

5: Architecture and Environment

5.1 General Character and Setting

The area has a diverse use and character, and this is illustrated through the description of the character areas below. The overall impression is of an area set in a treed landscape where the landscaping is a dominant feature. Within this, building groups are fairly well hidden by mature street trees, and this flows into the large garden areas and the landscape of the park areas and the Clough. The mediaeval church sits at the highest point in the area, though its dominance has been reduced over time due to general tree growth and the enclosing urban development. The natural topography of the area is also hidden by area development, though the A56, along the line of the Roman road from Manchester to Ribchester, is both a strong boundary and uniting feature. The Church is built in local sandstone, and most other buildings are in brick. The distinct character areas (Fig. 30) are:

The Historic Core/Church Lane

The Commercial Gateway and Rectory Lane

St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough

Prestwich Park Road South/St Ann's Road

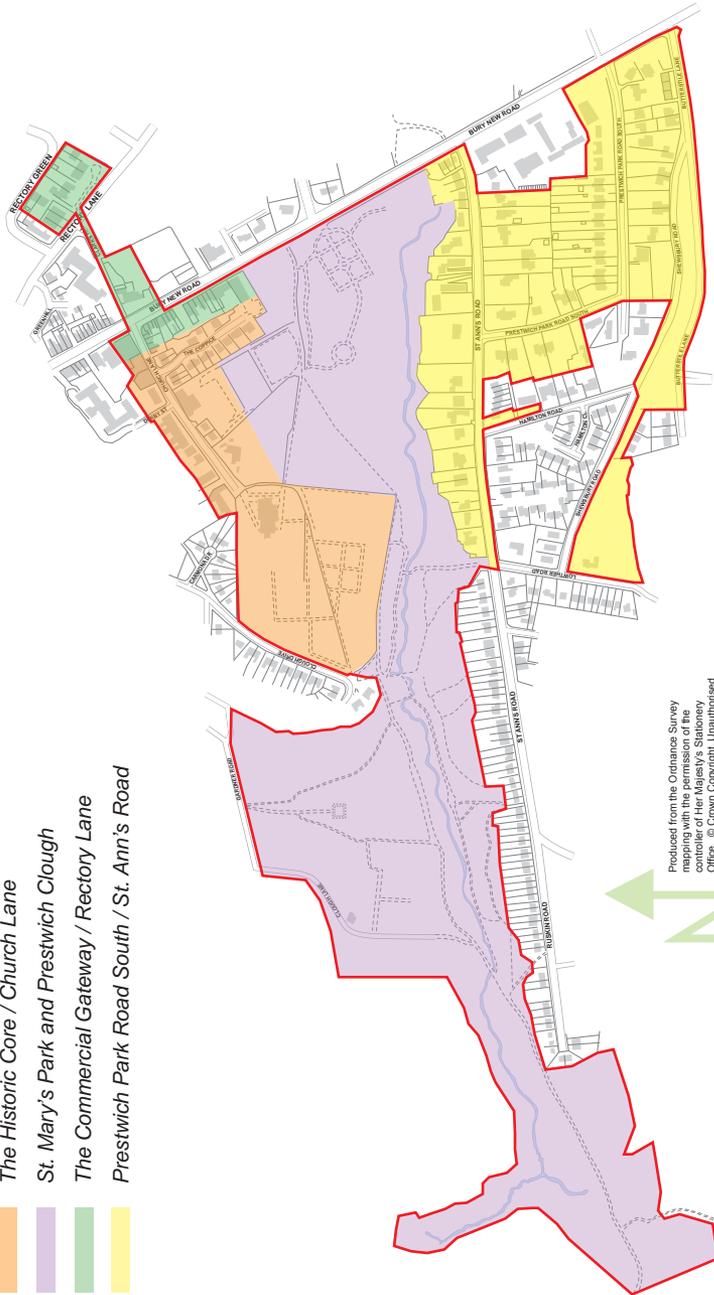
Greater detail on some of the buildings referred to in the character areas is given in the appendices and part 5.3.

The conservation area is enclosed by 20th century residential and commercial development to the north and south, though with open space links to the lower land in the Irwell Valley to the west.

Fig. 30 : Character Areas of St. Mary's Conservation Area, Prestwich

KEY

- The Historic Core / Church Lane
- St. Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough
- The Commercial Gateway / Rectory Lane
- Prestwich Park Road South / St. Ann's Road



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5.2 Character Areas

The Historic Core/Church Lane

The historic core is the oldest part of the conservation area and Prestwich village. It is dominated by St Mary's Church (Fig. 31) located on a promontory at the west end of Church Lane. It overlooks the churchyard and graveyard areas and below these stand St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough. The sandstone church is a landmark and marker for Church Lane and closes the views from the east. Immediately around the Church is an extensive churchyard containing 17th, 18th and 19th century gravestones, tombs and monuments. Beyond this there is other church owned land. The church site contains a hearse house (Fig. 32), boundary walls and gate piers, sundial and mounting block, all of which add to the special interest at the west end of Church Lane (Fig. 33).

A separate management plan has been produced for the churchyard site and this includes a full description and gazetteer of its character and content.



31) *St Mary's Church.*

32) *Hearse House.*

33) *Church Lane.*

Church Lane illustrates the development of the village since the mediaeval period. The church was founded in 1231, though it is thought that there was an earlier timber church, and its fabric has 14th century origins and exhibits extensions and alterations from key periods since that time. By the church entrance gates stands the Church Inn (Fig. 34), a 17th century coaching inn associated with those who travelled to the parish church from within the extensive post-medieval parish. The inn is 3 storeys built in hand made brick with a rendered frontage and rebuilt porticoed entrance. Abutting the inn is number 38, also built in hand made brick in the 18th century. In front of the inn is a slightly widened highway with stone flags and setts and which once formed part of the core and meeting place of the village. The enclosure of the area is completed by the early 20th century brick built rectory (Fig.35) on the south side, which stands behind brick walls and railings and within large mature grounds, part of which once formed the bowling green to the Church Inn. A relocated 17th century sundial is also located within the grounds.



34) Church Inn.

35) The Rectory

36) Church Lane South Side

Church Lane is reasonably well preserved on its north side but less so on the south. The lane was well established by the 18th/19th century, and numbers 20 to 36 (north side) and 1 to 11 (Fig. 36 south side) are from that period. All are brick and slate dwellings built in the late Georgian style, with 20 to 30 (George's Terrace) raised above road level behind a brick retaining wall and hedge (Fig. 37).

Numbers 32/34 are three storeys with external steps to the first floor, and with the ground floor level once being separate dwellings (Fig. 38). A range of window and door types have had an impact on the elevations of these buildings. Similar buildings have been removed on the south side leaving gaps for 20th century development which has not retained the enclosure provided by the earlier terraces. On the south side is the former grand house, Spring Bank, now much altered to house the Conservation Club, with the gardens changed to a bleak and open car park. On the northern side the original Conservative Club, built 1879, is a strong and positive feature in the street. Two low level huts, built in timber and concrete, stand on the north side of the lane. The highway and street furniture is of the 20th century. At the meeting of Church Lane and Bury New Road, number 1 has been carefully rebuilt in a late 19th century style and provides a positive and strong corner. Number 2 Church Lane (401 Bury New Road) is a much altered Georgian building which retains some features from the early 19th century, but which has much altered ground floor elevations (Fig. 39). The Coppice, a modern suburban development, has been built to the south of Church Lane, and this includes an apartment development overlooking the north of St Mary's Park. Its design has little connection with the traditional character of the area.

Once the hub of the village the lane has now become a quiet residential backwater and stands in contrast to Bury New Road at its eastern end. Its contribution to the character of the conservation area can be much enhanced through a careful restoration programme.



37) *George's Terrace.*

38) *32/34 Church Lane.*

39) *2 Church Lane.*

The Commercial Gateway and Rectory Lane

This area is located at the meeting of Church Lane and Bury New Road, and covers the commercial group of properties located at the southern end of the village centre. It provides the introduction to the village centre when travelling from the south. It is also a mixed area as it includes the Red Lion PH standing in a stone sett paved forecourt on the east side of Bury New Road, and also the group of residential buildings around Beech Tree Bank along Rectory Lane, linked to Bury New Road by a narrow path up Clarks Hill. The Bury New Road commercial properties are primarily 19th and early 20th century, to a mix of building forms, heights and design. Brick and slate are the primary materials with some black and white timbering. At ground level there is a mix of shop and commercial use, with some frontages that do not follow the original area character (Fig. 40) and suffer from the use of solid roller shutters.



- 40) Bury New Road
- 41) Red Lion PH
- 42) Beech Tree Bank

On the east side, the Red Lion PH (Fig. 41) provides the foil for the Church Lane corner buildings. It is a well preserved long two storey late 19th century brick and slate building with a mix of timber sash and later windows. To its north is the narrow tree lined path that climbs to Rectory Lane. The stone wall to one side of the path is the former stone boundary wall and gate posts to now demolished dwellings. Views east and west along the path are framed by the trees to each side.



43) Rectory Lane



44) St. Mary's Park



45) Prestwich Clough

Beech Tree Bank (Fig. 42) and numbers 63 to 67 (Fig. 43) face the top of Clarks Hill. 63 to 67 form the smaller group and Beech Tree Bank is a longish terrace, three storeys high and elevated above road level behind a stone retaining wall. Walls are in red and yellow brick and roofs in slate with both lateral and roof dormers. There are bay windows with curved window heads. The central section is infill c1997 implemented as part of an apartment conversion.

St Mary's Park and Prestwich Clough

These two areas combine to provide a large green swathe of land running across the middle and to the west of the conservation area. The area runs into the green spaces around the church and properties on Church Lane to the north and those on St Ann's Road to the south. At its eastern end its boundary is Bury New Road, and here the space is a formal, though altered, early 20th century park (Fig. 44). The park is hidden from the main road by the density of the boundary planting and whilst this provides separation from the busy highway it also stops views into the park and adds to its isolation from the active street. Away from Bury New Road the land becomes more undulating and informal, running into the deep valley of the Clough (Fig. 45) to the west. The area is crossed by paths, through both open and wooded terrain, and there are steps and bridges within the steep side of the Clough. Part of the Clough was, in Edwardian times, laid out as a formal walk (Fig. 46) with features and facilities along its route, and with the line of the stream controlled through the use of stone walls with large copings. Most of the original elements have been lost and the

retaining of the stream is in partial disarray. The Clough is ancient woodland and remnants of this remain. Its character has changed over time through grazing, management, controlled planting, and through the 18th and 19th century industrial development at its western end. For its length within the conservation area, the Clough (Figs. 47 & 48) has a clear identity, a clear boundary edge and an important physical and landscape structure, with significant opportunities for enhancement. The open spaces in the area are generally in contrast to the surrounding dense development, and are an important resource for the locality. The park and the Clough are managed but there is a need to address the form and function of the area and its use and landscape structure.



46) *The Edwardian Clough*

47) *Prestwich Clough*

48) *Prestwich Clough*

Prestwich Park Road South / St Ann's Road (Figs. 49,50,51)

This area is a 19th century residential suburb, originally laid out as a private estate from c1850. It also contains dwellings from the early 20th century and examples of late 20th century residential redevelopment. The main quality of this area is in the character created by large period buildings in generous grounds. The style of individual buildings varies from the remnants of the Georgian tradition through Victorian and Edwardian styles to mid war dwellings. All these combine, together with a mature street and garden landscape, to produce an area of significant character. The quality of the area has been eroded by a mix of modern development during the last half of the 20th century, when original dwellings were removed to allow