Eanam Wharf Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

August 2013
1. Introduction

The Eanam Wharf Conservation Area is proposed for designation in August 2013. The Conservation area is located to the eastern side of Eanam Road and on the north side of the canal south of Navigation Bridge. It includes a cluster of historic buildings and sites which represent one of the early nineteenth century industrial areas of Blackburn which developed shortly after the construction of the Leeds Liverpool canal.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is legally obliged to protect and enhance each of its conservation areas and to do this it is necessary to understand what it is in each area and why each area is important to the Boroughs special historical and architectural character. The report is called a character appraisal and has been produced following an assessment of the Eanam Wharf Conservation Area.
2. Conservation Area Status

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to determine which parts of their jurisdiction merit conservation area status. Section 69 of the Act defines conservation areas as: ‘Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ The special character of a conservation area is usually derived from a combination of features which include individual statutory listed buildings, historic street patterns, views and vistas, traditional building materials and areas of open space and greenery. The designation of a conservation area demonstrates a commitment by the local planning authority to protect and enhance the special character.

Figure 2 View from internal street with grain warehouse on right.

Conservation area status is not intended to stifle new development nor preserve as museum pieces, in fact conservation areas should evolve to meet changing demands. Local Planning Authorities are however legally obliged to ensure that the special architectural and historic characters of their conservation areas are not eroded when taking planning and development control decisions. They are assisted in this obligation by additional controls that are afforded to them by conservation area status. These are:

- Conservation Area Consent is required prior to the demolition of buildings or structures (with certain exemptions) within conservation areas.

- Planning permission may be required for certain changes to buildings that would normally be permitted elsewhere. Changes requiring permission include cladding a building, adding dormer windows, erecting a satellite dish in a visible location, and material changes to commercial buildings.

- Six weeks notice must be given to the Council before carrying out works to trees within a conservation area. This enables the contribution that the tree makes to the character of the area to be assessed and if necessary a tree preservation (TPO) made to protect it.

- Planning applications for development in conservation areas should normally be made in full rather than outline so that their full impact can be assessed before a decision is made.
3. Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. The Council is required to prepare a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their Local Plan. In doing so 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 the 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 place. When considering the impact of a proposed development Local Planning Authorities should weigh the harm or loss to significance against the public benefits of a proposal (policies 133 and 134, NPPF). Policy 141 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to make information about the significance of the historic environment publicly accessible. Publishing this character appraisal will comply with this requirement.

The Core Strategy for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is the Local Strategic Planning Policy Document for the Borough and requires in Policy CS17 for new development to identify and take opportunities to integrate and promote the Borough’s cultural assets. More detailed policies relevant to development management decisions are set out in the saved policies from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan, and the emerging Development Plan Document.

4. Summary of Special Interest

Eanam is one of the first areas to develop as an industrial zone after the opening of the canal in 1810 in Blackburn and is reflected in the groupings of early nineteenth century warehouses and ancillary buildings. The buildings form distinctive clusters set round setted courts, and Eanam Old Road which is a narrow internal street that retains its original setts on part of its length. Eanam Wharf is the centre piece of the Conservation Area and is a distinctive example of early canal architecture comprising two three storey stone built warehouses and ancillary buildings. The canal basin widens at this point and is presently flanked on the south side by a tow path. The character of the canal further west of the wharf is more open and flanked by trees and open areas that were once used as coal wharfs.

Figure 3 View from Navigation Bridge.
The area was significant in facilitating the growth of ancillary industries that supported the textile boom and in particular became a focus for breweries due to the plentiful supplies of spring water. An important surviving element of this activity are the two remaining stable blocks to the west of Eanam Wharf which were used by Daniel Thwaites and Company limited. The stable blocks have arched or gated openings fronting onto Eanam Road that open out into enclosed courtyards. The intimate scale of the buildings contrast with the larger brewery complex opposite.

5. Location and Setting.

The Conservation Area is sited on a triangular block on the eastern fringes of Blackburn Town Centre and on the northern banks the Leeds-Liverpool Canal. Eanam Road defines the northern boundary of the conservation area, and the canal basin defines the south side. The canal is elevated from the town and the land slopes to the west and north from a high point at Navigation Bridge which defines the eastern boundary. The western end is bounded by Cicely Road and Soho Foundry.

The Conservation Area includes a collection of listed wharf buildings, and stable buildings which are unlisted.

Figure 4 View west along canal towpath
6. Historical Development.

Blackburn was a relatively modest town in the eighteenth century and Eanam was barely developed. Work had began in the late eighteenth century to build a coast to coast waterway link, a canal from the docks at Liverpool to the River Aire and thence the Humber. The first detailed scheme for the Leeds Liverpool Canal was drawn up in the mid 1760s and the project was authorised by parliament in 1770. There had been much debate about the choice of route and the balance to be struck between practical engineering and water supply considerations and the need to serve the centres of industry and population. The original route by passed Blackburn through Samlesbury and a decision was made in 1794 to reroute the line to serve the industrial towns of Blackburn and Burnley. The canal eventually reached Blackburn in 1810 some 40 years after it had been authorised. The final stretch from Blackburn to Whittle le Woods was finished in October 1916 completing the longest canal in the Country. It is without doubt that the canal was a huge catalyst to the growth of Blackburn in the subsequent years. As well as coal traffic, the canal ideally suited for the transporting of bulk commodities brought raw cotton from Liverpool docks and took away finished cloth. Its competitive cheapness facilitated a reduction in the price of cotton textiles and thereby increased demand. There were at the turn of the century about fifty cotton mills dependent on the canal for transport and this rapid growth is evident in the 1894 map of the area. The canal continued to be an important transport route even with the dawn of the railway age in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Just a few mills now stand as memorials to an age when it was said that “Britain’s bread hangs by Lancashire’s thread”. (King Cotton 1976-78)

The two storey warehouse buildings along Eanam Wharf date from 1810 when the canal opened, the contiguous three storey buildings are later, and were originally built for the grain trade. Beyond navigation bridge was originally sited a windmill which was used to grind corn and was built in 1822. The windmill had large sails which rotated at high speed in strong winds and then friction was so great that it caught fire soon after it was built. When the canal basin was busy the boats would lie two abreast and the crane would unload from the furthest boat and swing goods inside the top floors of the warehouse.

Blackburn has a long association with brewing an industry which has continued to dominate the character of Eanam. In the late nineteenth century the smaller brew houses gradually vanished and were confined to a handful of larger breweries which were mostly grouped around the Eanam area where spring water was plentiful. Star Brewery was first established in 1806 by Edward Duckworth and William Clayton and Daniel Thwaites joined the partnership in 1807 and became sole owner in 1824. Major reconstruction of the brewery was carried out in 1964 and still stands on the north side of Eanam Road. Eanam Mews was originally built as the stables of Daniel Thwaites and Company Limited and subsequently used by their estate department. Eanam Stables further east of Eanam Mews were later acquired by Daniel Thwaites and Company Limited but were originally used by Henry Shaws Brewery hence the inscription on the gate piers ‘H.S. & CO.’
7. Character and interrelationship of spaces.

The area is characterised by three main building clusters and the canal basin itself forming a tight grain of intimate spaces, interspersed with open areas and vacant land.

Eanam Wharf forms the most distinctive cluster of stone built nineteenth century canal buildings and warehouses grouped around the setted internal street of Eanam Old Road. The approach from Eanam Road is of an attractive cluster of modest stone built two three storey buildings fronting directly onto the pavement, with the larger warehouse wharf building visible in the background. The street frontage has an intimate scale bounded by the British Waterways office building and canal house, with its curved facade of the canal offices turning the corner into the gated entrance. Building facades are punctured by sliding sash windows and doors. The warehouse buildings are two and three storeys and of greater massing, now converted to office use with loading bays evident on both frontages. A large timber overhang and cast iron columns fronting the canal announce that this was once an important docking area.

Immediately adjacent lies the former stabling block to the former Star Brewery, and still used today for the shire horses of Daniel Thwaites and Company Limited. The internal court has a gated entrance onto Eanam Road. The two storey buildings comprise a mix of red brick and stone buildings, with slate roofs. Continuing down hill westward is a large former works now metal clad presently detracts from the conservation area.

At the junction of Eanam Old Road and Eanam Road lies Eanam Mews, characterised by red brick two storey buildings with stone dressings. This was the original stable block to Thwaites Brewery. The arched entrance, opens out into a large courtyard flanked by two storey stables, stores and ancillary accommodation. The flanking walls to the mews enclose the stables on the eastern and western sides. A car park is now present on the east side which has stepped access to the canal.

The combination of modest early nineteenth century proportions to the buildings, architectural detailing and series of intimate spaces contribute to a village like townscape character. The open quality of the canal basin has a peaceful landscape quality that contrasts with the noise and activity of Barbara Castle Way in the immediate vicinity.

Figure 5 View to rear of Bank Cottage

Listed Buildings.

British Waterways Office.

This single storey and workshop office building controls the entrance, has rounded ends and dates from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The roof is constructed of stone slates. Windows are stone mullioned with paired lights and a square loading bay fronts faces Eanam Road. The building is Grade II listed.

Figure 6 British Waterways office

Canal Agents House.

The Canal Agents House overlooks the main road and is two and three storey stone built property with a cellar. The façade overlooking the street is three storeys with sash windows to first and second floor. The roof is double pitched with stone slates and gabled to both ends, three tall stone chimney stacks rise from the ridge.

Warehouses of Entwistle and Oddy Limited.

This warehouse block originally built to store grain fronts tow path and street behind and comprises long row of stone buildings with stone flag roofs. The oldest portion is two storey circa 1810 with round headed loading doors to the canal and yard. Windows are mullioned, and is now used as a bar and restaurant. Three storey warehouse element has large gable awning on iron stanchions over ground floor. There is a stone loading platform on the landward side and stone wharf on canal side. The buildings are grade II listed and from an early nineteenth century group of canal architecture.

Figure 7 Warehouses fronting canal
Crane Post.

East end of the warehouses and west of navigation bridge lies a large cylindrical iron column tapering upwards and mounted on two large hexagonal steps and is probably the base of a crane that was used to hoist grain into the warehouses off the barges.

Bank cottage

This cottage dates from the early nineteenth century and fronts onto the canal. The elevation facing the canal is two storeys with two storey bay windows at each side of a central entrance door. Bay windows have 3 sashes with stone mullions and sills. The rear elevation is three storeys and lower facing Eanam Old Road with three small sashes on each floor.

Unlisted buildings.

Eanam Stables, Eanam Road.

Eanam stables have their entrance onto Eanam Road which is marked by two stone gate piers with the inscription ‘H.S. & Co’ relating to the former Henry Shaw Brewery then Salford New Brewery. The stables date from 1886 and comprise a series of buildings arranged on a curve around a paved yard. The gate house and dwelling front the main road. They are mainly two storey brick and stone construction. Buildings include harness room, stalls and haylofts. The Coach house and farrier’s workshop is housed in separate buildings on the west side of the yard. The stables are now used for their original purpose by Thwaites brewery for their show and working dray horses.

Figure 8 Bank Cottage

Figure 9 Eanam Stables Eanam Road
Eanam Mews, Eanam Road.

Further west along Eanam Road is another collection of stable buildings known as Eanam Mews. These were formerly the stables of Daniel Thwaites & Company limited, and more recently used by the Brewery estate department. They are now vacant. They comprise an attractive two storey brick frontage which includes a round headed doorway and adjacent gatehouse. The single storey buildings built on a curve date from 1881 and were designed as a coach house, harness room and stables. The main entrance opens onto an enclosed courtyard paved with setts. Two storey stables extend along the west perimeter. Details include circular pitching eyes, loading doors to the first floor and round headed doorways. To the rear and west is a former mineral works with a square brick chimney.

Soho Foundry Cicely Lane

Soho Foundry is a three storey brick built building constructed in the late nineteenth century. It has three by eight bays with brick vaulted ceilings and cast iron columns. Architectural details include stone plinth, string course, brick and corbel plaster details. The windows are set in recessed panels. The Foundry was originally associated with the Soho and Salford foundries and associated with John Dugdale and sons who specialised in making weaving machinery and during the later nineteenth century were among the most well know power loom machinists. The firm were also important cotton spinners and manufacturers. The building has since been used as warehousing and more recently as a shoe store.

The prevalent building materials within the conservation area are grit stone and redbrick. Earlier buildings have gritstone slab roofs such as on the listed wharf buildings. The red brick buildings generally have grey slate roofs.

There is evidence of historic surface treatments such as large granite blocks lining the canal, and setted courtyards. Part of Eanam Old Road has a setted surface. There is also a stone boundary wall which forms a boundary to the Eanam Wharf.

Sash windows are still evident in some of the buildings, the refurbishment of the wharf buildings have had windows replaced with timber windows.

10. Unsympathetic development and buildings of little architectural merit.

Unsympathetic treatment and insertion of inappropriate infill developments is one of the main threats to the area.

The former garage building on Eanam Road has been clad in a metallic cladding that detracts from the historic character of the area and contrasts with the prevalent building materials of the area. The lack of openings on this building also give rise to blank facades and increase the perceived massing of the building.

There are also a number of gap sites and open spaces within the conservation area some of which are poorly maintained and break up the tight grain of the street pattern. There is scope to redefine the boundaries of these areas and improve the appearance of the conservation area by developing with appropriate building styles or creating more attractive spaces that have better linkages with the canal and have stronger boundary definitions.
11. Key Views and vistas.

From within the conservation area there are glimpsed views to setted internal courts or to the internal street within the wharf area. From the Internal street there are also glimpsed views of the canal. One of the most significant views of the canal and Eanam wharf is from Navigation Bridge which gives a sweeping view westwards of the canal.

From outside the conservation area the Wharf Warehouses can be seen from Barbara Castle Way. Soho Foundry dominates views west ward.

Figure 14 View along Eanam Road with grain warehouses in background
References;

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Contacts

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