

# OAKAMOOR CONSERVATION AREA Character Appraisal

July 2016



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# INTRODUCTION

Every local planning authority has a duty to assess from time to time if any of their areas (which are not conservation areas) contain special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). They shall then, following a review and, depending upon the results, designate those areas as conservation areas. This assessment of Oakamoor follows this legal process and duty.

The contents of this Conservation Area Appraisal are intended to be both a guide for owners and occupiers of buildings and land within the conservation area and a guide for the local planning authority. The contents are a material consideration when determining applications for development, dealing with appeals, or proposing works for the preservation or enhancement of the area.

This appraisal document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area & also identifies opportunities for enhancement. It follows the model set out in Historic England guidance (Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals 2006) and 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2012).

The Staffordshire Moorlands (excluding the Peak District National Park) currently (2015) has 15 designated conservation areas.

Conservation area designation leads to an obligation that special attention should be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

## **Consultation**

This appraisal has been widely circulated and advertised with full public consultation, as set out in the Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement'. A copy of the appraisal is available to view on the Council website and a hard copy can be consulted at the Council offices in Leek.

The designation of a conservation area at Oakamoor is part of the Churnet Valley Masterplan. Oakamoor lies within the heart of the Churnet Valley.

Both Historic England and Government guidance recommends the involvement of residents and businesses within conservation areas. In addition, there are a large number of stakeholders at Oakamoor: Staffordshire County Council owns the track-bed of the Churnet Valley line and the site of the Oakamoor works – known as the Oakamoor to Denstone Greenway and picnic site. The area proposed within the boundary includes large areas of woodland and open space, owned by local landowners and the Forest Enterprise.

# I. CONTEXT

## Location and Key Characteristics

1.1 The village of Oakamoor lies at 100 metres above sea level within the Churnet Valley, which follows a route running roughly north-west / south-east, from Cheddleton to Denstone. Although only properly settled from the early 19th century, the settlement, located at a major east-west crossing point of the river, was a heartland of industrial activity from the 13th century onwards.

1.2 The Conservation Area encompasses both the valley bottom and the buildings and former industrial sites associated with the development of the early iron-foundries and later brass and copper milling and wire-working processes within the valley. It also incorporates detached houses, built by the industrialists, overlooking the valley and contained within a managed landscape of gardens, parks and woodland which borrowed aspects of the wider picturesque setting of the valley.

1.3 The key characteristics of the conservation area include the following:

- a scenic wooded environment, dominated by a dense tree canopy of mixed planting (native deciduous and conifers), sheltered and deep-cut within with a broad valley bottom
- dominated by the River Churnet, which is the focus of most historic industrial activity and has influenced the linear form of development
- 'humps and bumps' within the landscape provide evidence of historic industrial activity, ephemeral but highly significant reminders of bygone industries and transportation structures and corridors
- dramatic, memorable views and relationships between the River Churnet and engineered structures, such as the bridge / causeway and weir and the Churnet Valley Railway bridges and tunnel
- a loud environment along sections of the River, particularly at key times of spate, but a contrasting tranquil and quiet environment within the woodland walks
- an acute awareness of the natural beauty of the environment has influenced the design, orientation and location of buildings – picturesque groups of cottages and detached villas are scattered along the narrow lanes and occasionally placed carefully on levelled platforms to enjoy the dramatic views
- an estate identity which has evolved over several generations, built by different entrepreneurs; by adopting much earlier building styles during the second half of the 19th century and 20th century, Thomas Bolton and Sons ensured that they were both preserving the historic character of the village and reinforcing awareness of their ownership and influence
- large areas of recreational public open space, and a good public footpath network provide a high quality environment with generous access for walkers, cyclists and horse riding, and sporting leisure interest, such as cricket

## Designations

1.4 Conservation Areas are protected under the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. This primary legislation requires proposals that need planning permission to preserve or enhance special architectural or historic interest.

1.5 The boundary of the conservation area is illustrated on Figure 1. There are eight listed buildings within the conservation area boundary, identified in Appendix 1.

## Planning Policy Context

1.6 National planning policy for the historic environment is all contained within one over-arching document, the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). This embodies a holistic view of the historic environment and is designed to ensure that decisions are not made in isolation without first considering the significance of the particular aspects of the historic environment and then addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability issues. The NPPF should be read alongside the Planning Practice Guide 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' which gives more detailed advice on Conservation Area designation and management.

1.7 The main local policies covering conservation areas are found within the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014). The local planning policy context includes Policy DC2 on The Historic Environment, Policy DC3 on Landscape and Settlement, Policy DC1 Design Considerations and Policy C3 Green Infrastructure.

1.8 Core Strategy, Policy SS7, identifies the Churnet Valley as a sustainable tourism area. Policies R1 and R2 form part of the adopted development plan and are consistent with the aims of the Framework, which seeks to support a prosperous rural economy.

1.9 The Churnet Valley Master Plan (2014) is Supplementary Planning Guidance and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. This will influence planning decisions and other initiatives and strategies affecting this area. The overarching principle is one of sustaining and enhancing the natural, built and historic environmental quality of the area, its settlements and its hinterland through managed change which provides for rural regeneration largely based on sustainable tourism. The Plan identifies the designation of the Oakamoor Conservation Area as a key action in recognition of its special historic character which needs to be preserved and enhanced.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 The Churnet Valley has a long history of industrialisation and exploitation of local minerals. Local supplies of iron ore (mined from the area to the north-west of Oakamoor), charcoal (from the immediate wooded hills and valleys, Alton Park and Croxden Abbey woods), and later coal (mined in the Cheadle area) and copper (mined at Ecton), together with a reliable source of water power from the River Churnet and its tributaries, provided all of the essential resources required to process metals within a small geographical area. Local supply and production enabled the costs of transportation to be kept low and created all of the factors required to foster important metallurgical industries. This took place from the 13th century until the 21st century, a fairly remarkable continual process of industrial development.

2.1.2 The closest medieval settlement to Oakamoor is Farley, to the south-east, which contains evidence of ridge and furrow within the landscape. The land to the north and south of Oakamoor was only properly “farmed” from the 18th century and by this time there would have been considerable clearance of woodland, enabling the development of associated isolated farmsteads.

2.1.3 From the earliest period of industrial development, Oakamoor was pivotal to the development of the local mineral industry, although there were other satellite developments, at Consall and Froghall. Sites in and around Oakamoor with industrial archaeological interest are identified on Figure 2. There are likely to be many others which are currently unrecorded. Oakamoor was located at a strategic point in the river where the river was shallowest and easily fordable. The development of industry would have contributed to the need to cross the river more easily, hence a bridge was constructed as early as the 14th century. The Croxden Chronicles referred to bridges over the Churnet in 1370, and the replacement of a bridge in timber at Oakamoor was recorded in the 1590s. Following flash floods, this was regularly repaired or replaced. A bridge is depicted over the Churnet at Oakamoor on Joseph Browne’s county map of 1682 (published in *The Natural History of Staffordshire* by Dr. Robert Plot). Oakamoor was still no more than a hamlet by the end of the 16th century.

2.1.4 A report to the Stafford Quarter Sessions in 1708 identified the presence of a decayed wooden bridge that was considered to be very dangerous and noted that several people, horses and cattle had drowned trying to cross the River Churnet at Oakamoor. At the next Session, the Court awarded £100 to build a stone bridge for carts and carriages. Although the court paid the building costs, the local people had to carry the 300 tons of stone to the site. The bridge was built between 1709 and 1710. The bridge was widened upstream in 1778 to comply with the turnpike requirements following the creation of the Blythe Marsh (Bridge) to Thorpe (Spend Lane) Turnpike Road in 1762 (B5417), which ran east / west.

2.1.5 Oakamoor is located in a strategic place, at the junction of three historic parishes, Kingsley, Cheadle and Alton parish, where the townships of Cotton and Farley (Alton parish), on the east side of the river, met the township of Whiston (Kingsley parish), east of the river and north of the Cotton Brook, and Cheadle parish (west of the river). Eventually in 1897 Oakamoor became a parish in its own right but until that time the diverse histories of the parishes and historic manors had a significant impact on the development of the valley – land to the east of the Churnet, owned largely by the Earls of Shrewsbury for most of the industrial period, was relatively undeveloped, whilst land on the west side of the valley was acquired and developed by the important industrialists.

## 2.2 Early Industrial Development - 13th Century

2.2.1 The earliest written evidence of iron manufacture in the valley is from 1290; “old mines of iron” and “old Forges” Veteres Forgas were described in “The Secunda Carta of Chedle” at Esteswelle (Eastwall) - the Santcheverel family granted the manor of Hounds Cheadle to Croxden Abbey in parcels between the late 12th and late 13th century but retained the rights to their mines and forges at Eastwall. These forge sites would have been hand-forging iron, before the advent of the hammer mill. The earliest process of producing iron was by using a clay-built furnace, called a “bloomery”. A fire was made from charcoal, intensified by manually-operated bellows, and small pieces of iron-ore were laid on top of the burning charcoal. Little pieces of bloom (wrought iron) were produced. This process of smelting, extracting the iron from the ore, had gone on for many centuries in Britain from even before the Roman period, and in north Staffordshire from at the least the 13th century. Sites with a stone bloomery floor have been discovered during archaeological investigation in recent decades along the Churnet Valley and some of these are recorded on Figure 2. Around the same time, at the end of the 13th century, there is documentary evidence that the monks at Croxden Abbey were burning charcoal as a source of revenue, using wood felled from Hawksmoor and their woodlands, which extended from the Churnet to the south-west towards Counslow, near Threapwood. These woodlands were being managed on a 20-year cycle of coppicing and re-planting.

2.2.2 Remnants of the bloomery process of making iron can be found scattered around the area in the form of heaps of slag or “scoriae”. The largest of these bloomery sites were at Eastwall and Mathers Wood (see Figure 2). Other sites have been identified from deposits of slag at Frame Wood, Star Wood, Cherry Eye Bridge (East and South), Consall Wood, Wallgrange and Jackson Wood, the latter about 800 m to the north of Eastwall Farm across the River Churnet. During the course of preparing this appraisal, remains of two bloomeries and associated slag have been reported at Carr Wood.

## 2.3 16th Century Developments in Iron Making

2.3.1 Water-power was applied to ironmaking from the 13th century onwards, when bloomeries were enlarged through the addition of water-powered bellows and when water-power was used to drive large tilt-hammers at forge sites. By the middle of the 16th century there was a hammer-mill on the Churnet at Oakamoor recorded in a court case - a “Forge Okam More in Alveton” (1573). Pig-iron brands were pounded by the water-powered hammer; worked by the hammerman, before the next stage of the process of refining the metal by further forging. The hammer mill site and small forge were located on the site of the later Brassworks, on the west bank of the River Churnet (downstream of the bridge). By the end of the 16th century Oakamoor was a small hamlet with a few houses. In 1602 a victualler was recorded at ‘Okemore’, indicating that there was enough activity and passing trade to warrant food to be served.

2.3.2 The Countess of Shrewsbury, the riparian landowner, received an annual rent for the water of the Churnet to drive the forge. The land to the east of the River was still largely in the ownership of the Earl of Shrewsbury by the time of the Tithe map of 1844.

2.3.3 A major development in smelting iron took place locally in 1593, when a blast furnace was purpose-built to the south-west of Oakamoor, at Greendale. This was located in a remote place alongside the brook running through Dimmingsdale, on a site that had been previously used as bloomery in the late medieval period. The blast furnace process of smelting was continuous, operating with a charge of several months at a time, and needed to be located away from habitation; if there was already a small settlement at Oakamoor; this may be why a remote site was chosen some distance from the existing forge. The blast furnace combined charcoal with the iron ore and limestone flux in a process known as indirect reduction.

2.3.4 The site of this furnace is at the head of the Dimmingsdale valley but the main part was built over by Old Furnace Cottage. The name of the furnace is preserved in the names of the local houses.

2.3.5 “Old Furnace” was therefore the first iron-smelting blast furnace to be built in the north of the County. It was operating for a short but productive period between 1593 and 1608, and was the initiative of Lawrence Loggin, under the ownership initially of Sir Francis Willoughby, and later Sir Percival who effectively used the proceeds to prop up his debts by charging a high £140 annual rent. Recorded as the ‘Oakymoor Works’, it was believed by Loggin that local supplies of charcoal and ore would keep the furnace in production. However, rising raw material costs, together with rent rises and problems in keeping key workers at the site, were all factors that made it unsustainable. This furnace used the water power from the stream, via a millpond, to drive a waterwheel-driven set of bellows. It was running in conjunction with the earlier complex of buildings alongside the River Churnet, (to the south of the present bridge) which comprised the forge, the hammer mill and a purpose-built chafery and finery. Loggin persuaded Willoughby to invest in extending the hammer mill and building the new finery and chafery. The finery converted the iron pigs produced from the new smelting process into wrought iron. The chafery contained a second hearth used in the manufacturing process. These combined industrial processes worked together to create the first “ironworks” in north Staffordshire. The local woods provided the source of charcoal but by 1606 woodland within a five-mile radius had been largely stripped and clear felled to keep up with the demand. During the later years of the ironworks, the search for a supply of charcoal became increasingly difficult and remote.

## 2.4 17th Century Industrial Development

2.4.1 In addition to these processes, further developments took place in the development of slitting mills and rolling mills and these had a major influence on the industrial development of the valley. Both of these processes required water power and a continuous process of manufacturing.

2.4.2 Rolling was first introduced in ironmaking in England in the 16th century, when the slitting mill was introduced to make small iron rods from strip, by passing it through rotating disc-shaped cutters.

2.4.3 In 1688-1689 an iron forge and mill at Oakamoor operated with a furnace at Meir Heath and a second forge at Consall. This was a very simple operation, owned by Dr. John Foley, and known as the “Moorland Works”. Only pig iron from the Meir Heath furnace was used. A slitting mill was provided at both sites; the mill at Oakamoor existed before 1683 but operated only until 1694, when it was converted into a chafery. In 1708 a new “Cole House” was built.

## 2.5 18th Century Industrial Development

2.5.1 In 1719 Thomas Patten and his associates took out a lease on Alton Mill, further downstream on the Churnet which had been a corn mill, and he converted it into a wire making mill. He was not a local man, having established a copper works in Warrington, but saw an opportunity in the Churnet Valley. He also built a brassworks at Spout Farm near Cheadle. The company, the Cheadle Copper & Brass Company, was formally established in 1734, using copper mined in the Moorlands for making brass pins.

2.5.2 In 1738 an account of the processes was given by Dr. Richard Wilkes of Willenhall of a visit to the Brass Works at Cheadle and Alton. This extract explains the process of first rolling the ingots into plates. These were then transferred to another site, heated and then rolled again into lengths of “wire”. This process strengthened the metal. The end-use mentioned was for making brass pins.

"I went to see the Brass Works at Cheadle & Alveton wch. had lately been there erected. At the former Place Copper wth. Lap. Calaminaris & Charcoal is made into Brass Pigs, or Ingots, wch. are then rolled into Plates of 4 foot long. These are carried to Alverton where they are nealed and rolled again 6 Times to about 21 foot long. Then they are slit into Several Peices & at 6 Operations drawn into Wire of a proper Size for Pins."

2.5.3 A further forge site is documented at Oakamoor in 1760. Its precise location is not known, but is presumed to be located alongside the Cotton Brook. A lease between the Earl of Shrewsbury and Thomas and John Gilbert gave permission for dams to be built and water to be taken from Oulscrough for the purpose of serving a forge.

2.5.4 From 1743 George Kendall started to acquire a large part of the land to the west of the river. In 1761, following the introduction of copper from Ecton copper mines onto the open market, the old slitting mill at Oakamoor bridge was used as part of the tin works developed by George Kendall, but it may have been demolished in 1771 when a purpose-built tinning mill was erected. Tinplating is the coating of iron sheets with tin to protect them from corrosion.

2.5.5 William Yates' map of 1775 identifies the "Tin Works and Rolling Mill" near the bridge in Oakamoor. The mill is marked by the conventional symbol of a waterwheel. It was the old forge site which was known as the Tin Mill. The mill head race was taken off the Churnet, upstream of the bridge, and this fed a millpond, all to the west of the River Churnet. The tail race still survives near the site of the cottages known as "The Island".

2.5.6 Kendall built himself a mansion to the west of the river, later called Oakamoor Lodge (demolished in the 1960s). In 1781 George Smith and Henry Knifton took over the operation.

2.5.7 In 1790 the tin works at Oakamoor were bought by Thomas Patten and Co. and tin plate continued to be produced there by Smith and Knifton until 1793 when the site was converted for the rolling and slitting of brass and copper. By the end of the 1700s Patten and Company were the chief suppliers of copper and brass, ingots and wire to Birmingham and the Black Country.



Plate I - 1775 Map of Staffordshire by William Yates (reproduced by permission Staffordshire Record Society)

## 2.6 Other 18th Century Mills

2.6.1 At the bottom of the Dimmingsdale Valley, to the south of Oakamoor, was a lead smelting mill, described as new in 1741 and located at Alton Common. In 1760 lead was still being smelted and the site had a smiths shop, two houses, a barn, nine acres and a pool. The life of the smelting mill was relatively short; it was converted to a corn grinding mill in 1784 and by the late 19th century it was operating as a saw mill.

## 2.7 19th Century Industrial Development

2.7.1 During the first decades of the 19th century the canal network was developed to serve the burgeoning industries in and around the potteries and the heavy industries of the Staffordshire Moorlands. The prime movers behind the campaign for a canal in the Churnet Valley were John and Thomas Gilbert, who also leased the Caldon Low Quarries. A branch canal from the Trent and Mersey Canal was proposed to serve the Caldon quarries. First proposed and surveyed in the 1770s, there were significant changes in level to overcome and because of these level changes, Froghall was chosen as the canal terminus, to be combined with an inclined tramway. The Caldon Branch Canal opened in 1777. Following this, in 1797, an Act was passed allowing the construction of a canal from Froghall to Uttoxeter, which passed through Oakamoor. John Rennie was appointed as engineer and work finally began in 1807. It was completed in 1811 but had a relatively short life as it was displaced by the building of the railway.

2.7.2 Thomas Patten and Company's sites at Cheadle, Oakamoor and Alton continued to work as a unit until 1828 when a rent rise forced the closure of the Alton Mill and the transfer of wire production to Oakamoor. Shortly afterwards the Cheadle Works closed and brass production also moved to Oakamoor.

2.7.3 In 1819 John Wilson (1802-1892), second son of Thomas Patten (later known as Thomas Wilson), became heir to the family industrial wealth and church livings of Warrington and land in Lancashire, Cheshire and Staffordshire.

2.7.4 In 1823, when he came of age, he adopted the name of Wilson Patten, and in 1827, following his father's death in December, John Wilson Patten became a partner in the family firm, the patent roller manufacturers, and the company changed its name to John Wilson Patten and Company.

2.7.5 Between 1828 and 1851 the industrial processes intensified at Oakamoor.

2.7.6 An Act of Parliament in 1846 authorised the North Staffordshire Railway Company (NSR) to build a branch line through the Churnet Valley. In 1847 it was decided that the NSR should act as canal carrier and the North Staffordshire Railway and Canal Carrying Company was formed and the railway company took over the Caldon, Leek and Uttoxeter Canal Companies. The deep and winding Churnet Valley necessitated the building of several tunnels where the river course proved hostile and the Oakamoor tunnel, at 462 yards, was the longest. The tunnel was also the wettest in the system, creating an endless maintenance problem throughout its use.

2.7.7 The canal through Oakamoor was closed in 1849 when the Churnet Valley Railway opened and NSR ceased to use it for conveying materials for the construction of the Churnet Valley line. Large sections of the canal bed were used for the new line, although the main section avoided Oakamoor. A small station was built at Oakamoor, although this was demolished in the 1970s and only the Crossing Keeper's lodge and station platforms survive. Railway sidings and a track known as the 'wing line' was eventually laid along the bed of the canal to enable goods to be brought into the Cheadle Copper and Brassworks goods yard, Bottoms brickworks and Eli Bowers lime burning kilns to the east of the site by railway trucks pulled by shire horses. These sidings ran on the south-east side of the site, following the line of the former canal, which was back-filled. A short section of sidings crossed the river via a bridge from the east bank of the river.

2.7.8 The main line ran south-west of the works and ran in a cutting before entering the tunnel under the hillside. Not all of the canal was back-filled and sections can still be found with water or dry cuttings. Where the railway tunnel cut through the hillside, an abandoned section of the former canal at the northern end of Oakamoor survived.



Plate 2 - The Churnet Valley Railway and Oakamoor Station in 1910 (since demolished), with view of the Oakamoor tunnel beyond the station platform (reproduced by permission Staffordshire Museum Service)

2.7.9 In 1851 the works were put up for sale and were bought by Thomas Bolton and Son and the company concentrated on supplying copper wire to the new telegraphy industry. In 1866 the wire for the first transatlantic telegraph cable was drawn at Oakamoor. In 1880 Boltons pioneered the use of electricity in the purification of copper, and in 1886 they developed the first continuous wire drawing machine. As the importance of the company grew so did the extent of the works. In 1890 a new factory was built on a greenfield site at Froghall.

2.7.10 The company expanded operations at Oakamoor and by 1890 all of the available land between the former canal and Mill Road had been used. This appears clearly by the time of the 1900 OS map.

## 2.8 20th Century Development

2.8.1 Thomas Bolton and Sons Ltd. remained at the Oakamoor site until it eventually closed in the 1960s and they moved their operations to the Froghall wireworks site, which continued operating until March 2014, when it too closed. The works site in Oakamoor was given to Staffordshire County Council in 1966 and was reclaimed in the 1970s when they developed it as a picnic site with the old railway line as a public park and a trail, called the Oakamoor - Denstone Greenway. After the 1920s few houses were built and it was another 50 years before there was significant development in the village, which took place at School Drive and off Star Bank.

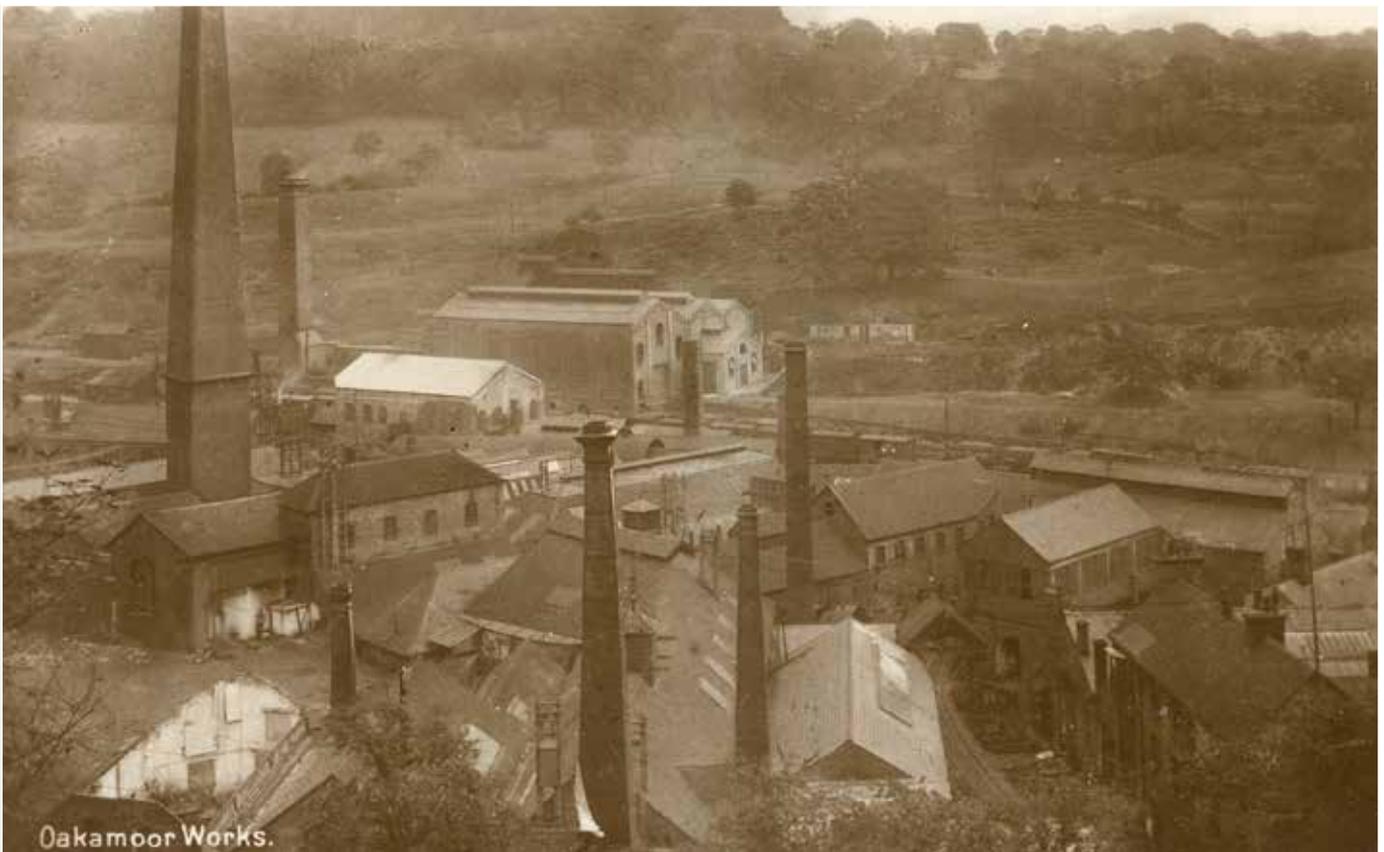


Plate 3 - Bolton's Copper Works at Oakamoor in 1920 (reproduced by permission Staffordshire Museum Service)

## 2.9 Archaeological Potential

2.9.1 There are two main threads of industrial archaeological interest at Oakamoor:

- the iron making and subsequent brass and copper industries, and
- the linear transport networks.

2.9.2 The sites of ironworking, brass and copper processing never worked in complete isolation and were always integrated throughout the valley. The success of the major entrepreneurs of the 19th century was in controlling all of the industrial processes.

2.9.3 The industry was therefore quite different from the development of factories and manufacturing in the late 18th century which contained almost entirely one continuous process on one site.

2.9.4 As a result of these satellite, integrated sites associated with the metal-based industries, the population serving the industries was spread out and places like Oakamoor did not really develop until much later in the mid 19th century. The requirement for skilled labour, with very specific jobs in metal-processing, meant that the local population could not meet the high demand -manufacturers searched fair distances for labour. As a result, the local area had insufficient housing to keep up with demand.

2.9.5 Sites of bloomeries, the water-powered forges, water-powered hammer mill, remnants of rolling, slitting, and processing metals are all contained within the valley. The documentation of these sites has been sporadic and few sites are well understood. Although the main site of industrial activity was flattened, not all the evidence was removed. There has been very limited archaeological evaluation or recording of the surviving structures and they have been attributed little significance in recent decades. There is considerable potential to enhance our understanding of the industrial

development of the valley. Some work is being done by the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership to gain a better understanding of the industrial archaeology of the valley. However, many of the sites are disguised by trees, leaves and years of accumulated hummus, debris and occasional rubbish tips and some back-filling and it is unlikely that we will ever get a complete picture of the scale of industrial activity.

2.9.6 The linear transport networks are much easier to understand and have more surviving evidence. The structure of the railway line survives largely complete, with the track-bed removed. The canal, however, has been displaced by the development of Churnet View Road and there are a few key areas where further investigation and opportunities to better enhance or reveal the significance of the canal may be appropriate.

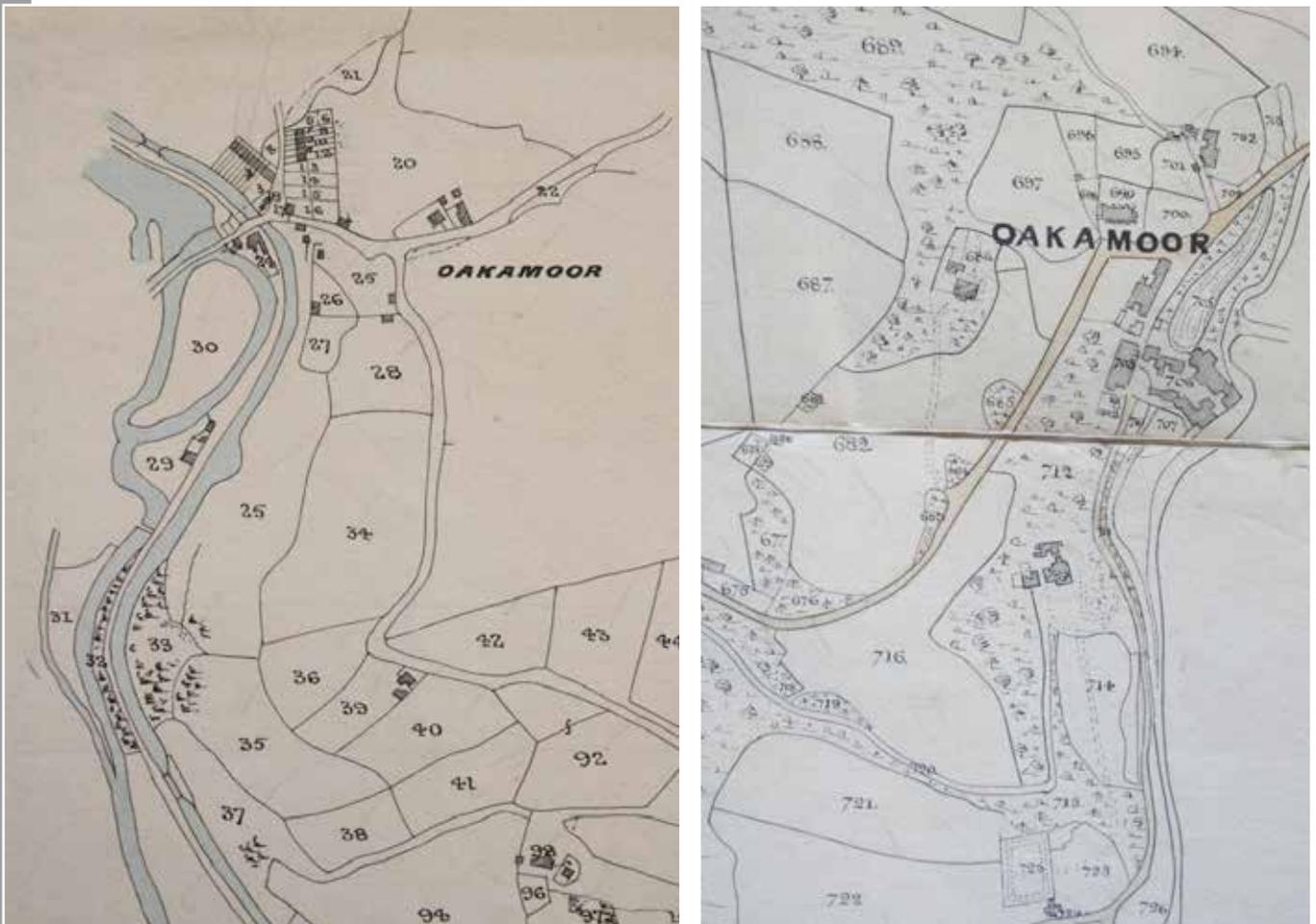
## TIMELINE

NATIONAL EVENTS	LOCAL EVENTS
450 BC – early ironworking in Britain	
Romans developed ironworking to Britain AD 43 – AD 410	
13th century – water power first used to operate bellows and hammers	Bloomery site at Dimmingsdale with evidence of water-powered bellows
1496 - The first blast furnace was erected at Newbridge, Sussex	1561 – indirect reduction (blast furnace) used in Staffordshire
1590 – the first slitting mill erected in England, at Dartford, Kent	
1709 – Abraham Darby first adapted the blast furnace to use :”coke”	
	1717 Thomas Patten erected a copper works at Bank Quay, Warrington
1720 – John Hanbury introduced tinsplate manufacture by coating rolled thin iron sheet with tin	
1728 John Hanbury invented the method of rolling iron plates through cylinders	
	1755 The partnership took over a copper works that Patten had set up (outside the partnership) at Greenfield in Flintshire.
	1764 A brass wire manufactory was also set up at Greenfield.
	1767 All of the various factories were brought within the partnership, including a works at Warrington.
1783 – Henry Cort developed the puddling process and the roller mill	
	1795 – Thomas Wilson Patten acquires interests at Oakamoor
	1807-1811 a branch canal of the Trent and Mersey Canal, leading off the Caldon Canal, is constructed from Froghall to Uttoxeter, passing through Oakamoor
	1849 – Churnet Valley Railway opens and the canal closes
	1851 – Thomas Bolton & Sons acquire the Oakamoor works
1866 - the wire for the first transatlantic telegraph cable is drawn at Oakamoor	
	1874 A S Bolton purchases the Light Oaks Estate and sets about developing the area
	c1966 – Thomas Bolton & Sons close the Oakamoor works

### 3. SETTLEMENT PLAN FORM AND MAP REGRESSION

3.1 The early County maps depict Oakamoor as a place name with a bridge and mill-site. On Yates' 1775 County map, the line of the river, running down the east side of the valley, the stone bridge and the mill leat on the west side of the valley, leading from a point upstream of the bridge to the mill south of the bridge, are all clearly represented.

3.2 The most detailed mapping of the settlement comes from the mid 19th century Tithe maps (ca. 1840-44), of which there are four covering the four different townships and three separate parishes which met at Oakamoor. By 1844 the canal had been constructed and it is illustrated on the Farley Township map with locks and a winding hole. This is the only map representation of the canal in local archives, as built, although there may be others in the Gloucester archives. A narrow strip of land separated the canal from the river and this strip was altered over the course of the next century. On either side of the canal and downstream of the bridge were operating a brickworks (to the west) and limekilns (to the east). Downstream of the bridge, was an "island", known as the Middle Meadow. At this time it was an open area of water meadow with no signs of industrial activity. Below this water meadow was a gasworks - the site of the gasworks remained fixed and is still evident today.



Plates 4 & 5 - Left - Farley Township Tithe map (B/A/15/11, 371) 1844, and right - Cheadle Parish Tithe map (B/A/15/81, 442), 1844, (with permission of Lichfield Record Office)

3.3 By 1844, the land north of the river, at Carr Bank, had been developed with a cluster of three terraced rows forming the core of the workers' housing. Along Mill Road were built the complex of industrial buildings forming the Wire Mill site (to the west of the road) and the site of Patten's Brass Works, sandwiched between the river and the road (the site of the original forge).

3.4 All rivers change over time and the River Churnet is no exception; even though it flows through a steep, deeply incised valley, its course has meandered over the centuries. This resulted in a split channel south of Oakamoor Bridge, which was removed during the County Council reclamation of Bolton's Works in the 1970s.

3.5 Many of the changes to the course of the river have been man-made; the course of the river south of the bridge was altered in order to create a second millpond, which is first visible on the 1881 OS map. The changes in the alignment of the river are illustrated on a series of overlays. In conjunction with the alterations to the course of the river stone abutments and stone-lined channels were constructed.

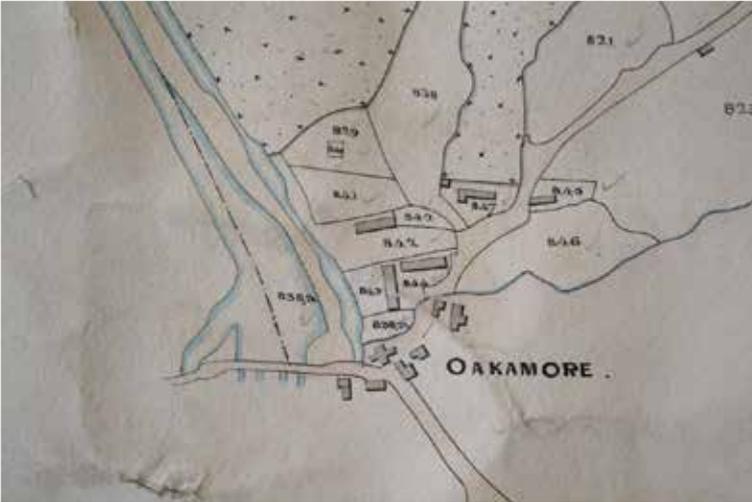


Plate 6 - Whiston Tithe map (B/A/15/177, 546), 1840 (with permission of Lichfield Record Office)

3.6 The width of the river upstream of the weir has changed significantly and has narrowed, following the reclamation of the canal bed and the creation of Churnet View Road.

3.7 By the time of the 1881 Ordnance Survey map there had been some very distinct developments; the original millpond serving the forge site and Rolling Mill had been supplemented with a second millpond, providing a head of water to another group of buildings, the expanded Brass Works developed by Thomas Bolton and Son after 1851.

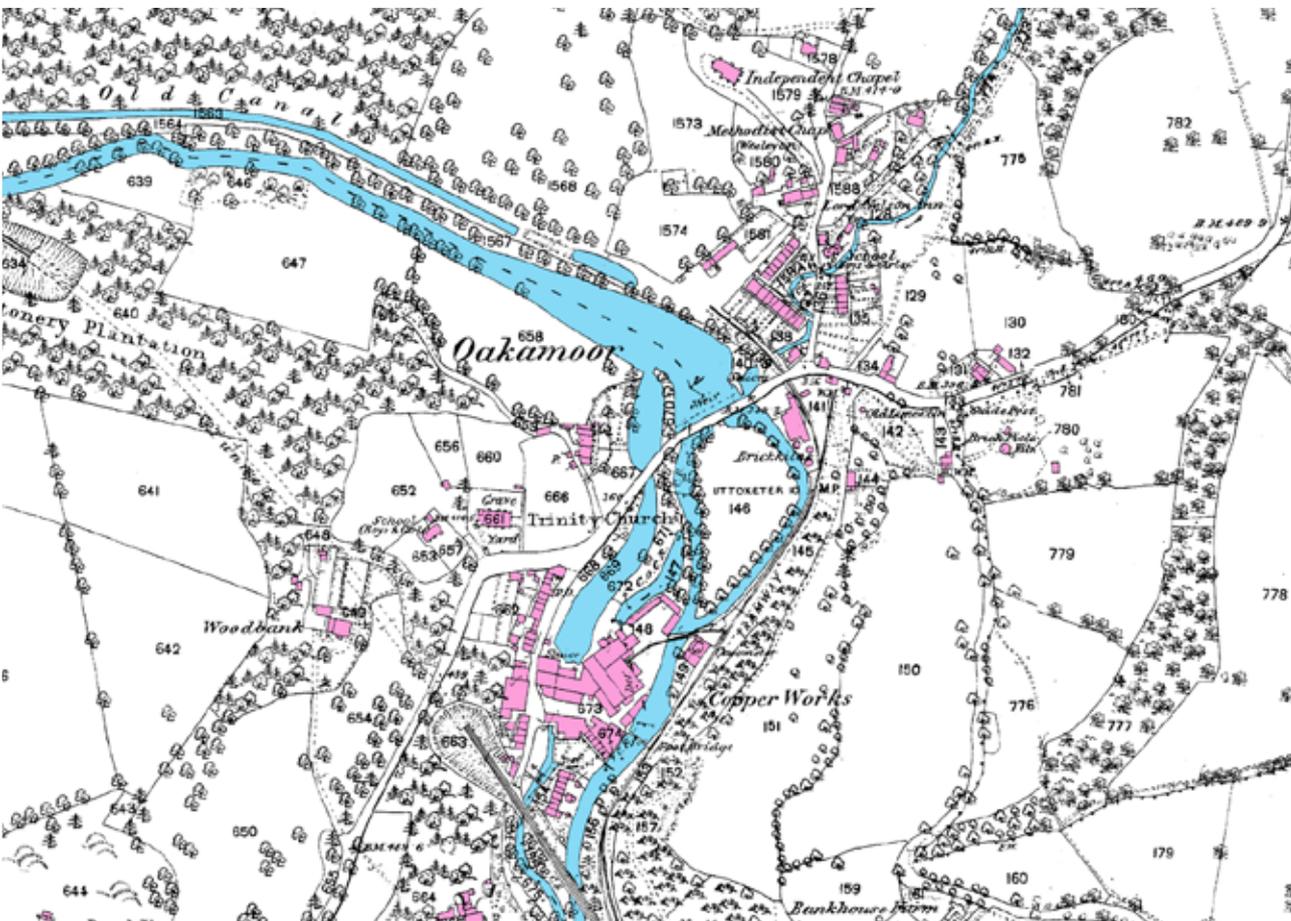


Plate 7 - First edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881 (1:2500 scale)

3.8 By 1881, the canal had been partially filled-in, above and below the bridge, and the reclaimed land was in use for tramways serving the brickworks, limekilns and former canal wharf. The old canal beyond the wharf survives as an open channel and the railway line and Oakamoor Tunnel had been built. There was little evidence of any expansion on the housing stock, although a few new public buildings had appeared at Carr Bank.

3.9 By the time of the 1900 Ordnance Survey map there had been a rapid growth in the amount of housing. This was concentrated on the flattened land that fronted the former canal basin. Four terraces had been built by 1900 and a tennis ground cut into the hillside below the school, which was located on the site of a filled-in canal lock.

3.10 A final intense period of development came between 1900 and 1924 when further terraces were built along the line of the old canal, re-named Churnet View Road. The remaining sections of open canal were filled in. A number of the smaller terraced cottages at the western end of Churnet View Road were later demolished.

3.11 By 1924 almost the entire flat area of land within the valley bottom had been built upon. Some of the "millyard" remained open, in places where the original millponds had been displaced and culverted.

3.12 During the 1960s and 70s the land was reclaimed by the County Council and the 1970 OS map illustrates the site as it is today but with the eastern channel still in place. Since that time the village has expanded a little to the east along Star Bank and at School Drive.



Plate 8 - 1924 edition Ordnance Survey map (1:2500 scale)

## 4. LANDSCAPE SETTING, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 The landscape of the Churnet Valley has some breathtaking scenery and, in recognition of this, is currently being considered for designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4.2 Around Oakamoor, the highest terrain along the Churnet Valley gently undulates at around 250-280 metres AOD, running parallel with the river valley and capped with dense tree cover. In places, where the floor of the valley is at its widest, as at Oakamoor Bridge and at Stoney Dale, the landscape is dished and the flood plain has fewer trees. Although the land rises in places above 280-metres, views are contained to the valley as the rocky outcrops (bluffs) define the structure of the valley and the gradient eases off beyond many of these.



Autumn view over the Churnet Valley looking towards Oakamoor from Whiston

4.3 The generic description of the area, as described in the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment, is “Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys”. Many of these little cloughs, with grooves cut by brooks and streams, are only evident when walking through the woodland.

4.4 There are large Forest Enterprise leaseholds in the Churnet Valley and some commercial coniferous woodlands. There are also a large number of nature reserves in and around Oakamoor owned by conservation organisations and the County Council. The most significant locally are;

- Hawksmoor Nature Reserve (National Trust)
- Dimmingsdale Nature Reserve
- Oakamoor to Denstone Greenway (Staffordshire County Council)
- Cotton Dell Nature Reserve (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)

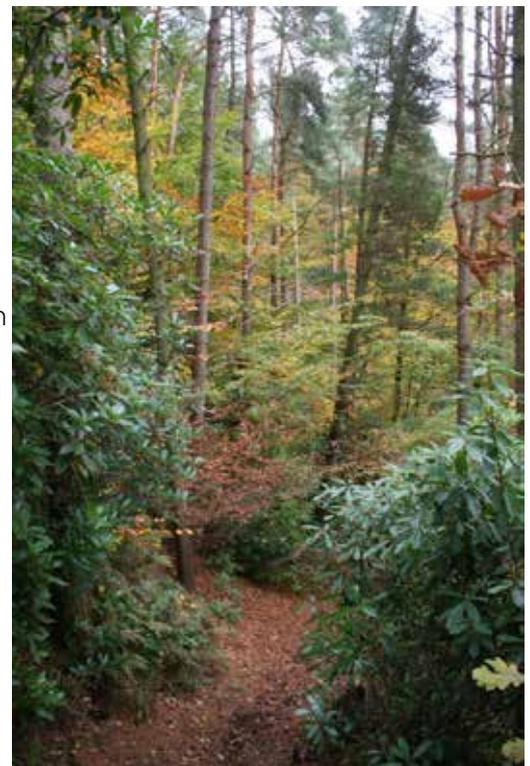
4.5 Carr Wood forms the northern backdrop to many of the views within the conservation area and the northern setting of the village is dominated by woodland, stretching northwards from behind Churnet View Road and The Valley School. Carr Wood is a mixed deciduous and coniferous plantation, dominated by beech, Scots pine and oak. It was re-planted after charcoal burning stripped



Carr Wood viewed from the east

4.8 The west side of the valley contains two distinct woods; Lightoaks Wood and Hawksmoor. Hawksmoor Wood and Hayes Wood, once part of Croxden Abbey's ancient woodlands, are owned by the National Trust. There are tongues of woodland leading down into the valley outside the National Trust ownership but of a similar character. Stonery Plantation, which is to the immediate west of the conservation area boundary, and beneath which the Oakamoor railway tunnel runs, is a mixed woodland of mainly deciduous trees.

4.9 The mixed planting within the valley derives from a combination of the current Forest Enterprise managed woodland, interspersed with older ancient woodland and areas of mixed planting added by the old and new estates, as part of the wider setting of their large houses. This provides great autumnal interest, is visually enriching, and forms part of the distinctive 19th century designed landscape setting of the valley.



4.10 To the south of the village of Oakamoor lies Stoney Dale, a dry valley connecting with the Churnet. The underlying geology on the north side of the valley is Hawksmoor Sandstone, the land to the south side of the valley Hollington Sandstone. The rising land to the north of Stoney Dale is heavily wooded and Lightoaks Wood sits on Freehay Conglomerate.

4.11 Within the landscape, the larger houses are perched high above the valley floor; some, such as Light Oaks and Moor Court, were constructed on levelled platforms to take full advantage of the dramatic views.

4.12 The setting of these houses uses borrowed landscape from much further afield. Light Oaks, for example, was designed to have a view directly towards Alton Towers, which is part of the extended setting of the house and the conservation area.

4.13 The setting of the conservation area contains multiple dramatic picturesque views, taking in both the buildings and their landscape setting; for the most part these characteristics are inseparable. The main approaches do not contain the principal views; winding down the steep slopes of the valley

sides, between wooded fringes, the roads slowly reveal occasional glimpses of the landscape on the far sides of the valley. The main impression of its wooded setting is from the valley floor, where there are long views to the hillsides. There are two major exceptions along the eastern side of the valley; from the old road that once connected Oakamoor with Farley, and from intermediate points along the Farley Road, which contours at around 130-150 metres AOD along the east side of the valley, there are long views across to the western slopes and the upper levels of the settlement. Here, the grander houses sit with a sheltered outlook, in a wooded landscape setting. They share some of the characteristics of picturesque Swiss villas in a wooded setting. Lights Oaks, Barley Croft and Woodbank share prominent gables with decorative bargeboards and steep-pitched roofs, contrasting light and dark features, dark roofs and bargeboards and light rendered walls. The dramatic setting, albeit less-wooded, was not lost on the designers or builders of these houses. Despite the industrial development within the valley floor, at this height, there was significant detachment.



Wooded backdrop to panoramic views at Stoney Dale (above) and Carr Bank (below)

4.14 Spoil heaps, 'humps and bumps' within the landscape, and surface workings are often overlooked for their significance but now provide some of the last tangible evidence of the historic industrial activity within the valley, and the last evidence of what shaped the development of the valley. This evidence is very easily lost but has survived largely because the ground conditions are too steep or within the flood plain and not conducive to development. Industrial activity on occasion overlaps the boundary of the conservation area and the setting of the village is particularly sensitive to development which might remove this historic context. Numerous bloomery sites are contained within the woodland along the hillsides in and around Oakamoor.



## 5. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY

There are only 8 listed buildings in Oakamoor village (see Appendix 1) and several just outside the village at Moor Court. This small number, however, does not reflect the architectural or historic interest of the village, which has a large number of well-preserved 19th century historic buildings. The architectural interest covers both small domestic buildings, such as terraces, and larger industrial buildings, and individual, architect-designed public buildings and private houses.

### 5.1 Public Buildings

#### 5.1.1 Church of the Holy Trinity (listed grade II), Church Bank

Pigot's Directory of 1835 describes the construction of the church;

'Chapel of Ease at Oakamoor...erected by private subscriptions, and opened on the 29th August 1832: it contains four hundred and seventy sittings. The living is a curacy, in the gift of the rector of Cheadle, and the present minister is Revd. George Bellatt.'

The church is a very fine quality building. It was designed by J.P. Pritchett of York with integral lower ground level schoolroom, which is built into the hillside, and a traditional rectangular Georgian church plan with single space for worship – a connected nave and chancel. The building has high quality architectural details. The local, dark pink ashlar was chosen for the walling. It has a distinctive, three-stage west tower with crenellated parapet, crocketed corner finials and both diagonal and engaged buttresses and is Gothic Perpendicular in style with crenellated parapets.



#### 5.1.2 Bolton Memorial Free Church (listed grade II), Carr Bank, originally called Oakamoor Mills Chapel

This Free Church was completed in 1876 and designed by Edward F.C. Clarke of London. It is also a very fine quality building.

The original Wesleyan Methodist chapel in the village was built ca. 1860 at the foot of Carr Bank (this was located on a small plot adjoining the present Village Hall). The building was conveyed to A.S. Bolton in 1873, with the approval of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference (D3936/2/1/21 and D953/340 and D953/34) as part of the plans to develop a village school. The chapel built by the Bolton family in 1876 eventually displaced the original chapel and was a significant architectural work, although now largely hidden from the village by a tree-lined drive and mature oaks and yew trees. It was built in rock-faced buff-coloured gritstone ashlar, with contrasting smooth-faced, dark pink ashlar dressings. The landmark bell-cote was located at the west end of the church and is now completely hidden from the village. It is encrusted with intricate carved details which reveal that no expense was spared: miniature gargoyles, corner colonettes with foliated



capitals and crocketed finials. The Gothic wrought iron gates fronting Carr Bank and striking gatepiers are good examples of the quality of the architectural detail.

The Bolton family were staunch Methodists. The Wesleyan Methodist chapel proved to be too small for the growing community and this may have in part pre-empted the construction of the Free Church in 1876. The small graveyard contains noteworthy memorials to A S Bolton and other members of the Bolton family and their servants.

### 5.1.3 Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel, Carr Bank (unlisted)

This small chapel (now a private house) was constructed in 1859 and was roughly contemporary with the Wesleyan Methodist church which has been demolished. The conversion of the building into a house in 1980 has stripped it of much of its original, simple Early English chapel character, but there are some surviving features from the original building, such as the trefoil window and date plaque in the northern gable-end, rock-faced dark pink gritstone and buttressing. It is of historic interest as part of the social history of the village, during a time of great expansion.



5.1.4 **Oakamoor Village Hall** (unlisted) was developed in 1876-77 by Alfred Bolton as the **Mills School** providing education for his workers' children. The hall remained as a schoolroom up until the children were moved to the New School (now Valley Primary School) circa 1892. It became the village hall in 1959. The building was built immediately adjacent to the earlier Methodist chapel of 1860, which is why it still has a plain elevation to the north; it retains much of its original character. The southern elevation and gable end to the road were, therefore, the principal elevations, with an engaged chimney flue to the roadside gable and buttresses dividing the bays. These elevations contain the large windows needed for a large schoolroom, set high above a large plinth, to avoid distractions, (the large raked dormer is a later alteration). The building is a local landmark, with buff-coloured gritstone and contrasting dressings from the locally quarried, dark pink gritstone.

There were other schools: the National School, described in Pigot's 1835 Trade Directory, was at that time the schoolhouse in the undercroft of the church (built in 1832). A new school was built above the church overlooking the valley in 1856 (P.L. Wilson), and was designed by Thomas Fradgley. Oakamoor became an ecclesiastical parish in 1864 at which time the chapel of ease was re-named Holy Trinity Church. The National School at Oakamoor closed in 1876 and was eventually demolished in 1944. The burial ground was extended in its place.



Following the 1870 Education Act, Alfred Bolton established a non-denominational schoolroom in the mills in 1871 based on the 'British School' principles advocated by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster and founded in 1814 - "British and Foreign School Society for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion (the British and Foreign School Society)." This became known as The Mills School. To provide better accommodation, a purpose-built school was constructed on Carr Bank in 1876 (now the Village Hall).

5.1.5 **The Valley School** (unlisted) was built on Carr Meadows and was named as The New Schools. It was built by Alfred Bolton in 1892 and it was designed to be multi-functional and available for social events and village societies, lack of large social space being at a premium. Built from pink gritstone ashlar, it has an L-shaped plan with prominent gables featuring round and mullioned and transomed windows and finials.



## 5.2 Terraced Workers Cottages (unlisted)

5.2.1 The two rows known as **The Square** were reputedly built by the Patten Company to house workers at the Wire Mills and Brass Works. The company was the owner in 1841. They were probably built after 1793 and before 1810, prior to the construction of the canal. The western row reputedly once bridged the little Cotton Brook, which was why one of the central houses is slightly larger than the others. This appears on the Tithe map of Farley township. Both rows were provided with long front gardens, where they would have been encouraged by the Pattens to grow vegetables, particularly potatoes, to supplement their diet. Each house also had an outhouse and privy, the original design of these, however, has been obscured by later phases of rebuilding but there are some early examples that survive at Nos. 1, 5 & 7, and 19th century pattern windows at No. 11. In the 1840s the western row of The Square (Nos. 1-9 The Square) contained occupations such as a brass wire drawer and a roller maker. The northern row of The Square (Nos. 10-17) contained wire drawers, roller makers and tube makers.



5.2.2 The row opposite The Square, known as **Starwood Terrace**, was owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury. The row was also developed as workers cottages and leased by the Patten company. In the 1840s, highly specialised skilled trades occupied this row, including a copper roller maker, a blacksmith and a brass wire drawer. The second terrace, Nos. 7-9 Starwood Terrace, was built by the Bolton company in the early 20th century. These cottages are all slightly plainer and larger than their counterparts, with taller floor-to-ceiling heights, but they complement the earlier row.

There are some similarities in the detail between all of the early rows: they all share dentilled brick eaves, the western facing row of The Square and Starwood Terrace both share stone lintels and cills with brick hood moulds over the 3-light windows and a raised band, that to Starwood Terrace is plain but darker with bluish vitrified bricks, that to The Square is a three-course dentilled band, quite an old-fashioned detail for its day. The northern row of The Square was simpler in detail, with segmental arched brick heads serving two-light windows. These may have been slightly smaller cottages, or did not need the same amount of light, being south-facing. There are still fragments of

limewash attached to the corbelled eaves along all of the rows, which indicate that the brickwork was at one time lime-washed, but over the years continual washing with rain has removed most of the evidence. This, in combination with hood moulds and small-paned windows, would have been very typical of the first years of the 19th century when many estates were building in a Picturesque style, typically with whitewashed brickwork. It would also have been easy to maintain and keep looking fresh in the later 19th century, in a very smoky environment.

The terraces share economic methods of construction designed to use fewer bricks – there are segmental arches to the smaller windows and doors, constructed from a single course of bricks, and the main walling brickwork has four courses of stretcher bricks to a single course of headers and stretchers.



5.2.3 Further up Carr Bank stands a detached house looking south down the valley - **Oak Tree Cottage**. This appears to have been purpose-built as a house and grocer's shop by John Mosley or his predecessors. This and the Lord Nelson were the only buildings on the hilly section of Carr Bank for some time. John Mosley was both the owner and occupier in 1841 and the Mosley family continued to own the building into the 1900s. The shop door, which was positioned on the gable end, has been blocked up. This house has similar characteristics to the terraced cottages: whitewashed brick with hood moulds to the windows. It was probably built during the first decades of the 19th century and the style of architecture seems to signify a desire to be deferential to the major landowners.

#### 5.2.4 Outlying Estate Cottages

A row of three cottages survives at Stoneydale, **Far Stoneydale Cottages**, built in the same style as the workers cottages at The Square. These were owned by the Patten family and were part of the Light Oaks estate, developed at the same time as The Square, circa 1810. They retain dentilled brick eaves, squared stone lintels and cills with brick hood moulds and a plain projecting horizontal brick band. They were also once whitewashed.

At the top of Oakamore Road, on the way to Cheadle, are a group of cottages built by Thomas Bolton and Sons. These are: a semi-detached pair of workers cottages, now called High Winds and Highfields, and a pair of cottages called Beech Cottage (TB 1910). This little group is very interesting because it was built between 1900 and 1910 by the company using the same kind of details that had been used almost a hundred years earlier in the valley bottom.

The conservative taste and sensitivity to the character of the village is also exhibited in the design of the gatelodge to Light Oaks, which appears to date from around 1830, but in fact dates from circa 1895, following the acquisition of the Light Oaks Estate by Thomas Bolton in 1874 and their main phase of refurbishment of ca. 1890-95.



There are other terraced workers cottages in the centre of the village, but the character is more dilute following the loss of repeated details.

### 5.2.5 Churnet View Road – Terraces

Between 1880 and 1920 most of the terraced cottages along Churnet View Road were constructed by Thomas Bolton and Sons to house workers at the expanded Brass and Copper Works within the village. The canal was filled in piecemeal and the road was constructed in several stages, reclaiming land from the riverbank.



There were two main periods of development:

(1) 1880 to 1900, when the following terraces were built:

**Nos. 1-4 Churnet View Road** – mellow brick with gablets and moulded timber pediments, pent-roof bracketed porches, some extending over living room bay windows, 6-over-6 paned sash windows

**Nos. 5-10 Churnet View Road** - mixed brick with darker tones, stone dressings, brick gablets, 6-over-6 paned sash windows

**Nos. 1-8 Riverside** - mixed brick with darker tones, stone dressings, brick gablets, 6-over-6 paned sash windows, pent-roof bracketed porches

**Nos. 9-18 Riverside** - mixed brick with darker tones, stone dressings, brick gablets, 6-over-6 paned sash windows, pent-roof bracketed porches

(2) 1900-1920, when the following terraces were built:

**Nos. 1-5 Tennis Corner** – ornate moulded terracotta date plaque and initials FAB (Francis A Bolton) 1907, rendered brickwork with moulded brick cills, and moulded brick piers, casement windows (none original).

**Nos. 19-34 Riverside** - unusual pinkish buff brick, central three-course horizontal sawtooth projecting band, stone lintels and cills with brick hood moulds over 3-light plain casement windows, later porches. The end bays have large gables with bargeboards.

**Nos. 1-6 Woodside Cottages** – central date plaque in stone “Woodside Cottages 1916”, unusual pinkish buff brick, segmental brick arches and moulded brick cills to windows, 3-light casement windows (most replaced), end bays have asymmetric gables with timber bargeboards.

**Nos. 7-9 Woodside Cottages** – central date plaque in stone “TB & S Ltd 1922” (Thomas Bolton &

Sons Ltd), mixed brick with darker tones, segmental arched windows with 3-light casements, gables with half-timbered infill, asymmetric end bays.

Each terrace has a distinct style but has borrowed a number of elements from other traditional buildings in the locality already established by previous landowners and the designs are very conservative. Many share small-paned sash windows at a time when larger panes of glass were the prevalent type. Notably, they all have brick chimney stacks and Staffordshire blue clay tiled roofs.

5.2.6 Off Church Bank there are a row of semi-detached cottages called **I-4 East View** built between 1880 and 1900. These are slightly larger than the cottages at Churnet View Road and were built on Light Oaks estate land and were therefore probably also built by Thomas Bolton and Sons, probably for more important managerial or supervisory staff. They were built from brick with a stone band at first floor cill level and above this a half-timbered first floor with arched braces and gablets with bargeboards overlooking the valley.

Many of the late 19th century and early 20th century semi-detached cottages and houses within the village were built by Thomas Bolton and Sons to house their workers. They vary in detail but in general incorporate a simple palette of materials and details. Certain traits are evident: gablets with sash windows, small-paned sashes, brickwork with brick detailing such as hood moulds and decorative bands, small areas of 'half-timbering', Staffordshire blue clay ties.

### 5.2.7 The Island (unlisted)

The Island was reputedly built by the railway company, although by 1861 it was known as Bolton Row (Census) and was occupied by workers at the Brassworks and not employees of the railway. It may in fact have been the company's first foray into estate building, following their acquisition of the Oakamoor site.

No. 3 still contains the original window arrangement, with stone chamfered mullioned windows, but fortunately all of the cottages retain their patterned bands of plain and fish-scale Staffordshire blue clay tiles. They are a particularly attractive terraced row, despite alterations.

### 5.2.8 Gate House, Mill Lane (listed grade II) – the Crossing Keeper's Cottage

The former railway crossing keeper's house was built for the 1849 opening of the Churnet Valley Railway. It is a highly picturesque landmark building, built with an ashlar ground floor and jettied timber-framed first floor with decorative bracing. The plan is very shallow, the end result being very narrow gable ends, punctuating the views. This is enhanced by a projecting porch and first floor oriel window to the south, with bands of contrasting beaver-tail and plain clay tiles.

### 5.2.9 Lodge to Light Oaks – The Lodge was built circa 1895, in a very old-fashioned style, to

complement and reflect the character of Light Oaks, built some 60-70 years earlier. The distinctive cast-iron windows with their small-paned lattice casements, graduated Westmoreland slate roofs, scalloped bargeboards and Tudor-arched doors are directly borrowed from the main house of the 1820s.



### 5.3 Public Houses

5.3.1 The most distinctive public house in Oakamoor is **The Cricketer's Arms**. This tall, two-storey building stands as a prominent landmark from the eastern approach into the village along the turnpike road (B5417), and it would appear that it was indeed built following the construction of the turnpike road in 1762. The building has a number of details (including a very steep pitched roof with coped gables), quoins and segmental arched windows, which suggests that it was built shortly after the construction of the 1762 turnpike, rather than after the canal (1811). The history of this pub is not particularly well understood because, although it was in use as a public house in the 1840s (Tithe map and award), it was not named at that time or at any time in the 19th century Trade Directories. The building was owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury and occupied by Samuel Mellor. He was identified in the Census return for 1841 as a farmer, not a publican.



5.3.2 **The Lord Nelson** - the use of traditional, dark pink gritstone may have led people to assume that this building dates from the 18th century, but there is little architecturally to suggest that it predates 1800. It is a good example of a public house of ca. 1805, with attached Saloon, dating from ca. 1840, which has larger, grander sash windows. The name was probably coined in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Trafalgar and Nelson's death. Joseph Harvey was the tenant of the Lord Nelson in 1841/4 and the evidence of his smallholding survives in the many farmbuildings associated with the pub.



5.3.3 In the 1841 Census Mary Finney was the Publican of the **Admiral Jervis**. She was a widow of 75 in 1851 and by 1861 Edward Finney was the landlord. Shortly after this and the arrival of the Bolton family, the village became dry, the licence of the Admiral Jervis was not renewed until the 20th century and Edward Finney had to find another source of employment as a blacksmith. The pub contains a core of early 19th century terraced cottages, which have been interlinked to create the pub. These sit on either side of the Coffee Tavern, a prominent, late 19th century half-timbered, half-brick, gable-fronted building which was in fact designed as a reading room. The building is now dominated by the series of ad-hoc additions but it may have earlier 18th century buildings in its midst. The original village post office, which was attached to the northern end, was demolished.



### 5.4 Detached Houses and Villas

During the early 19th century, the larger houses were built lower in the valley where the industrial processes had not had a chance to develop to their full extent, and where the mills were operating with water power from waterwheels served by millponds, rather than coal-fired boilers and steam

power. The houses were designed to be close to the works, from where operations could be managed more efficiently.

Although there would have been a number of industrial chimneys associated with the forge and brassworks sites, as time went on, the industry became more polluting and the smoky atmosphere in the valley led to the desire to build further up the valley sides.

The main villas were built by different entrepreneurs: George Wragge, Joseph Ingleby, Thomas Patten and later Alfred Bolton, all built or remodelled houses.

The earliest houses were not villas, but were designed in the manner of Georgian town houses and local farmhouses.

#### 5.4.1 Sunnyside (listed grade II), Church Bank

The three-storey grand house dates from the last decade of the 18th century and overlooks the mill dam and head race. Here it has a commanding position over operations. It was probably built as the manager's house for Thomas Patten and Company, as the only other house in the hamlet (Oakamoor Lodge) was already occupied at that time. It was built in high quality Flemish bond brickwork with ashlar quoins and a clay tiled roof with coped verges on kneelers. The use of cyma recta moulded eaves band and raised



central keystones with wedge lintels is typical of the end of the 18th century. The two-storey later addition to the north was probably built circa 1810. It incorporates squared stone lintels with brick hood moulds, a detail shared with other Patten cottages. At the time of the Tithe Award in 1842 it was occupied by Joseph Finney, who was described in the Census as a Mechanic. By 1861 it was occupied by Alfred S. Bolton as his first house at Oakamoor.

#### 5.4.2 Oakamoor Lodge (site of, demolished)

Oakamoor Lodge (demolished in the 1960s) was, like Sunnyside, one of the earliest detached houses to be built in Oakamoor. It was occupied by George Wragge and the Wragge family during the 19th century. He was one of the partners and shareholders of the Cheadle Brass Company in 1839. The site of the house still retains evidence of the original landscaping, and it has a tied farm, Stoney Dale Farm, with a walled garden just behind, in the sunniest spot in the valley.

Although there are no photographs of the house, it was probably similar in character to Sunnyside, which has stone wedge-lintels and was built from local brick, with stone dressings.

#### 5.4.3 Lightoaks (listed grade II)

Lightoaks is a substantial country house built as an occasional residence for John Wilson Patten. It was designed as a true "cottage ornée" of circa 1820, but was heavily altered after it was acquired by the Bolton family when it was almost doubled in size around 1895. The main house has hipped roofs of graduated green Westmoreland slate and is finished in roughcast, which is typical of the 'ornée' style. It is dominated by decorative drop finials, scalloped bargeboards, cast iron lattice casements and a cantilevered first floor to north and south elevations with later decorative timber brackets (originally posts). There is also a later hipped lantern roof over the central stairwell with a weathervane. The scale of the house is



interesting - it borrows the small-scale style of cottage architecture but deploys them on a massive scale. The house is really a villa in concept and exploits the dramatic views to Alton Towers.

**5.4.4 Woodbank (unlisted)** - a distinctive house with large prominent gables, steep pitched roofs with bargeboards, sash windows with Gothic tracery and cavetto-moulded eaves with corbels of medieval-style figure heads. It is an unusual eclectic mix of styles and influences and was designed to be a landmark, visible from the opposite side of the valley. Although it has been altered, it is characteristic of the 1830s.



The house was owned by John Wilson Patten and Company in 1844. It is mentioned in White's 1834 Trade Directory, so was probably built ca. 1830. Joseph Ingleby, one of the partners of the Cheadle Brass Company with Thomas Patten, and George Wragge, was living at Wood Bank in 1834 - 1842, and may indeed have built it. Members of the Ingleby family continued to live there in the 1840s and 50s until it was acquired by A.S Bolton ca. 1854.

The house has a large garden of over 5 acres, with mature shrubs and lawns laid out to the east and south, and parkland type planting close to Cheadle Road, along the approach drive; it is a prominent landmark from the east side of the valley.

#### 5.4.5 Barley Croft

The house called Barley Croft was built ca. 1890, at roughly the same time as the lodge to Light Oaks and was probably intended to be occupied by a member of the Bolton family. It has striking similarities with Wood Bank, with rendered walls, steep gables and bargeboards and sash windows, some with Gothic tracery. Again, by adopting a much earlier style of architecture, the Bolton family were ensuring that they were reinforcing and imparting an estate character to the village, even though the houses were built by different entrepreneurs and at different times.

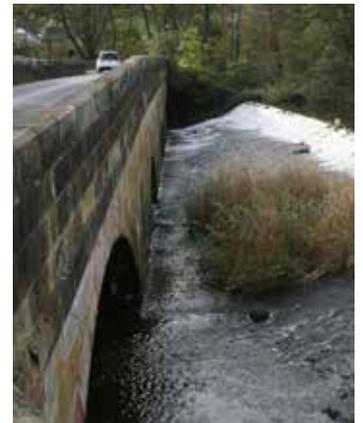


### 5.5 Structures

#### 5.5.1 Oakamoor Bridge (listed grade II)

C16 in origin, much rebuilt in the C18, widened in the early C19, with a parapet rebuilt at a slightly later date. Red and white sandstone ashlar, with herringbone tooling to the south-east, smooth faced to the northwest.

South-east face: 4 arches spanning the River Churnet, the left hand one possibly C16 and 4-centred, the others C18 and segmental, the 2 outer arches are wider; plain parapet with parallel tooling to the stonework.



#### 5.5.2 Canal

The Uttoxeter Canal was planned in 1797 to link Uttoxeter with the Caldron Canal and hence the mineral extraction and industrial sites in the Churnet Valley. Tenders

advertised for the Froghall to Uttoxeter Canal on the 8th July 1802. The canal was built between 1808 and 1811 and opened on 3rd September 1811. There are sections of the canal surviving which run parallel with the railway line south of Oakamoor. Much of the canal was infilled but there may be evidence of the canal buried under later spoil.



### 5.5.3 Retaining Walls to Limekilns (listed grade II), off Star Bank

The limekilns were constructed in association with the Uttoxeter Canal, which ferried lime from nearby Cauldon Lowe to the Potteries. Lime burning here was terminated in 1860 by the owner Eli Bowers, who had commenced activities at Froghall in 1858.



The kilns were built with large revetment walls, circa 1806, of coursed and roughly dressed sandstone, with ashlar blocks to the coping, archivolt and buttresses. The retaining wall is approx. 20m long and 7m high, and is buttressed by 6 inclined sections on the principal west elevation and with a short return to the north. The west elevation has two semi-circular arched stoke holes, set between pairs of inclined sections.

### 5.5.4 First World War Memorial (grade II), Carr Bank

The 1st World War Memorial is a local landmark which was erected circa 1919. Built from smooth ashlar, it has a tall rectangular tapered shaft surmounted by a "Wheel Cross" and inscribed panelled sides. The sword carved on the south face of the shaft is similar to the bronze cross designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission memorials.



## 5.6 Materials and Details

As there was no local building tradition in the village, with perhaps only one or two houses built before the 18th century, property builders were more open to adopting more national styles of architecture than their counterparts in outlying, well-established, Moorland villages.

### 5.6.1 Brick and Stone

The locally quarried freestone is a dark pink gritstone, and this was used, sometimes in conjunction with buff-coloured stone, for all of the prestige public buildings in the village. However, there was also more extensive use of brick and this was used universally for the workers cottages. Most of this brick is a dark pink colour, mellowed with age and weather, and with a variety of subtle colours, but evidence suggests that the terraces from the first half of the 19th century were originally white-washed with lime, probably in part as a quick way of sprucing up the heavily-polluted brickwork, but also a traditional way of finishing Picturesque estate cottages.

A local supply of brick and lime from the brickworks and limekilns across the road, on the south side of Oakamoor Bridge, would have made this combination a very economic option, compared with the cost of acquiring and transporting stone. The fact that the dark pink gritstone continued to be used for the public buildings throughout the 19th century demonstrates that this was considered to be the better quality material at that time.

Brick was the material of choice for the later terraces along Churnet View Road. Here the brick varies in colour between a dark mottled red and an unusual pale pink / buff.

Fashion dictated that brick was used for the late 18th detached houses belonging to the mill owners and managers. Here the brick was a highly consistent, red-orange colour and would have been brought into the village from a local clamp. Its refined consistent quality meant that it was used for the principal elevations, with the dark pink gritstone adopted for tooled dressings and for secondary elevations and extensions.

Brick was used widely for chimney stacks, as it was ideal for being moulded into a variety of forms. Brookside Cottages is a former terraced row of workers cottages, with engaged brick chimney stacks made from moulded bricks. The same style of chimney stack, with independently expressed flues, is found at "The Island". This detail was commonly used in Gothic Revival architecture. Corbelled brick verges can be found at Audley House but this is quite unusual in the village.



Stone was used for the larger, public buildings, which were invariably built from carved ashlar, quarry dressed and finished by skilled stonemasons. Prestigious buildings incorporated stone quarried from further afield than the immediate valley and selected for its durability and suitability. The coarse-grained sandstones known as the Millstone Grit Series vary in thickness and quality. The Hollington area is likely to be the main local source for the larger public buildings, as the quarries from that area produced both a dark pink colour and a cream colour, as exhibited at the Bolton Memorial Free Church. The plainer, older buildings were also often built from the local dark pink gritstone and these were often tooled in a herringbone pattern. Where this stone outcrops along the sides of the valley, it is likely that it was quarried



out selectively for some local buildings. However, this local stone was generally of poor quality and was quite soft. The cement-faced repair of the stone at The Lord Nelson may be indicative of this local, poorer quality stone.

### 5.6.2 Render

The local use of render owes much to the fashionable taste of the late Georgian period for 'rustic' or picturesque architecture. There is not a local tradition of rendered buildings in this part of Staffordshire. The most important examples of rendered buildings in Oakamoor are set on the higher slopes of the valley and in most cases the render was selected to highlight the landmark qualities of the houses rather than for economy. The houses loosely reflect Bavarian and Swiss landscapes, as interpreted in England in the 19th century. The type of render used at Lightoaks is called 'roughcast', and was intended to have a rough texture emulating vernacular buildings, rather than the smooth render of Georgian stucco houses.

### 5.6.3 Timber Details

Bargeboards – bargeboards are not a traditional detail in the wider Staffordshire Moorlands but they are an important and distinctive feature of Oakamoor. Bargeboards were adopted for many of the Gothic Revival buildings, both small cottages and larger houses, and they were also adopted for many of the middle-sized houses, which have a few architectural pretensions.

Decorative pierced and scalloped bargeboards survive at Clough House, The Island and the Crossing Keepers Cottage as well as Lightoaks - scalloped bargeboards were normal for the Cottage Ornée. Plainer bargeboards were adopted at The Square, Hawthorn House and Hawthorn Villa, Woodbank and Barley Croft.



### 5.6.4 Roof Materials

The dominant roof material in Oakamoor is blue clay tiles, made in the Staffordshire potteries. There are both handmade and machine-made tiles surviving. They are a very durable material although they will become more rare as there are no longer any local manufacturers of these traditional tiles. Staffordshire blue clay tiles are also occasionally patterned, with fish-scale or beaver-tail tiles, used in combination with rows of plain tiles to create contrasting bands, as found at The Island and The Manse.

On occasion, graduated Westmoreland slate was adopted in the first half of the 19th century or Welsh slate in the second half, following the opening of the railway.

### 5.6.5 Roof details

Within this area of Staffordshire the steep pitched roofs of the 17th and 18th century buildings were finished with raised stone-coped gables. In general, the earlier the coping, the more it is chamfered and shaped. The later copings tend to be finished square. There are a handful of examples in Oakamoor.

The majority of the 19th century buildings that incorporate bargeboards have deep overhanging verges and eaves. Roofs oversail the gable wall below with an exposed rafter, which is either left painted or faced with a bargeboard. This traditional way of constructing bargeboards enables the properties to have considerable depth of detail, light and shade.

## 6. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The description of each area should be read in conjunction with the Spatial Analysis Map - Figure 4.

### Guide to Map

The Spatial Analysis Map is annotated with the following:

**Panoramic Views** - these views are limited to the best defining and most memorable views within Oakamoor. They are generally broad and often panoramas, sometimes linking subjects in the middle distance and far horizon.

**Landmarks** – landmarks are structures that because of either size or design stand out from the crowd.

**Positive Buildings** – positive buildings are those that are of special architectural or historic interest, either as individual structures or as part of a collective group, and make a strong contribution to the character of the conservation area. The local authority is likely to strongly resist proposals for the demolition of any Positive Buildings.

### 6.1 Key Views and Landmarks

6.1.1 The geology and structure of the steep-sided valleys creates a visual envelope, which contains many of the most dramatic views, combining both groups and isolated buildings with the dense tree canopy.

6.1.2 The winding road network contains a series of intimate, framed and short-range views, twisting and turning through the settlement. These are most dramatic along Carr Bank, which has the greatest concentration of buildings. There would have been a similar relationship to the west of the bridge, but for the fact that many of the smaller workers cottages on this side of the river have been demolished over the years. To the west of the River, the views are now dominated by the dense woodland upon the valley slopes, with occasional picturesque buildings at the roadside. Isolated groups of buildings, such as the Crossing Keeper's cottage and The Admiral Jervis along Mill Road, punctuate the views. This character has arisen directly as a result of the demolition of terraces and industrial buildings.



6.1.3 Views of the River – views of the river are limited by the amount of tree cover within the valley and along the margins. However, there are two particular views of the River Churnet, which are very dramatic and connect the foreground with the industrial activity and the wider setting. They are;

(1) the view from Churnet View Road over the river towards the water meadows above the weir. This view encompasses the spoil heaps and unrecorded industrial activity along the western banks of the river, upstream of the bridge and places it

in its wider landscape setting.

(2) the view from the bridge over the weir to the north. This 'kinetic' view changes along the bridge, revealing the close relationship of the river to the former line of the canal, the canal wharf and the sluices and monumental efforts undertaken to control and dissipate the energy of the river.

6.1.4 Vantage points for some of the best views of the village are not obvious and many are serendipitous, on exploring the network of little lanes – one of these was only created relatively recently – at the end of Rose Bank Crescent, which lies just beyond the proposed conservation area boundary.



6.1.5 The “picturesque” landscape was deliberately manipulated to create manufactured views, to conceal the less attractive elements and to show the best aspect. Hence, the mill owners’ approach to the mills was via a carriage drive, completely avoiding the route past the mills. The larger houses, perched high above the valley, were orientated to look south, down the valley. These properties are visible on occasion from points along the valley floor and from Farley Road, but are largely hidden by trees. Light Oaks is completely hidden from the surrounding area but has a strategic view looking outwards to Alton Towers.

6.1.6 There are no longer any industrial chimneys, which would have been the major landmarks by the end of the 19th century. Instead, the bridge over the river, the limekilns and the War Memorial are now the main village landmarks. These and the strategically placed pubs, which were designed to catch passing trade, now reflect the scale of the settlement at the turn of the 19th century, before the expansion of the mills, application of steam power and the arrival of the big industrial chimneys. The parish church and the Memorial Free Church are both set back from the main roads within wooded and landscaped graveyard settings. The levelled platform created for each church provides a perfect vantage point to see the valley below and from these buildings there are good views across the village, but the churches themselves are not prominent in the settlement.

## 6.2 Open Spaces

6.2.1 There are few formal, designed, open spaces. The tranquil setting of the parish church and the Free Church incorporates large, managed graveyards. The Valley School, which once catered for many social gatherings and community events, sits within extensive grounds. All these spaces contain platforms and vantage points from where there are expansive views over the valley.

6.2.2 The gardens of the largest houses, Light Oaks, Wood Bank, Sunnyside and the site of Oakamoor Lodge, all contain lawns and landscaped terraced gardens. These are the most formal open spaces. They would have been influenced by the early 19th century Picturesque movement and, from the mid 19th century, garden and landscape designers such as J. C. Loudon and Edward Kemp, both of whom wrote about the importance of connecting the house, or villa, with its landscape setting.

6.2.3 Both explained at great length how to lay out a villa and its aspect; "The Position of the House.....This is to be effected, first, and principally, by elevating the base or platform from which the structure appears to rise; and secondly, by the disposition of the plantations by which it is connected with the surrounding scenery...by raising the house on a platform of twenty or thirty feet high, or more, according to the dimensions of the house; and by connecting this platform with the surrounding grounds and plantations, by gradations of terraces and shrubberies, the main body of the house will be raised higher than the highest of the surrounding trees....." (Loudon, Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm & Villa Architecture, 1846)

6.2.4 Cricket pitches at the top of Oakamore Road and east of Stoney Dale and Red Road still provide other village, social spaces.

6.2.5 The largest open spaces, which were not designed as such, are the former Brickworks site and forge site, south of Oakamoor Bridge, and the former canal wharf north of the bridge. Together these shared public spaces are now highly valued local recreational areas, which provide opportunities for families and dog walkers and for hosting many public events. They have special value to a much wider audience, as they bring many new visitors to Oakamoor.

### 6.3 Protected Trees

6.3.1 Specific Tree Preservation Orders are marked on the Designations Map (Figure 1). These are:

**TPO SM.46** - the 2 individual trees (T1, T2 - both Yews) on The Square next to the war memorial.

**TPO SM.172** - a Woodland (W1) and 3 individual trees (T1 Beech, T2 Larch, T3 Holly) at The Lodge, Mill Road.

**TPO SM.250** - a Woodland (W1) behind the line of garages at Churnet View Road.

**TPO SM.260** - a Woodland (W1), 2 Groups (G1 and G2) and an individual tree (T1 Lime) at and adjacent to The Squirrels at Rosebank Crescent. Woodland W1 straddles the proposed Conservation Area boundary, whilst G1, G2 and T1 are outside this boundary.

**TPO SM.270** - an individual tree (T1 Oak) in an extended garden to the rear of 3 Riverside, Churnet View Road.

6.3.2 In addition, within the Conservation Area, all trees are protected if they have a stem diameter of 75 millimetres measured at 1.5 metres from ground level. In general, it is an offence under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for anyone to undertake work to a tree in a conservation area without giving the Council six weeks written prior notice. The notice period is for the Council to decide if the tree(s) should be protected from proposed work by a TPO.



6.3.3 In addition, where large numbers of trees are being managed as a crop, or felled, a felling licence may be required from The Forestry Commission and this takes precedence over conservation area control.

6.3.4 There are many places in Oakamoor where trees are part of the setting of the village and where they also contribute to its special character. Historically, these have been managed by the landowners without significant loss of character. Landowners and householders are encouraged to discuss proposals for managing trees in gardens and any woodland that falls within the conservation area at an early stage with the tree officer (see Issues).

## 7. DESCRIPTION OF SUB-AREAS

For the purpose of describing the area in this appraisal, Oakamoor Conservation Area has been split into three Character Areas;

### (1) Carr Bank, Cotton Brook and Churnet View Road,

This includes; Carr Bank, Star Bank, Cotton Dell, Farley Road, Churnet View Road and the Canal Wharf

### (2) South of Oakamoor Bridge

This includes; Mill Road, the Light Oaks estate, the site of Bolton's mills, Stoney Dale, the River Churnet

### (3) Cheadle Road

This includes; Church Bank and Cheadle Road

The different Character Areas are shown on Figure 5 and the analysis of the main views, landmarks and important buildings are illustrated on Figure 4, the Spatial Analysis map.

The omission of any particular building, feature, view or space within this appraisal should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

## CHARACTER AREA I

### CARR BANK, COTTON BROOK AND CHURNET VIEW ROAD

The small cluster of buildings at the bottom of Carr Bank is a particularly picturesque group, popularised in early photographs. It is inward-looking and of consistent simple character, domestic in scale and detail. Here, the Lord Nelson Inn overlooks the former Mills School (now the Village Hall) and the rows of cottages forming The Square and Starwood Terrace. This cluster was largely built during the first decades of the 19th century. The orientation of buildings with the earliest buildings planned or positioned largely to face south, and the rest squeezed onto any available plot, has contributed to the haphazard form. The Cotton Brook, winding its way through this area, and its small hump-backed bridge provide further interest.



This area has the main core of early workers housing. **The Square** was one of three purpose-built terraced rows, in a planned area of housing. The Square was built in two terraces running perpendicular to each other, one south-east facing, overlooking the Cotton Brook, the other south-west facing, overlooking the River Churnet, the pattern dictated by the brook and the need to provide some private space for privies and for growing vegetables. They have a spacious setting. The foreground to the street is now dominated by the Village War Memorial. The cottages were built by Thomas Patten, and recorded in 1839, to house some of the workers at their Oakamoor site, there being very little other housing in the village at this time. The cottages incorporate dentilled eaves and either single-coursed, segmental brick arched windows or stone lintels with brick 'hood moulds'. They were very simply built, with the minimum amount of



detail and expense - modest domestic buildings of the early 19th century.

The small row of 6 cottages known as **Starwood Terrace**, opposite The Square, is roughly contemporary, although the land was owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury. This row contains darker brick hood moulds and horizontal bands, of vitrified brick, and a dentilled eaves course. The approximate date of construction is 1810-1820. The details are 'picturesque' and typical of landed estates and perhaps the windows were more decorative at one time. The land may have been leased from The Earl of Shrewsbury from ca. 1820 by Thomas Patten and Company. The extended terrace to the east, which housed the post office until recently, is an early 20th century sympathetic Bolton addition.

The variety in ownership and piecemeal pattern of development has contributed to the mix of styles and details in this area, although they are restrained in character.

**The Lord Nelson** is likely to have been purpose-built as a public house to catch passing trade. It looks south down the valley and is a prominent local building, catching travellers en-route to Cotton. Local legend suggest this was once called The White Lion, but this seems unlikely as the building in form dates from around 1800-1810 and the name would have been a popular tribute to commemorate Lord Nelson after the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805; Joseph Harvey was the Landlord of the Lord Nelson in 1835 and in 1850 (Trade Directories).

The road is very steep where it rises above The Lord Nelson and this contributes to the winding and haphazard form of development.

Samuel Mellor was the landlord of the public house at the foot of Carr Bank in 1840 (now **The Cricketer's Arms**) and the landowner was the Earl of Shrewsbury. It seems most likely that this inn was established following the creation of the turnpike road in 1762 and that this was in fact The White Lion, but it seems to have drifted in and out of use as a public house, as it is not mentioned in the early 19th century Trade Directories. The 19th century Census returns record that the income of the tenant was mainly from farming. It incorporates features of the late 18th century such as the steep-pitched, raised coped gables and segmental brick arches and may date from the 1760s. It was include in the 1918 Alton Estate sale catalogue as The Cricketer's Arms.

The village had several schools, each one in turn displaced by a more modern school, with larger capacity, serving the new requirements and standards of the Education Acts. This area contains two school buildings - the Mills School (**Village Hall**), established in 1876 under the patronage of Alfred Bolton, and the substitute Mills School (**the Valley School**) built in 1892, with a much wider remit to cater for village social events, available space being at a premium. The first Mills School was built in a small space, squeezed between the brook and an earlier building, reputedly a Wesleyan Chapel, although there are no photographs to show its former appearance. It has become more of a local landmark since the demolition of this chapel – the narrow stone gable with articulated chimney stack is a prominent focal point.

Map evidence suggests that the open landscape around the Valley School was formerly a deciduous woodland, Carr Wood, owned by John Sleigh Esq in 1844. The school stood isolated for many years, looking south down the valley, and has only recently (during the first half of the 20th century) become trapped by housing along School Drive. This air of detachment was shared with the Independent Chapel and Manse to its east and the former Primitive Methodist Chapel, the larger semi-public buildings. However, later development and increased tree cover have disguised their landmark character.

## Carr Bank and Star Bank

Carr Bank and Star Bank are separated by a steep-sided, incised clough – Cotton Dell. The steep-sided fields on each side of the brook contain evidence of mineral workings and industrial activity. These open areas, which contain trackways and platforms as well as spoil, contain some of the most tangible evidence of the past industrial activity within the valley.

### Carr Bank

At the top of Carr Bank, disturbed land between Springfield and Tree Tops falls away steeply towards the brook and there are glimpses across the Cotton Dell over the ‘wrinkles’ in the landscape.

The buildings along Carr Bank share a strong red colour. Both dark red and blue-brindled brick and dark red sandstone bring a distinct, homogenous character to the winding lane. The dark red sandstone (Ipstones Sandstone) outcrops at Star Wood and has not travelled far from where it may have been quarried. Descending the hill, the roofs, dominated by Staffordshire blue clay tiled roofs, some patterned as at The Manse, and Welsh slate, and the bluish tinged brickwork, provide a limited and unified palette. Small privies and outhouses cluster along the edge of the road and together with the larger buildings create an intricate pattern of development.



There are a number of distinctive buildings along Carr Bank, which make a bold statement to the edge of the road;

- **The Manse** – a Gothic Revival house, gable-fronted with stone copings and trefoil finials, tall stone chimneys and chamfered window surrounds
- **Springhill and Chimney Pots** – three, stone-built houses sharing a hipped roof and decorative arched doorcases, with carved keystones and margin-light sash windows
- **Keristone** - the former Primitive Methodist Ebenezer Chapel of 1859
- **Oak Tree Cottage** – a brick-built, former shop and house of ca. 1810, which shares brick hood moulds with terraced workers cottages at The Square
- **Hawthorne House and Hawthorne Villa** – a pair of brick, gable-fronted houses with highly distinctive ground floor, open porch and bay window, with dentilled timber cornice

From further afield, the close-knit network of houses, cottages, narrow lanes and private alleys, clustered all along the hillside between Carr Bank and the Cotton Brook are a fascinating jumble of structures and levels. On the north side of the brook are cultivated, terraced gardens. The picturesque group can be seen from a number of vantage points.

Above the Memorial Free Church and its Manse runs an old trackway or packhorse route, which leads into Carr Wood. Within the wood are the sites of two known bloomeries (not individually recorded on the HER). This track may have been used as an old charcoal burners track or to serve the bloomeries. The Historic Environment Record suggests that it led to the site of an old forge, presumably the bloomeries. From this track there are glimpses of the buildings at School Drive and across the valley.

### Cotton Dell and Star Bank

The east side of the Cotton Brook was only recently developed in the 20th century. A narrow lane leads from Star Bank and may have been created to provide a packhorse route for charcoal burners or bloomery sites in Star Wood or it may have been simply the most direct route into the valley from Cotton and pre-date the construction of the turnpike road. Buildings in the bottom of the little Cotton Dell valley are well integrated into the surrounding historic settlement. These include a

group of three modern bungalows. Along Star Bank, Delmere and Old Bank Cottage share quirky outbuildings. There is an ephemeral village charm to the back lane leading alongside the Cotton Brook, along which there are an assortment of garden sheds and individual timber garden buildings, some slightly ramshackle and some lovingly constructed, all contributing a quirky character to the lane.

The brook winds and dips under a long culvert below a weir and herringbone brick-lined abutments. Close to this point was another forge, possibly that of Thomas and John Gilbert in the 18th century close to the site of The Glen; the building has a long narrow form, which although not very old, may echo a previous mill building on this site.

From the lane, there are glimpses across Carr Bank to the north and gardens with multiple, cultivated terraces cling to the hillside – a large Araucaria (monkey puzzle) stands in the garden of Clough House, which is a handsome and well-preserved historic building.



This part of the settlement has an old-fashioned village identity: allotments, livestock, smallholdings and garden sheds stand cheek-by-jowl with cottages, along the cultivated margins of the brook.

Cotton Dell Nature Reserve marks the limit of the conservation area boundary. To the south of the wood is a large, open area which contains considerable evidence for workings and industrial activity. The ground rises steeply but the paddock is best seen from Rose Bank Crescent. Similarly, to the west of the wood, the land also rises steeply up to Carr Bank, and also contains evidence of industrial activity. The small, steep paddocks characterise this part of the village.

### **Western section of the valley and Churnet View Road**

This area is striking for its linear pattern – river, canal bed and later road run in parallel.

Upstream of Oakamoor Bridge, the banks of the river have changed shape and size; the most recent alteration has been the reduction in the width of the river above the weir, by almost half its width since 1880, and the reclamation of the river to create Churnet View Road. The tranquil, green, river bank space on the north side of the river, which follows the course of the river from the weir for 100 metres west, is an entirely modern creation, hence the slightly artificial, raised nature of the road. The remains of sluices which survive close to the bridge provide an important vantage point from which to appreciate the river and the historic context. The canal wharf buildings (**Railway Cottage and Railway Stables**) running on the north side of Churnet View Road were once occupied by the Wharfinger and the hive of activity which once occurred at this point has been replaced with an open and tranquil space and car park.

The western limit of the conservation area boundary is marked by the northern Oakamoor tunnel entrance to the 1849 railway cutting, the railway bridge over the River Churnet and the junction of the track-bed with the former canal. The railway bridge and tunnel entrance are no longer readily visible from the thicket of trees and wetland edging the old trackbed and river bank. These features are included in the conservation area for their historic and structural interest and their relationship with the southern Oakamoor tunnel entrance and bridge.

To the east of the old track-bed, the ground opens out in a glade, which is bordered by Carr Wood to the north and the River Churnet to the south. This is the location of the former Uttoxeter Branch of the Caldon Canal built between 1808 and 1811, but filled-in during the 1920s, and a

row of 17 workers cottages, which had been built by 1922, but which have since been demolished. From the old canal bed there is a funnelled vista east towards Farley Road and Coppy Wood in the distance, which is shaped by the presence of the river and Carr Wood.



The northern side of Churnet View Road is edged with almost continuous development; sporadic infill of the former canal bed over a period of thirty years has resulted in a long linear, ribbon of terraced development, all developed by the Thomas Bolton company after 1880, and all designed to harmonise and reflect traditional building styles in the area.

The terraced workers cottages are interrupted by a row of small, pitched-roof timber garages, of quirky character.

The houses overlook the river, although the view has become increasingly screened with self-seeded trees along the river margins. Glimpses across to the southern hillside and the wooded fringe above the water meadows are a striking feature. Humps and bumps and trackways lead across this open landscape are probably the remains of spoil or workings associated with the forge site or rolling mill. They may be evidence of further industrial activity, so far unrecognised and unexplored.



These open slopes provide a stark contrast with the intense development on the northern side of the valley; the former industrial activity and the woodland above define the space and frame the views on the south side of the valley.

## **CHARACTER AREA 2 SOUTH OF OAKAMMOOR BRIDGE**

Oakamoor - Denstone Greenway and Oakamoor Picnic Area are public open spaces created from the former track-bed of the Churnet Valley Railway and the derelict reclaimed land of the Bolton's copper, brass and brickworks site, downstream of Oakamoor bridge.

The large swathe of green space immediately to the south of the bridge was historically an island, created by a build-up of alluvial silt over many hundreds of years, which split the river into two channels, one which ran around the eastern perimeter of the valley, and one more central to the valley. The land which forms the open expanse of grass now reflects its character in 1881, before it was developed in association with Bolton's expansion of the works.

The weir was introduced in conjunction with the bridge to dissipate the energy of the river and create a pool to enable a cut to be taken upstream to feed the mill complex. The mill leat still survives in its broad form, colonised by trees and now barely distinguishable to the passer-by. Below the bridge, the splayed deck over the outflow of the leat survives. From this point, the leat has been preserved as a culvert, which winds, buried through the former complex and through the site of the first millpond. There are still pockets and places where the line of the culvert is still evident. The culvert now runs underneath the forge site and emerges in an open channel just in front of 'The Island' cottages.

**Oakamoor Bridge** is more causeway than bridge; it straddles the widest section of the river, where the energy of the river was then broken by the upstream weir. The parapets continue east and west over the former canal and the old mill leat. The bridge has one large segmental arch at the eastern end and a further three arches, of smaller size, with a pair of straight sides central arches with segmental arches and a basket arch to the west end. Although the bridge is documented as having been built in 1708, there are some subtle differences in the ashlar which may indicate a phase of remodelling or repair. The bridge was widened in 1778 and it appears that the deck and parapets may have been raised at the same time.

The differences in the size of the arches reflect the fact that the largest and widest arch spanned both the River Churnet and the outflow of the Cotton Brook.

The original canal bridge arch was partially back-filled and the top voussoirs of the arch are still visible from The Cricketer's pub garden, the south side now hidden and backfilled.

The bridge is an impressive landmark but the route of the river was changed during the creation of the country park in the 1970s, and the eastern channel was backfilled. When the County Council reclaimed the site of the Brickworks during the creation of the country park, the diversion of the route of the river stopped up views of the main arch of the bridge. Tree cover and the increased scouring of the riverbank and erosion have started a process of naturalisation of the contours, which probably reflects the marginal character of the "island" when it was described as the "Middle Meadow" in 1844.



South of the forge site, the area is dominated by the old Churnet Valley Railway line. Remnants of this survive in the form of the old station platform, several railway bridges and the line of the railway which follows the eastern edge of the flood plain. Along the line of the railway, self-set deciduous trees have colonised the margins and create an arched tunnel to the long vistas, with occasional glimpses out over the cricket pitch towards Stoney Dale. Above the valley floor and on the wooded margins above the old railway line, the old lane, which once connected Farley with the Valley, provides a platform from where there are far-reaching, panoramic views across the valley to the western end of Stoney Dale and as far as Oakamoor Road. The striking character of the local

geology is very evident here as 20th century houses appear to cling to the edge of the bluff along the south side of Cheadle Road.



### Mill Road

Mill Road is lined with woodland to the west, climbing the valley side, and a relatively flat piece of open green space to the east, which contains a self-set copse, and the open space of the former millpond, bounded by the River Churnet to its east. This was the site of the former Boltons Copper and Brassworks and a series of previous historic forges, the site of Thomas Patten's Rolling Mills and the site of the historic 16th century Forge and Hammer Mill. Now, a plaque set into the wall from Thomas Patten's era and a few low structures and remnants of machinery and the mill tail race and culverts are all that is tangible above ground of the once extensive industrial complex of buildings, which lined both sides of the road. Trees have partially colonized areas of former building platforms and footings. To the west, there is an open expanse of land set aside following the demolition of the old Wire Mill. The absence of any enclosure along this stretch of road sets this land apart, which would otherwise be overlooked.



Mill Road was once dominated by the buildings of Bolton's Copper and Brass Works, lining both sides of the road. The clearance and landscaping of the former industrial site, today has produced a new, open green recreational and tranquil space. Further along Mill Road, the former railway tunnel, the railway cutting, the railway bridge, which crosses the River Churnet, and the Crossing Keeper's Cottage are an important group with a physical and working relationship. This location has the strongest associations and sense of identity of the Churnet Valley Railway.



The relationship between the physically isolated cottages at The Island, sandwiched between the River and the tailrace, is particularly unusual and quite a noisy environment.

### Lightoaks

**Lightoaks** and its garden and parkland setting are a very important part of Oakamoor. The site evolved over 70 years. The house was probably built for Thomas Wilson Patten or by his son John Wilson Patten, who inherited the estate, as a Cottage Ornée Retreat, a villa influenced by the Picturesque movement. The site was acquired as part of a large landholding in 1816 but it appears that it was only in use as a family residence when he was visiting the works in Oakamoor

as the census returns during the 19th century indicate that it was mainly occupied by servants and gardeners. The house remained in the 'Wilson Patten' family until the estate was sold at auction to the Bolton family in 1874. The architectural influences of the time are evident in both the estate cottages built by the 'Wilson Patten' family and their large houses built for themselves and their managers. Although there have been alterations to some of these houses, they share key characteristics of the Picturesque movement.

"Light Oaks" was developed as a house around 1820, with later additions of ca. 1895. The private carriage drive, which falls within the landscape setting of the house, was originally built for Oakamoor Lodge, the house occupied by George Wragge in 1816. Following the sale of the estate in 1874, A S Bolton acquired the exclusive rights to the private carriage drive and the area around the main entrance from Oakamoor Road was re-landscaped so that the drive related directly to Light Oaks. The drive still snakes past the site of Oakamoor Lodge.



Lightoaks has a very distinctive character, that of a Cottage Ornée, which is a building type which came out of the Picturesque movement. It is a good example of this genre, with multiple dormer windows, latticework cast-iron casements, deep overhanging eaves, ornate scalloped bargeboards and roughcast render. It was positioned to take full advantage of its superior, high-level location, with long views from the south-east elevation, channelled by trees, towards Alton Towers, which is a prominent landmark on the horizon, an eye-catcher and part of the borrowed landscape. The house is placed on a levelled platform with the natural contours of the parkland rising 20 metres to the south-west, providing shelter and forming a backdrop to the house, with occasional parkland trees and a large clump of rhododendron and pines. Below the house the lush planting extends into the more native woodland of Light Oaks Wood and in here are occasional tall pines, which have lost some of their original landmark presence. These features are typical of the landscape movement of the early-mid 19th century – specimen trees and exotic planting were added to the existing natural landform, often to create dramatic silhouettes and strong, lush contrasts. Areas of woodland, underplanted in the 18th century with yew, were supplemented in the 19th century with rhododendron.

To enhance the privacy of the site, both Oakamoor Lodge, which once stood at the bottom of the hill, and later Light Oaks both adopted a private winding carriage drive, leading between the house and the former Tinning works (later Copper and Brass), even though there was the public turnpike road to the immediate north of the bluff - the landscape features, planting, wooded setting and topography are all indivisible.

The garden has evolved but is dominated by some very large mature trees – several large oaks

and a large Cedar of Lebanon on the upper lawn. On the margins of the lawns the shrubberies contain the typical Victorian mix of conifers and broadleaved trees, mainly oak, with an understorey of rhododendron and yew. To the north-west of the house are a tall, range of brick service buildings and stables, which were extended and heightened in 1880. They complement the original character. The range of buildings developed on the site survives largely complete in its late Victorian form, with a Victorian Winter Garden, outside plunge pool, and a network of well-tended kitchen gardens, with brick forcing walls, those to the south lined with fruit trees and divided by box hedges, and those to the north of the lateral wall forming the working estate yard area with potting sheds and manure heaps. The southern lawn is separated from the house by a short terrace and a flight of stone steps. It was extended with a longer parterre and a ha-ha, both developed in the late 19th century, which creates an even more dramatic contrast and foil between the simplicity of the lawn and untamed nature beyond.



The house is approached via a Picturesque gatelodge, with timber gates added by the Bolton family circa 1895. The lower entrance leads to the northern (front) entrance of the house, between ornamental early Victorian rockeries, where there is a later Victorian porte cochère, designed so that those alighting from a carriage would not get wet.

The measures taken to prevent the owners from seeing any of the villagers or the works were rather extravagant; the land

was shaped in a dramatic series of level changes and platforms. Within the woods, great mounds of earth were moved to create a large dam wall to support a fish pool or small lake. The broad carriage drive, snaking down the steep contours of the hill, is lined with a stone revetment with herringbone coping to one side, and a steep drop over the wooded valley to the other side of the drive, lined with mature pines, yews, beech, oak and some rhododendron, closer to the house. The planting incorporates a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees with some good, large mature oak and beech trees. On the open bluff, to the north of this drive, at Barley Croft stands a veteran oak.

By 1891 Light Oaks was being occupied by Thomas William Sneyd on a short tenancy. A. S Bolton had moved to Moor Court and the house was refurbished and massively extended shortly after this for Thomas Bolton (his son) and his wife and seven children and seven servants, who were living there by 1901.

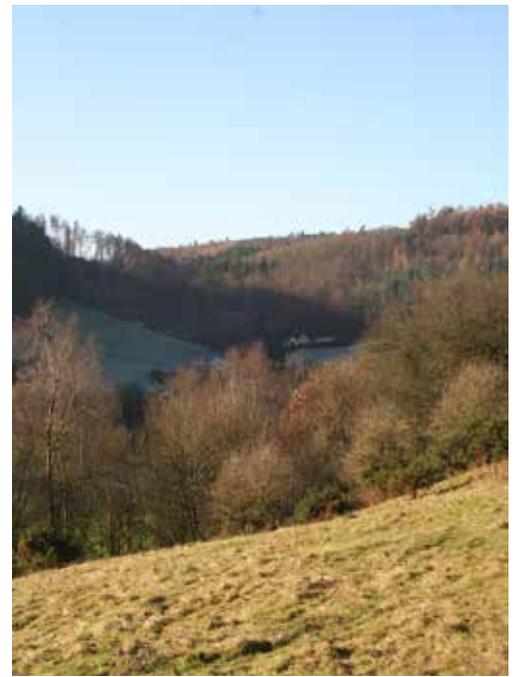


## Stoney Dale

The deep valley of Stoney Dale is set between two outcrops of gritstone, that to the south is very visible as a rocky formation underscored with a stand of larch trees, that to the north contained within Lightoaks Wood. The narrow lane of Stoney Dale opens out to the north of the valley in views which take in a broad expanse of pasture, fringed with woodland, with occasional houses and lightweight wood cabins dotted about the north side of the pasture on the perimeter of the woods. This area forms the southern part of the historic Lightoaks Estate and the clusters of houses, ranged along the lane, were developed by the industrialists (Patten and Bolton) from the early 19th century. Stoneydale Farm is, however, much earlier in date (18th century), part stone masonry, and appears to be a Home Farm to the original Oakamoor Lodge and its small



estate, servicing the old walled kitchen garden to the immediate north, of which some of the walls still survive. The wooded valley was probably clear-felled to create a small farmholding for this farm. Houses on the edge of the woods are included in the conservation area because they were all established by 1938 and have a direct visual and historic relationship with the Bolton Lightoaks Estate.



## CHARACTER AREA 3 – CHEADLE ROAD

Church Bank and Oakamoor Road / Cheadle Road were consolidated, and probably widened, as part of the Blythe Marsh to Thorpe Turnpike Road. Development is concentrated on the north side of the road, as the bluff to the south and the outright ownership of the Light Oaks estate, prevented much development from becoming established until the 20th century. Cheadle Road has a long descent into the village, weaving down the hill and leading onto Church Bank. Views of the valley are framed through a green corridor, with trees overhanging the road. This route is a transitional space, with dispersed buildings, including Bank Top Farm (Banks Farm), an early 19th century farm complex, leading up to a more open, semi-agricultural character, with small fields.



This area is dominated by the ashlar parapet walls of Oakamoor bridge and the wooded green corridor leading down the hill, which frames the views of the local landmarks. The area is characterized by several large houses built for the entrepreneurs and managers of the Brass and Copper Works (described in section 5) and the landmark Church of Holy Trinity, which sit on leveled platforms, with lawns skirting the western side of each building.

## 8. GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AREA

### Buildings

8.1 The majority of buildings within the conservation area are in good condition and well-maintained. There is one major exception: The Limekilns (grade II listed building) are in poor condition with large structural cracks and vegetation taking hold. They require immediate attention to the upper sections of masonry.

### Landscape

8.2 The condition of the landscape is partly addressed under Problems and Pressures; management of the landscape of the Churnet Valley is complicated and the overarching body responsible for this is The Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership, which represents a number of organisations. The condition of the landscape is not fully understood and there are many areas of historic industrial activity which are unrecorded and have been abandoned over time in a naturalised setting. Large structures are often embedded within the landscape but have not been maintained, such as the railway bridges for the former Churnet Valley railway and the mill leats downstream of the copperworks site. There is the potential for conflict between ecology and archaeological interests, which could be resolved through early planning and informed investigation.

### Negative Factors

#### Garages

8.3 There are a number of small, flat-roofed garages placed in prominent locations within the village. The smaller, more temporary garages, timber with pitched roofs, are quirky and not out of place but there are many others that are built from concrete panels, which do not enhance the village.

#### Loss of Boundary Walls

8.4 Boundary walls have on occasion been removed to create off-street car parking bays. This is particularly unsightly along Churnet View Road, where the boundary walls form a strong linear pattern – once one wall has gone, the rest in the terrace tend to follow, even though there is little evidence of competition for on-street parking and no parking restrictions.

#### Poor Maintenance or Repair

8.5 Cement render repair - large scale, local practice of cement repair of the softer sandstone, instead of lime mortars. This invariably leads to further pockets of erosion and damage to the stone and is unsightly.

8.6 Rendered stacks – instead of replacing weathered brick or stone, chimney stacks have often been rendered in cement renders, as this is a more economic repair, although not a long-term solution.



## Timber Fences

8.7 There has been a proliferation of tall, timber, panel fences in the village, hiding some of the terraced cottages from public view and fragmenting the appearance of the rows. Some of these panel fences are almost 2 metres high. They are rather alien to the character of the village which historically had shared interests and employment, which fostered a strong sense of community, enhanced by open frontages to gardens.

## Loss of Building Details

8.8 Unlisted buildings, even in conservation areas, are vulnerable to loss of architectural details: windows, doors, chimney stacks, traditional guttering and roof materials. Within Oakamoor many of the original windows and gutters have been replaced in uPVC. In order to protect the surviving architectural details, it may be appropriate to protect this settlement with an Article 4 Direction, at some point in the future.

8.9 The distinctive character of uniform terraces, in particular along Churnet View Road and at The Square, is being slowly eroded by incremental changes to windows and doors.  
Setting of the Limekilns

8.10 The setting of the landmark limekilns is spoilt and significantly damaged by a large amount of street clutter: old filling station shack, Council waste collection and recycling bins and a bus stop. This area and its setting could be very easily enhanced by a few simple measures.

## 9. PROBLEMS, PRESSURES AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

### River Churnet

9.1 The River has sections of very different character along its length. Much of it was manipulated and canalised during the industrial revolution and some sections were re-routed. The appropriate management of the riverbed and the banks and margins needs a careful and thoughtful approach to take into account the areas of different significance, to conserve and manage the best aspects of both the historic and the natural environment, to ensure that significant elements of industrial archaeological interest are not lost from erosion, neglect, or alteration in the wider interests of nature conservation. This is a delicate balance and the recent creation of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership has put in place a mechanism to address any potential conflicts.

9.2 Downstream of the Bolton's site, where it passes the site of the former gasworks, the river runs in a deep channel, gushing quickly under the concrete deck and bridge. Here the river has large gritstone blocks laid along the flow of the river, and these are shaped to create a concave and fast-flowing section. The purpose of channelling the river is unclear but may have been to remove any potential threat to the industrial sites from bank erosion.

9.3 Along a large part of the river the banks are revetted with a mixture of gritstone retaining walls, of different ages and phases, largely unrecorded, their significance little understood. The section of the river running between Oakamoor Bridge and the lower works was largely built over and directed through culverts. During the process of reclamation, the margins have been returned to more naturalistic contours and marginal planting and self-set trees have been encouraged to soften the banks.

9.4 Downstream of the lower bridge (the concrete and steel platform) the banks of the river have been left largely intact. Steep sections of retaining wall on the eastern bank of the river, dating from ca. 1849, reflect the fact that these historically retained the railways sidings, which were otherwise precariously close to the edge of the river.

9.5 Below Oakamoor Bridge, where the river is scouring the banks, stones are becoming dislodged and the banks are reverting to more naturalised contours. However, this is progressive erosion and needs a considered response. The use of gabion baskets to protect the banks should be carefully considered, as it may introduce alien structures into important public views.

### Trees

9.6 The conservation area includes many trees. These have been planted for different purposes. In most cases it is the trees and planting that dominate the character of the settlement, although the extent of this does vary across the conservation area dependent on the density of buildings.

9.7 Trees along the line of the railway and the river have become naturalised and largely self-set. Trees within some plantations are managed as a commercial crop on a cyclical basis of felling / coppicing, creating glades and encouraging a process of natural regeneration and re-planting. Other plantations and woods contain evidence of historic coppicing and some woods are totally unmanaged.

9.8 The churchyards and the space around the War Memorial are dominated by yew. These slow-growing trees were planted for spiritual reasons; yew trees were often used as a symbol of immortality as well as an accepted European tradition in churchyards and are traditionally

unmanaged.

9.9 Trees within small domestic gardens are managed and pruned more regularly and there are occasional unusual specimens, such as the Monkey Puzzle (*Araucaria*) at Clough House, which add variety and contribute to the lush character of the settlement.

9.10 The larger gardens and parkland setting of the largest houses also incorporate trees which were often planted as part of a wider parkland or extended garden design and a desire to see them reach maturity. Many of these were planted as decorative, stand-alone species, designed to make an impact in views or complement the architecture and their canopy and silhouette has on occasion become obscured by self-set trees or overcrowding. There are no planted avenues within the conservation area, which require succession planning and planting, although the main carriage drive at Light Oaks was planted.

9.11 All of these trees need different methods of management and there is no single one-size-fits-all solution. Management requires a careful balance of different interests and priorities to promote biodiversity and recognise the visual qualities of the designed landscapes. The banks and margins of the River Churnet, for example, are currently being shaped in places by a process of selective felling of trees to create engineered log-jams. These create pools and eddies and change the flow of the river, helping to create banks, build up silt, control erosion and provide a much more natural environment to the River Churnet.

9.12 As part of this appraisal, we have noted a number of mature and veteran oak trees; for example, there is a substantial veteran oak tree in the open glade above the valley floor at Barley Croft. This has survived successive generations of clear felling and may predate the clear felling of Sir Percival Willoughby in the 1600s. It was probably once a significant landmark on top of the bluff.

9.13 A number of principles adopted in the Landscape Character assessment of this part of the Churnet Valley have resonance. They are:

- Both broadleaves and conifer species occur in this landscape and new plantings should generally reflect this mix.
- However woodland plantings should follow best practice advice provided by the Forestry Commission.
- Care should be taken not to interrupt important views across the landscape in particular from higher ground towards Alton Towers from Oakamoor.

9.14 As the conservation area incorporates so many trees, there is a need to consider all of the different circumstances when assessing proposals for felling or lopping. A felling licence will be required from The Forestry Commission for felling certain quantities of trees.

9.15 In the same way that a balance needs to be struck between nature conservation and historic environment conservation in the river environment, there also needs to be balance when considering the wooded environment of the valley. Much of the lush planting was deliberate and was designed to enhance the setting of the village and the larger villas. Whilst rhododendron *ponticum* has become invasive in areas of Carr Wood, equally its large glaucous leaves provide structure and privacy to many of the larger gardens, where selective species (not *R. ponticum*) should be retained and controlled.

### **Traffic, Access and Rights of Way**

9.16 The B5417 passes east-west through the village. This accommodates Alton Towers traffic and is subject to occasional bursts of heavy traffic at peak times. The village has a few public car

parks and could provide further off-street parking if pressure for parking increases substantially or if there is a marked increase in visitors following the development of the Churnet Valley as a tourist destination.

9.17 There is a substantial network of Public Rights of Way, which surround Oakamoor and lead through woodland, and there are also a number of permissive paths, which are regularly walked. The railway line forms an important recreational corridor, accommodating cyclists and horses, which leads to Dimingsdale, enabling a complete circuit of Oakamoor. From this wider wooded landscape, there are a large number of views of the valley from the footpath network, where new views are often created when trees are felled. Certain parts of the landscape are, however, isolated, such as the Churnet Valley Railway north of the railway tunnel and the western banks of the River from Oakamoor Bridge northwards.

9.18 Reinstatement of the most important historic transport and communication corridors, the Churnet Valley Railway and the Uttoxeter Canal, or the addition of footpaths or bridleways, are aspirations of the Churnet Valley Masterplan. Fundamentally, Oakamoor is isolated from Froghall to the north, with no direct footpaths running along the route of the River. The potential to connect large parts of the valley should be explored further. Unfortunately, the northern end of Churnet View Road is blocked and it is not possible to walk along the line of the old canal.

### **Site of Bolton's Brass Works**

9.19 The historic site of Bolton's and Patten's Brass and Copper Works, Patten's Tinning Mill and Rolling Mill and the previous forge sites is all owned by Staffordshire County Council. Since the area was reclaimed and turned into a picnic area, it has had very little active management. The old mill race is preserved as a culvert underneath the car park and height restriction barriers prevent heavy vehicles from damaging the culvert. Some sections of the culvert have become exposed and occasional isolated holes and pits have appeared as spoil has collapsed. These areas are largely concentrated in the coppices which have been allowed to colonise the old workings. Current practice is to tape off any hazards and to backfill voids with limestone to consolidate any gaps and make areas safe. In due course, an accurate survey of these areas would provide a better understanding of the surviving archaeological evidence.

9.20 On the eastern side of the valley, above the line of the railway, the land which was owned by Boltons contains large areas of spoil and a number of different activities took place here. Unmarked tramways and packhorse routes survive in addition to the route of the canal. In the woodland there are also waste tips which have historically been investigated by people digging for glass bottles; some of these areas are hazardous and may contain glass batteries. The degree of contamination of this part of the site from copperworking activities and spoil is unknown.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. Control and Continuity

#### Article 4 Direction

It is strongly recommended that in conjunction with the designation of the conservation area, permitted development rights be withdrawn for certain types of development in order to preserve the surviving character of Oakamoor under an Article 4 Direction.

Many such works carried out by owners or occupiers are classified as “permitted development” under the provisions of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (“the GPDO”). This means that they can be carried out without the need for express planning permission, even in Conservation Areas. Permitted development rights currently exist for a large number of developments that can have a significant impact on the character of the area. This might include alterations to windows and doors to change apertures, the alteration of roofing materials and the partial demolition of front boundary walls. In particular, where the character of the conservation area is dominated by uniform or repeated architectural details, the rhythm of terraces and frontages can easily be spoilt by ad-hoc alterations.

An Article 4 Direction enables the Council to require owners and/or occupiers of specific properties to apply for planning permission for certain alterations, where there is concern that the character of the conservation area is under threat.

The Article 4 (1) Direction would need to cover residential properties fronting the street and the roofs of residential properties which are set back from the street, which are part of the distinctive roofscape.

An Article 4 Direction does not prevent the development to which it applies, but instead requires that planning permission be first obtained from the Council for that development. English Heritage advises that Article 4 Directions can increase the public protection both of designated and non-designated heritage assets, and help the protection of the setting of all heritage assets. The NPPF states at paragraph 200 that “the use of Article 4 Directions to remove national permitted development rights should be limited to situations where this is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of the area...”

Along The Square, Carr Bank, Churnet View Road, Starwood Terrace, The Island (Mill Road), and Stoney Dale it is primarily the character of the traditional terraced houses and cottages which the conservation area designation seeks to retain, but alterations currently permitted to residential properties include changes to the size of door and window openings, and the removal of local roofing materials or designs of chimney stack and local wall finishes. It is important to preserve the remaining character of the area and those elements which make Oakamoor special. These include: traditional building details, such as window apertures, traditional style windows (whether original or replacements), chimney stacks, traditional roofing materials and traditional boundaries to frontages. The creation of further hardstandings and partial demolition of boundary walls should also be brought under control along these frontages.

The removal of permitted development rights does not apply to all buildings in the Conservation Area, but primarily to those where the special architectural or historic interest is vulnerable. In practice, therefore, most of the mid-late 20th and 21st century buildings are not included in the Article 4 Direction.

Design Guidance and a set of Design Codes should be produced as a priority to provide public information on the appropriate types of development which would be supported by the Local Planning Authority. This should reflect the specific characteristics of Oakamoor, which are unique and atypical of the wider Moorlands district.

## 2. Monitoring Change - Photographic Record

A street-by-street photographic survey has been undertaken as part of the appraisal. This will require regular updating to make it an effective tool. It will need to be widely distributed within the local authority to ensure that alterations are effectively monitored.

## 3. Recognition of Importance - Local Heritage Assets

The conservation area Spatial Analysis map and the description of Architectural Quality both show buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Many of these are traditional buildings, which retain a high proportion of traditional features. In addition to these, there are a number of buildings that are particularly distinctive on either historic or architectural grounds, or both, and merit inclusion on a Local Heritage List. Although identification in this list does not in its own right convey any additional control, the significance of buildings on a local register is recognized as part of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the local planning authority would endeavour to retain and preserve the special character of all buildings that fall into this list.

The following buildings are recommended for inclusion within a non-exclusive Local Heritage List:

- Cricketer's Arms
- The Square (all)
- The Valley Primary School
- Woodbank, Church Bank / Cheadle Road
- The Lodge, Cheadle Road
- The Admiral Jervis, Mill Road
- Old Police House & Sunnyside, Church Bank
- The Village Hall, Carr Bank,
- The Manse, Carr Bank
- Lord Nelson, Carr Bank

## FURTHER ADVICE AND INFORMATION

For further advice and information please contact the Conservation Officer at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council & High Peak Borough Council:

Tel: 0345 6053013

Email: [conservation@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk](mailto:conservation@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk)

### National Organisations:

Historic England, East Midlands Region,  
Windsor House, Cliftonville NORTHAMPTON NN1 5BE

tel: 01604 735460

[www.HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk)