

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 24 MAY 2012  
title: DESIGNATION OF EXTENSION TO LONGRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
principal author: ADRIAN DOWD – PRINCIPAL PLANNING OFFICER (DESIGN AND CONSERVATION)

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To seek Member designation of an extension to Longridge Conservation Area at Stonebridge Mill.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
- Community Objectives – The Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2013 has three relevant strategic objectives – maintain, protect and enhance all natural and built features that contribute to the quality of the environment. Ensure that the design of buildings respects local character and enhances local distinctiveness. Sustainably manage and protect industrial and historical sites.
- Corporate Priorities - Objective 3.3 of the Corporate Plan commits us to maintaining and improving the environmental quality of the Ribble Valley. Objective 3.8 of the corporate plan commits us to conserving and enhancing the local distinctiveness and character of our towns, villages and countryside when considering development proposals.
- Other Considerations – None.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the 12 April 2012 meeting, Members authorised officers to consult upon proposals for the further extension of Longridge Conservation Area at Stonebridge Mill and to report the results of this to the meeting of 24 May 2012.

2.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 69, states that every local planning authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and, shall designate these areas as conservation areas.

2.3 Section 69 of the Act also states that it is the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) is relevant:

*“Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Achieving Sustainable Development).*

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that sustainable development has three dimensions. The creation of a high quality built environment and providing support to community cultural well being are part of the **social role**. Protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment is part of the **environmental role**. Paragraph 8 states that these roles (including **economic**) should not be taken in isolation, as they are mutually dependent.

Paragraph 17 ‘Core Planning Principles’ *includes ‘conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations’.*

Paragraph 126 states *“Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:*

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place”.*

Paragraph 127 states *“When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest”.*

2.5 The idea of including Stonebridge Mill in Longridge Conservation Area was initiated by Longridge Town Council and Longridge Heritage Committee in their response to the Longridge Conservation Area appraisal and review (reported to Committee on 3 April 2007). Following extensive public consultation (which included Taylor & Russell Ltd) the present conservation area boundary encompassing Stonebridge Mill was designated by the Borough Council on 22 May 2008.

2.6 The report to Committee from 6 March 2008 states:

Stonebridge Mill

The opening of the railway stimulated the growth of new steam-powered mills at Longridge and between 1850 and 1874 four textile mills opened. Stonebridge was the first cotton factory and was built by George Whittle in 1850 on Silver Street (Till, 1993). A date stone (possibly relocated) confirms this build date. Aerial photographs suggest the mill's largest building, the weaving shed, was demolished some time in the 1940s to 1960s. However, stone/brick building ranges survive in a 'L' shape around the perimeter of the former weaving shed site. The southern range also forms one side of a courtyard

accessed off the Preston Road (formerly Silver Street) and still retains the mill clock. The surviving mill buildings have been constructed in a combination of sandstone and hand moulded brickwork – this juxtaposition and use of materials suggests a history of alteration and extension. It is likely that the surviving buildings would have been warehousing, offices, engine housing and preparation facilities for the weaving shed. The 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows two terraces of houses on the east side of Silver Street separated by the courtyard entrance. The terraces are constructed in the same hand moulded brickwork as the mill.

2.7 Rothwell M, 'Industrial Heritage: A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of the Ribble Valley' (1990) suggests the brick boiler house ('hidden' within the modern portal frame building) and adjacent brick engine house were the second set of such buildings on the site and were built in 1877 following the introduction of a 350hp cross-compound engine to replace the original 1850 single beam engine (the original engine and boiler houses survive in the same range further to the west). Rothwell suggests that the brick boiler house 'now extensively altered, appears to have been designed for three boilers'. He also notes that **'along the south side of the mill yard are additional offices and storage buildings, a later weaving shed (c.1910) and a water tower topped with a cast iron tank...the drive for the second shed was carried overhead across the mill yard and the shaft bearing boxes (for oiling) survive along the external wall'**.

2.8 The Longridge Conservation Area Appraisal (The Conservation Studio consultants 2005; subject to public consultation) states:

(i) *'The special interest that justifies the designation of the Longridge Conservation Area derives from the following features: Good example of a Lancashire industrial town; Former cotton mills and local stone quarries were important to the town's development in the C19; Long terraces of mill worker's housing of the mid to late C19' (Summary of Special Interest);*

(ii) *'The map of 1892 shows how the cotton industry had taken over the town with several large cotton mills in the vicinity; Victoria Mill (1862) to the north off Green Lane; Cramp Oak Mill (1851) off Berry Lane; and Stone Bridge Mill (1850) and Queens Mill (1874) off Chatburn Road' (Historic Development and Archaeology: Origins and Historic Development).*

2.9 The Pennine Lancashire Northlight Weaving Shed Study (2010) was commissioned by Design & Heritage Pennine Lancashire with the support of English Heritage, Heritage Trust for the North West, Lancashire County Council and the local authorities of Pennine Lancashire. It provides a practical guide to all those involved in the conservation and development of the unique north light weaving sheds of the region and to generate enthusiasm for their retention and future use.

2.10 The study suggests:

*"The key characteristics and benefits of the north light weaving sheds were:*

- *large single storey making it easier to house and supervise large numbers of power looms leading to greater production efficiency;*
- *the single storey, 'modular' nature of the structure enabled it to fit to irregular sites and for the buildings to be readily extended as businesses grew;*
- *the single storey sheds were structurally more secure as they avoided the problems of accumulative weight and vibration induced by power looms in multistorey mills spreading the loads across the ground floor;*

- *the provision of high levels of north light uniformly distributed across the full extent of the floor area was imperative to the process of weaving as it increased worker's efficiency and removed shadows which could otherwise disguise faults in the quality of the cloth. The uniformity of the lighting enabled looms to be distributed freely throughout the floor plan;*
- *the provision of top lighting freed the restrictions on size imposed by side lighting or floor spans in multi-storey building which enabled very large deep plan buildings, often housing many hundreds of power looms, to be developed;*
- *simple and relatively cheap construction using a 'standardised' structural system of cast iron columns and beams, timber rafters, slate roof coverings and glazed timber north lights enclosed within coursed stone outer walls. The cast iron structure offered improved fire resistance over the timber floors of multi-storey mills and the structure incorporated all the bracketry necessary to support the power line shafting and belt drives enabling new companies to set up and establish businesses relatively cheaply.*

*The number and scale of the weaving sheds has had a significant impact on the urban and semirural character of the Lancashire region. As a group of buildings they stand testament to the significance of the textile industry in the region and contribute greatly to our understanding and knowledge of the ways in which the industry transformed the urban and rural life of the area, influencing the development of towns and elevating small villages to important manufacturing centres. As a group the buildings themselves reflect changes in technology, from water to steam power, advances in manufacturing machinery and the consequential effect on the industrial economy.*

*Despite the survival rate to date, few mills are legally protected and the pressure to demolish and redevelop the large and potentially profitable sites they occupy intensifies.*

*It is often the case that buildings with unique and interesting historic fabric are perceived to be problematic for adaptive reuse, either through potential difficulties in obtaining consents, the physical difficulties in adapting the buildings for new uses or the expense of retaining or conserving the fabric of the buildings.*

*However, the problems associated with the refuse of multi-storey historic buildings are not present when considering the reuse of the northlight weaving sheds. The historic interest of the sheds lies primarily in the quality of their 3 dimensional space and light, the unique industrial quality of their cast iron structures and the historic significance of the buildings as a group in relation to the development of the weaving industry. The buildings themselves are simple, robustly constructed with little or no ornamentation and their simple open plan single storey structure lend themselves well to numerous types of new use without the need for extensive modification of the core historic fabric."*

The study summary states:

*"The weaving sheds of Pennine Lancashire are an integral part of its landscape and the fabric of its towns. The decline of the manufacturing economy in the region and changing requirements for industrial space has left a surplus of unused industrial buildings and many vacant and empty weaving sheds. The loss of these buildings will have a significant impact on the identity of this area and its cultural, social and community life and in the longer terms its economic strength."*

(This guide is available on the Lancashire County Council website.)

- 2.11 The Lancashire Textile Mills Rapid Assessment Survey (June 2008 – March 2012) has been undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North for Lancashire County Council (in partnership with English Heritage which commissioned and funded the project). The survey identifies that 1661 textile-manufacturing sites once existed in Lancashire. Of these, 619 survive, or are partially extant, which equates to a survival rate of 37.27%. (On 9 May 2012, this was revised following the completion of a buildings at risk assessment to 528 and 31.7% respectively).

The rapid assessment report states *'the borough also contains several interesting examples of weaving mills built during the second half of the nineteenth century. In Longridge, Stonebridge Mill (LTM0761) was erected as a purpose-built weaving factory in 1850 and, amongst other buildings arranged around a central courtyard, the site retains two engine and boiler houses'*. (This report, which includes a photograph of Stonebridge Mill is available on the Lancashire County Council website).

The rapid assessment survey was primarily a mapping exercise to quickly identify what was left of the county's textile buildings. A second stage has recently begun with the aim to 'create a typology of the various textile-manufacturing sites in the modern county, and produce a consistently thorough record and interpretation of a representative sample of each type'. **The project brief for this identifies fifty sites to be examined in detail including 'Stonebridge Mill Longridge (early weaving sheds)'. The completed survey will be used to put the rest of the county's mills into context** and to address concerns that 'there has been no systematic evaluation of the stock of the county's textile mills, meaning that the basic questions in respect of quality or rarity could not be answered when development proposals were being considered'. The second stage project proposals emphasise that the earlier survey of Greater Manchester (1992) *'was dominated by cotton-spinning mills, and no detailed surveys were carried out of textile-finishing sites or weaving mills, which were focused largely within the boundary of the modern county of Lancashire. The second stage survey will complement this earlier study, enable imbalances to be redressed, and facilitate a more informed understanding of the textile manufacturing industry in historic Lancashire'*.

The Oxford Archaeology North author of the report also advised officers on 22 October 2009:

*'Longridge had a number of textile mills, although these do not appear to have fared well in more recent times. Stonebridge Mill, on Kestor Lane, is an exception. This weaving shed, dating to 1850, was the first steam-powered mill in the town, and seemingly **retains many important original features, including the boiler house and single beam engine house**. Elements of the site seem to be occupied, but it is probably one to keep an eye on, as I wonder about the buildings' maintenance regime'*.

- 2.12 Munt M., "Listing our Industrial Heritage" in Context 112: November 2009 discusses the recent change in perceptions of the importance of industrial archaeology (with particular regard to English Heritage's 'Principles of Selection': Industrial Buildings Selection Guide" March 2007).

He suggests that

*"industrial heritage assets have evidential value of past activities and their siting can tell us much about the evolution of a settlement and local landforms. They contributed fundamentally to the local economy. They have **illustrative historical value, especially when machinery, internal spaces and external details survive**.*

Their associations with local families or craftsmen have resonance. Their **aesthetic value** can range from the adaptation of vernacular building techniques, to polite architecture in brick, iron or glass. Architects were involved in some of the best examples. They can have **communal value**, having once provided social cohesion – a place of work with associated leisure, educational and housing facilities close by.

**Frequently their size, scale and form add much to the diversity of the otherwise low-rise, modest townscapes in villages and smaller towns.** They remind us that, until quite recently, people worked as well as lived in these places that are now dormitory settlements.

... the importance of industrial archaeology has not always been recognised... However, this has now been acknowledged in English Heritage's 'Principles of Selection' last revised in 2007, which sets out the approaches to designating buildings. The emphasis is on national significance. However, the guide for industrial buildings recognises regional factors. It aims to achieve a representative sample for each sector of an industry in each region. It also seeks the identification of regional specialisms, which will often have strong claims to note on a national level. This acknowledgement is welcome news. Prior to 2007, industrial buildings had been assessed largely on architectural merit rather than the other values mentioned above. Thematic surveys had highlighted the importance of particular building types. **But the aspects such as the technical processes carried out, structural innovations and the social contexts were not given as much weight as today.**

**The loss of historic industrial buildings can seriously impair the legibility of a place.** The principle of change to industrial buildings is now accepted in English Heritage's 'Principles of Selection' as not necessarily precluding them from listing, but as showing their state of almost continuous adaptation".

- 2.13 English Heritage's 'Industrial Structures: Listing Selection Guide' (April 2011) discusses textile mills:

**"the widespread introduction of powered looms in the second quarter of the century that created a novel type of building, the weaving shed with its distinctive saw-tooth roof with north-lights...**

**in areas that specialised in weaving, the weaving shed with its engine house and suite of warehouses and offices are self-contained.** Weaving sheds often cover huge areas and are by their nature highly repetitive...

Other components will be found on a textile factory site. **Engine houses (to house steam engines to power the line shafting or rope drive) and boiler houses were usually internal in the first generation of mills (late eighteenth/early nineteenth century). It is their larger windows that distinguish them: single, tall and round-headed to house the first single-cylinder beam engines (from the 1820s), paired when accommodating the wider double-beamed engines from the mid 1830s. By the 1850s external engine houses become common and after the 1870s, with the widespread adoption of the compound engine with horizontal cylinders, they can be large and architecturally embellished.** Some early twentieth-century textile factories were electrically powered and may contain generator towers in addition to substantial engine houses. Dye houses (usually tall undivided structures with long, louvred ventilators running the length of the roof) and drying houses (often very long buildings with small windows, sometimes built adjacent to or over the boilers) may be found on integrated sites but also occupied specialized sites of their own. Warehouses

*were often important elements on integrated sites. Administrative officers might form part of a warehouse or the mill building; later in the nineteenth century they were often detached and given elaborate architectural treatment, especially when associated with showrooms”.*

The designation guide (which I would emphasise is related to building listing rather than conservation area designation) identifies ‘specific considerations when considering industrial structures for designation’:

(i) THE WIDER INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT

More than with many building types industrial structures should be considered in their wider setting. Taking the example of the cotton industry of Greater Manchester, this might extend through all stages: the landing and storage of cotton bales; transporting these via canal or railway to the factory; carding, spinning and weaving on integrated or separate sites; finishing, storing and packing goods; distributing them to the consumer; and recycling waste products. All play their part, and each building needs to be seen within this broader context.

(ii) REGIONAL FACTORS

This involves a regional perspective in the selection of buildings and sites in order to achieve a representative sample for each sector of an industry.

(iii) INTEGRATED SITES

If the process to which a building is related involved numerous components, then the issue of completeness may become overriding. On an integrated site that is relatively incomplete, a single surviving building is unlikely to justify listing unless it is important in its own right. On the other hand, an exceptionally complete site may provide such an exceptional context that it raises the importance of buildings that might otherwise not be listable.

(iv) ARCHITECTURE AND PROCESS

An industrial building should normally reflect in its design (plan form and appearance) the specific function it was intended to fulfil.

(v) MACHINERY

The special interest of some sites lies in the machinery.

(vi) TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Some buildings may have been the site of the early use of important processes, techniques or factory systems (for instance, coke-based iron production, mechanised cotton spinning, steam power applied to pumping and so on). Technological significance may also reside in the building itself rather than the industrial process it housed.

(vii) REBUILDING AND REPAIR

In assessments for listing, a high level of reconstruction is sometimes the basis for a decision not to list. With industrial buildings, partial rebuilding and repair is

often related to the industrial process and provides evidence for technological change that may in itself be significant enough to warrant protection; alteration can thus have a positive value.

(viii) HISTORIC INTEREST

Where physical evidence of important elements of industrial history survives well, a high grade may be justified; where survival is less good, there may still be a case for designation, but judgment will be required. In some cases historic association with notable achievements may be sufficient to list: much will depend on the force of the historical claims, and the significance of the persons or products involved at the site in question.

- 2.14 On 11 November 2010 the Borough Council's Principal Planning Officer (Design and Conservation) was invited by landowners considering a land sale to discuss the Longridge Conservation Area boundary at Stonebridge Mill which appeared spurious and to have excluded elements of interest. The Borough Council's subsequent correspondence states:

*"I would therefore agree that the Longridge Conservation Area boundary does appear to require reconsideration and possible extension at Stonebridge Mill and intend to report the matter to a forthcoming Planning and Development Committee meeting. However, mindful of the commercial considerations discussed at our meeting I would be grateful for your comment and opinion on the extent of any proposed conservation area extension before progression with this matter.*

*In my officer opinion and without prejudice to any decision of the Borough Council, the modern portal frame building has no interest. However, the brick boiler house, water tower and c.1910 weaving shed and adjoining stores/workshops has architectural and historic interest as part of the evolution, adaption and development of the textile mill site.*

Unfortunately, no further communication was received from the landowners until January 2012 (at which point I was advised that this letter had not been received).

- 2.15 On 1 February 2012 a meeting of officers, landowners and prospective purchasers of the site was held at Stonebridge Mill to discuss the historic and architectural significance of the brick boiler house, water tower, c.1910 weaving shed and the adjoining stores/workshops and the implications of conservation area designation and policy.

- 2.16 In 2011 English Heritage undertook a special study to ascertain how much of the nation's industrial heritage was at risk. As part of this BDRC Continental were commissioned to do a survey of peoples attributes towards industrial heritage. The key findings were:

- i) 86% of adults think that it is important that we value and appreciate the industrial heritage of this country.
- ii) They value our industrial heritage because it is a reminder of what made our country great (71% England; 74% NW), for its educational value (75%) and because it can provide direct links to our families past (33%).
- iii) Overwhelmingly the public think that it is as important to preserve our industrial heritage as other types of heritage such as castles and country houses (80% England; 82% NW).



- iv) Only 25% agree that ‘the industrial heritage sites I care about are well recorded and protected already’ compared to 66% for historic buildings and archaeological remains overall.
- v) 64% of those in the North West agree that its industrial heritage sites ‘help to attract visitors to the local area’.
- vi) 80% of those in the North West agree that its industrial heritage sites ‘are important to pass down to future generations’.
- vii) 74% of those in the North West agree that ‘industrial heritage sites should be reused for other, modern day purposes, but make sure that their character is preserved’ (71% England).
- viii) 85% in the North West agree that ‘industrial sites should be preserved to remind us of our industrial past (85% England).
- ix) Only 3% in the North West agree that ‘industrial sites should be demolished and replaced with modern buildings and structures’ (8% England).

2.17 The Longridge News website (21 March 2012) reports upon an exhibition devoted to Longridge’s mill heritage and the research of a local historian and heritage centre official into George Whittle and the impact he had on the history of Longridge. The heritage centre official notes that:

*“George is one of the most important characters in Longridge’s past and was known as the ‘Maker of Longridge’. He realised, before anybody else, the potential of steam powered mills in Longridge. He came to Longridge in 1838 and worked as a ‘putter out’, in which he ‘put out’ work to handloom weavers. In 1850, George Whittle began to build Longridge’s first steam powered weaving shed at Stone Bridge Mill. He was well respected and liked by local people because he employed local handloom weavers who were struggling to find work. He was also highly praised for never having a shortage of work at the mill. Work even continued throughout the cotton famine in 1860-61. In fact, nowhere else in Lancashire had such a good record of steady work”.*

2.18 Mynors C ‘Listed Buildings, Conservation Area and Monuments’ (4<sup>th</sup> Ed, 2006, page 134-6) refers to conservation area designation procedure and confirms that:

*“it is only the architectural and historic interest of the area that should be taken into account, so those making the decision may have to be careful to exclude from their mind irrelevant considerations. In particular, where – as not infrequently occurs in the case of more recent designations – there is development pressure in the vicinity of land to be included in (or excluded from) a conservation area, it would be prudent for the authority to have a clear record of the reasons for the proposed inclusion or exclusion, to avoid later accusations of impropriety”.*

Mynors cites R v Secretary of State, ex p. Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (1996) JPL.844 whereby, in the case of Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, the European Court of Justice held that economic interests are not relevant at the stage of deciding whether to designate an area of land.

Development Control Practice also refers to R v Easington DC ex parte Seaham Harbour Dock Company Ltd 22/10/98 and the challenge to the designation of a

conservation area at Seaham town centre. The dock company argued, inter alia, that the local planning authority had wrongly considered potential English Heritage grant aiding in its decision to designate.

Westlaw UK note:

*‘Owen J held that “financial matters have no part to play in whether the area may be so designated”. (He) nevertheless found that the members of the committee could be informed about the financial implications of the designation. The result would seem to be that in deciding whether to designate the committee must somehow separate the merits of the area and the need to enhance and conserve from the means by which the area will be enhanced and conserved. In practice this must be quite a difficult exercise.*

*The other side of the coin of course is whether the adverse financial effect on Seaham Harbour is relevant. There was no attempt by the applicants to argue this and it must follow from Owen J’s judgement that such consequences are not proper material considerations. On the other hand in deciding whether to grant a conservation area consent, it is more arguable that financial aspects are material’.*

- 2.19 In this regard, I would refer to the known consequences of conservation area designation listed in the Risk Assessment of this report. I also note that should Members be minded to designate an extension to Longridge Conservation Area, that any future development proposals affecting this area would have to be considered against all relevant legislation, policy and guidance (including economic considerations) and not just that pertaining to the consideration of the historic environment.

### 3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 There is no statutory requirement to consult prior to conservation area designation or appraisal. However, English Heritage’s Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2006, paragraph 3.2) advises that:

*“Once a conservation area appraisal has been completed in draft form, it should be issued for public comment. Local consultation can help to bring valuable public understanding and “ownership” to proposals for the area. Thought should be given to encouraging a wider public debate, drawing together local people, resident groups, amenity groups, businesses and other community organisations, in a discussion about issues facing the area and how these might be addressed. Ideally, consultation should be undertaken generally in line with the local authority’s statement of community involvement (SCI)”.*

English Heritage’s Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (March 2011, paragraph 1.11) advises that:

*“Community involvement ... over the last few years local communities have become more proactively involved in identifying the general areas that merit conservation area status and defining the boundaries. The values held by the community are likely to add depth and a new perspective to the local authority view”.*

- 3.2 A letter of consultation is appended which was sent to Longridge Town Council, the known owners/occupiers/agents of land/buildings in question, Longridge Heritage Committee, Longridge and District Local History Society, Lancashire County Archaeological Service and a known potential purchaser of land/buildings in question. The Principal Planning Officer (Design and Conservation) introduced the proposals to

the Longridge Heritage Committee meeting of 23 April 2012. Site notices identifying the main consequences of conservation area designation and the proposed new boundary on a map were displayed at the periphery of the site.

3.3 The consultation was non-statutory and therefore all comments received up to the report writing deadline are summarised below. I note that comments have not been received during the public consultation from the owners or prospective purchasers of land associated with Taylor and Russell Ltd. However, the agent for Taylor and Russell Ltd and a potential land purchaser have previously asked that concerns be presented to Committee and are therefore summarised below.

i) Longridge Town Council – recommend a limited extension of the conservation area (a map indicates this to be the north façade of the water tower and the whole of the boiler house). The exclusion of later additions is in recognition of their very limited contribution to the special architectural and historic interest. The Town Council’s position on this matter also recognises that extending the conservation area in the way the borough proposes has serious detrimental implications for commercial considerations affecting the area, and may jeopardise the expansion plans and continuing pressure of a major employer.

ii) Lancashire County Archaeology Service (having consulted Oxford Archaeology North in respect to the significance of Stonebridge Mill) –

Stonebridge Mill built in 1850, is probably the oldest surviving mill left in Longridge, and one thought to be of an unusual layout. The site has been identified in Lancashire Textile Mills Survey, Stage 1 Rapid Assessment Survey as being worthy of further study and will be one of only 50 such sites to form a more detailed Stage 2 to be undertaken over the next 2 years.

Lancashire County Archaeology Service would therefore recommend that in the first instance consideration should be given to the extension to the Conservation Area to cover all surviving structures that can be clearly identified as being depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Lancashire Sheet 53.12, surveyed 1892 (*this shows the water tower and the boiler house*).

Secondly, that consideration should also be given to the inclusion of the area of C20 weaving sheds on the south side of the site. The site is not immediately identifiable as a textile mill, indeed the presence of the weaving sheds might be considered to be the one defining indicator to the majority of the public that this is a site associated with the textile mill industry rather than an engineering works, and the retention of these structures would help maintain this link.

iii) A Longridge resident – believes that the commercial value of the town’s labour market (Singletons Dairy expansion plans) far exceeds the somewhat dubious value of extending a conservation area which already seems complete and could not be enhanced by including part of a derelict mill.

iv) Agent for Taylor and Russell Ltd –

Against any further extension of the conservation area.

Originally happy to extend the area to include the internals of the water tower and adjacent small landlocked building – now wish to retract this offer. As the façade of the water tower is within the conservation area, do not see a need to extend

the conservation area further. No physical changes are required by Taylor and Russell.

The financial ramifications of the delays to date and possibility of the Singletons sale not proceeding are very severe. At no point informed by RVBC of any developmental, planned, meetings concerning an extra extension of the conservation area.

Is it proposed to preserve or conserve the buildings?

The communication and consultation in relation to the conservation area has fallen a great deal of distance short of where it needed to be. Would not be as willing in the future to invite officers on site to show, highlight and elaborate on all aspects of conservation inclusion and the possible routes for development.

Believe that the original boundary was drawn incorrectly rather than too tightly.

The North light Mill building is not shown on the 1913-1914 maps but is shown on the 1932 maps. Thus this building is presumably not part of the original 1850 George Whittle Stonebridge Mill. The North light Mill appears to be vacant of weaving activity circa 1957.

A building in the approximate position of the front section of the North light Mill, as included in the conservation area, appears on the maps pre this date and presumably forms part of the original 1850 Stonebridge Mill. However, it does appear set back, indicating that a smaller alternative structure was located here prior to the North light Mill construction which must have been demolished. A clear definitive edge appears on one of the external walls that suggest construction took place in different phases after its initial construction circa 1915. The definitive edge is within the conservation area.

The water tower and boiler house building (inside the modern 1970 steel portal frame) are again presumably generally original structures but do not form part of the 2008 conservation area extension. This is presumably an error at the time of the conservation area extension.

v) Prospective site purchaser –

Singletons Dairy Ltd is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation cheese making company based at Mill Farm, Longridge. In the past 10 years sales have almost tripled and throughput on site has increased from 1200 tonne site to over 3500 tonnes. Currently employ 80 people.

A key determinant to future expansion is the need to upgrade certain facilities on site; however the major restriction has always been space. In 2010 an opportunity to expand the size of the site came up as the Taylor and Russell land adjacent to the Mill Farm site was put up for sale. However, it would be necessary to demolish all of the currently non designated structures and build a new dairy. This in turn would given Singletons the world class facility needed to continue to compete in demanding world markets and would ensure manufacture stays on the Mill Farm site.

At a pre-application meeting 28/8/2010 and a site visit 11/11/2010, Taylor and Russell and RVBC Conservation Officer confirmed the conservation boundary.

From this an area of land was identified for sale to specifically exclude any part of the 2008 conservation area extension. From this point on, no discussions or dialogue or paperwork was received to suggest a further extension of the conservation area to include the North Light Mill was being considered.

Negotiations ensued for the purchase of the entire site, yard, northern mill lights and steel portal building but excluding any areas in the 2008 conservation area extension.

The North Light building which is proposed to be included in the further extension of the conservation area is not shown on the 1913-1914 but is shown on the 1932 map. The land at this time is presumed undeveloped apart from a small gasometer. It is safe to presume therefore that this building is not part of the original 1850 George Whittle Stonebridge Mill. The North Light Mill appears to be vacant of weaving activity circa 1957. A building in the approximate position of the front section of the North Light Mill, as included in the 2008 conservation area extension, appears on the maps pre this date and presumably forms part of the original 1850 Stonebridge Mill. However, it does appear set back, indicating that a smaller alternative structure was located here prior to the North Light Mill construction which must have been demolished. A clear definitive edge appears on one of the external walls that suggest construction took place in different phases after its initial construction circa 1915. This definitive edge is within the 2008 conservation area extension. However, the water tower and boiler house building (inside the modern 1970 steel portal frame) are again presumably generally original structures but do not form part of the 2008 conservation area extension. This omission appears to be an error at the time of the creation of the 2008 conservation area extension.

The current state of the North Light Mill is in a seriously poor condition. There are no grant monies for its restoration. The steel portal frame behind it is landlocked. If the sale of Taylor and Russell fails, the North Light Mill will continue to fall into complete ruin.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In my opinion the omission of important Stonebridge Mill buildings and structures from Longridge Conservation Area undermines the significance, integrity and legibility of this important site and the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. The May 2008 boundary was drawn with principal regard to the appearance of Stonebridge Mill and ignored building elements to the rear of facades, and the end of range boiler house obscured by the modern portal frame buildings. However, a more thorough inspection of the site, informed by the Lancashire Mills Survey, the Pennine Lancashire Northlight Weaving Shed Study, the revised English Heritage Industrial Buildings and Industrial Structures designation guides, English Heritage's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance and a better understanding of the significance of individual elements of the weaving mill site, has enabled the full character of the site to be appreciated.
- 4.2 I have considered the comments received during the public consultation whilst mindful of the legal restriction on relevant material considerations. I would concur with Longridge Town Council and the Lancashire County Archaeological Service that greatest significance can be attached to those surviving structures (boiler house and water tower) from the nineteenth century mill. The Lancashire Mills Survey, Rothwell, Munt, Pennine Lancashire Northlight Weaving Shed Study and English Heritage's Industrial Buildings

and Industrial Structures designation guides suggest these structures to be integral to the technical and architectural significance and understanding of the whole mill site and to be of special architectural and historic interest to the area.

4.3 I am also mindful of comments from Lancashire County Archaeological Service (informed by the author of the Lancashire Mills Survey who has a strategic overview of the County's textile mill heritage and its significance) relating to the additional significance of the twentieth century northlight weaving shed in providing an ostensible identity to the whole weaving mill and this part of Longridge Conservation Area. Therefore, I consider that all of the area shown within the proposed conservation area extension on the appended map has special architectural and historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

4.3 I would confirm that the current and future state of repair of the buildings is not a material consideration to be taken into account.

4.4 I note that 'architectural interest' is not solely concerned with aesthetics. Indeed, English Heritage's 'Industrial Structures' designation guide (see above) only states on the matter of architectural interest that *"an industrial building should normally reflect in its design (plan form and appearance) the specific function it was intended to fulfil"*. In this respect, I note the very distinct fenestration of Stonebridge Mill's boiler house and surviving north light weaving shed as well as the 'unusual layout' referred to by Lancashire County Archaeological Service. Furthermore, DCMS, 'Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings' (March 2010) recognises under General Principles that:

*"Aesthetic merits. The appearance of a building – both its intrinsic architectural merit and any group value – is a key consideration in judging listing proposals, but the special interest of a building will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological innovation, or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality"*.

## 5 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Conservation area designation and extension may result in an increase in planning applications submitted as a result of "permitted development" thresholds being reduced. Whilst the Council currently receives less than 10 conservation area consent applications for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas each year, it should be noted that this type of application carries no submission fee. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires new conservation area designations to be publicised in the London Gazette and in at least one newspaper circulating in the area of the local planning authority.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The main consequences of conservation area designation are:
  1. the Borough Council has a statutory duty to keep conservation area designations under review.
  2. the Borough Council is under a general duty to ensure the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, and a particular duty to prepare proposals to that end;

3. notice must be given to the Borough Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area;
  4. conservation area consent is required for the demolition of most unlisted buildings in the area (enforcement action or criminal prosecution may result if consent is not obtained);
  5. the limits of what works may be carried out without planning permission are different;
  6. extra publicity is given to planning applications affecting conservation areas;
  7. the Borough Council is to take into account the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the area when determining applications;
  8. the making of Article 4 Directions, which limit permitted development rights, is more straight forward;
  9. the Borough Council or the Secretary of State may be able to take steps to ensure that a building in a conservation area is kept in good repair;
  10. limited financial assistance may be available for the upkeep of a building in the area.
- Political – N/A.
  - Reputation – N/A.

## **6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

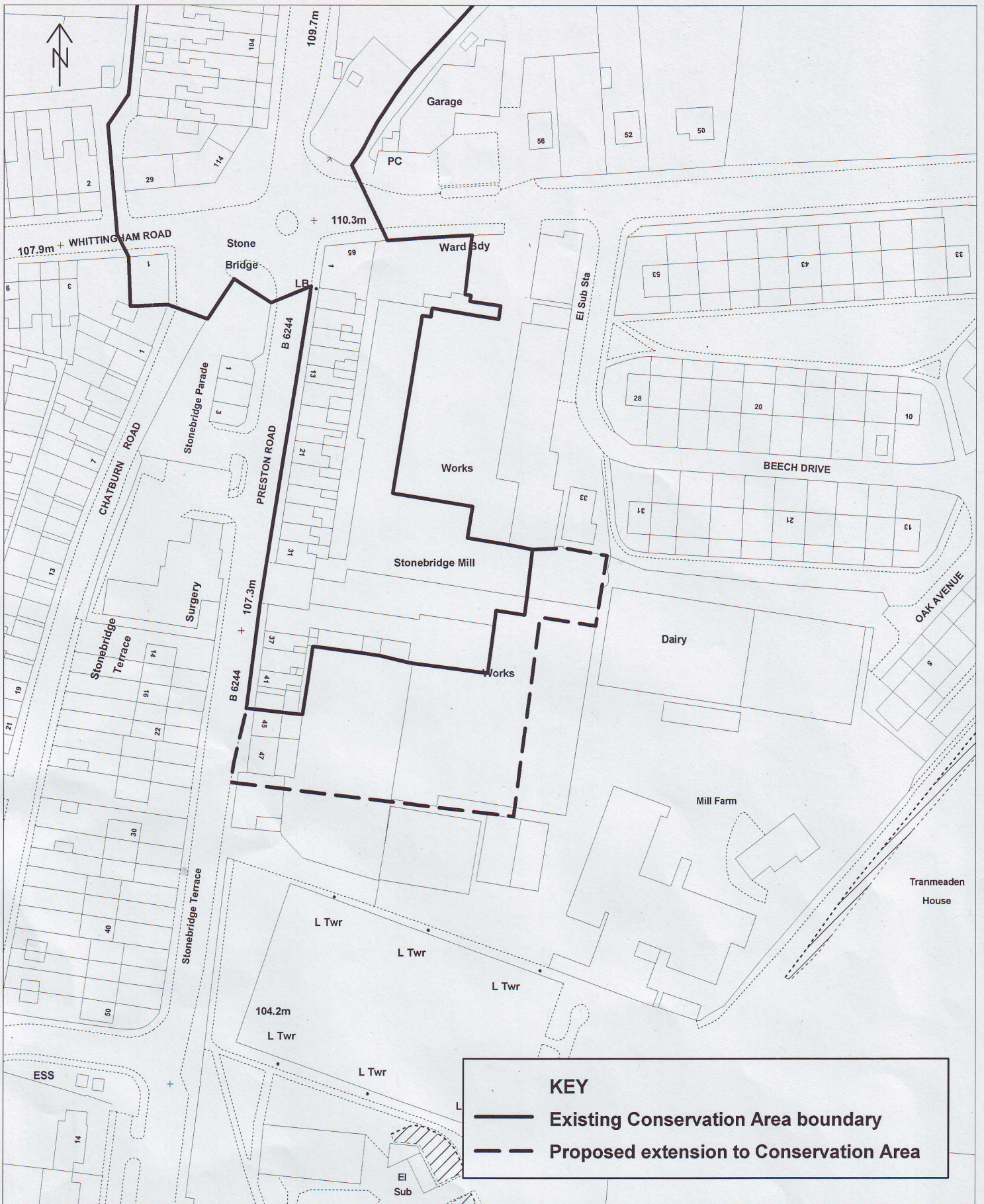
- 6.1 Designate an extension to Longridge Conservation Area in accordance with the 'Proposed extension to Conservation Area' boundary shown on the appended plan.

### **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1 Consultation report on extension to Longridge Conservation Area at Stonebridge Mill - 12 April 2012.
2. Minute 902 – Committee's resolution to undertake a limited consultation – 12 April 2012.

For further information please ask for Adrian Dowd, extension 4513.



**STONEBRIDGE MILL**

Existing and Proposed Longridge Conservation Area boundary

Scale 1:1250

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