

## WORSTON CONSERVATION AREA (proposed)



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## WORSTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL (PROPOSED)

### Introduction

This designation report for the proposed Worston Conservation Area follows a similar format for the appraisals of the existing conservation areas in Ribble Valley area which are being prepared simultaneously (2005). This document therefore contains a detailed assessment of the special architectural and historic interest of Worston, including its location, setting and a description of its historical development.

The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal map along with listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, significant trees and spaces, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation. A number of issues are identified and recommendations made.



*View south over Worston from the side of Crow Hill*

### Purpose of the appraisal

The Ribble Valley Local Plan 1998 contains a commitment to designating Worston as a conservation area (para. 4.7.3 page 32). This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features which give the proposed Worston Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in PPG15, and local policy, as set out in the Local Plan 1998, and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the proposed Worston Conservation Area can be assessed.

## Summary of special interest of the proposed Worston Conservation Area

The special interest that justifies designation of the proposed Worston Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Small historic rural hamlet beside Crow Hill;
- Architectural and historic interest of the conservation area's buildings, including 3 listed buildings;
- Views of Pendle Hill;
- Part of Clitheroe Knoll Reefs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Worston Brook and its bridges, particularly the stone bridge to Worston House;
- Situated on wildlife corridor;
- Prevalent use of local building stone;
- Rural setting of the village;
- Trees in the surrounding landscape and beside the brook;
- Areas of stone roadside kerbs, cobbles and setts;
- Stone boundary walls with a variety of coping;
- Meadow beside Worston Brook and former bull ring.



*The Calf's Head Hotel*

## The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for

development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum.



*Looking eastwards towards Pendle Hill*

### **Local planning policy**

Local planning policies for the preservation of scheduled monuments and conservation of historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in the Ribble Valley Local Plan which was adopted in June 1998 (Policies ENV14, ENV15, ENV16, ENV17, ENV18, ENV19, ENV20, ENV21) and the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 which was adopted on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 (Policies 20 and 21, supported by draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) entitled 'Landscape and Heritage').

## Location and setting

### Location and context

Worston is a small, secluded rural hamlet located between Clitheroe and Pendle Hill along the banks of the winding Worston Brook. The A59 lies immediately to the west, with rolling fields filled with sheep to the east and south. The road through the village carries only local traffic to a few houses and farmsteads at the foot of Pendle Hill, and is a 'quiet lane' leading to Downham.



*Typical stone wall with triangular stone coping*

### Landscape setting

#### Topography, geology, relationship to surroundings

Worston lies on attractive, undulating landscape which is characterised in Lancashire County Council's *Landscape Character Assessment* as lowland fringe farmland. To the east the fields rise gently and soon give way to the moorland which forms the base of Pendle Hill. The settlement consists of one lane which runs roughly parallel to the Worston Brook, then crosses it and another small tributary close to Worston Old Hall. The village main street is roughly level until rising noticeably from Old Hall towards Hall Foot House.

The principal landscape features are Crow Hill which provides the northern backdrop to the hamlet, covered in rough pasture with some trees, and once the site of extensive limestone quarries; the winding course of the two brooks, with trees and a public footpath; and the wide fields used mainly for grazing sheep. About two kilometres away, Pendle Hill, which reaches over 500 metres in height, is a dominant presence.

The building of the A59 in the 1970s bypassed Clitheroe and provided a fast link to Blackburn and subsequently to the M6. Unfortunately, it cut through the boundaries of the properties in the south-west of the hamlet. Although the road is located in a cutting and is not visible, traffic noise can be heard. Worston lies on limestone which provides most of the local building stone. This is overlain by thin clay soils suitable for grazing.

## Historic development and archaeology

### Origins and historic development

A pre-historic burial ground was found on Worsaw Hill. In 1778, workmen widening the road to Chatburn found 1,000 Roman silver Denarii. Fragments of the ancient Sawley Abbey were incorporated into the building of Worston Hall.

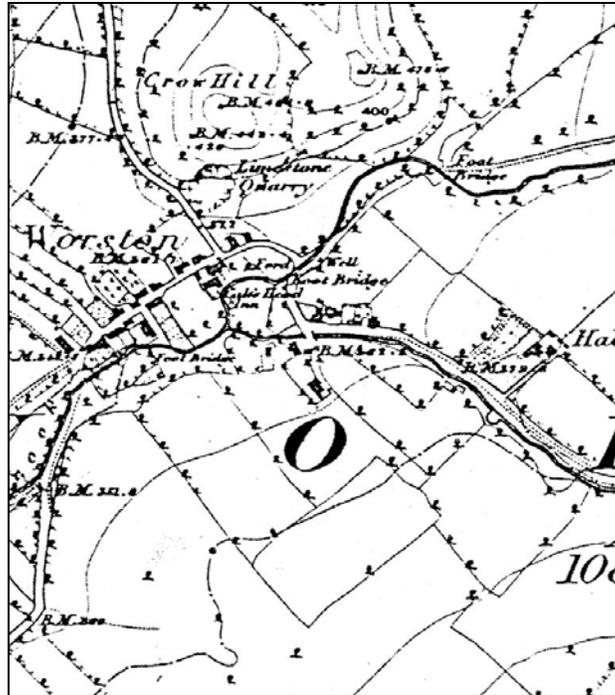
A Roman road cuts across the land between Worston and Clitheroe but the earliest reference is to *Wrtheston* in 1241 when much of the land was owned by John de Lacy of Clitheroe. The adjoining manor of Mearley was granted by his ancestor, Robert de Lacy, to Ralph le Rous in 1102 and further land was owned by the Abbeys of Whalley and Sawley. In 1311 Henry De Lacy was still the major landowner. The settlement appears to have developed as a small agricultural hamlet, with a number of buildings lying along the main street. There was never a church, although a mission room was provided which had associations with Christ Church in Chatburn.



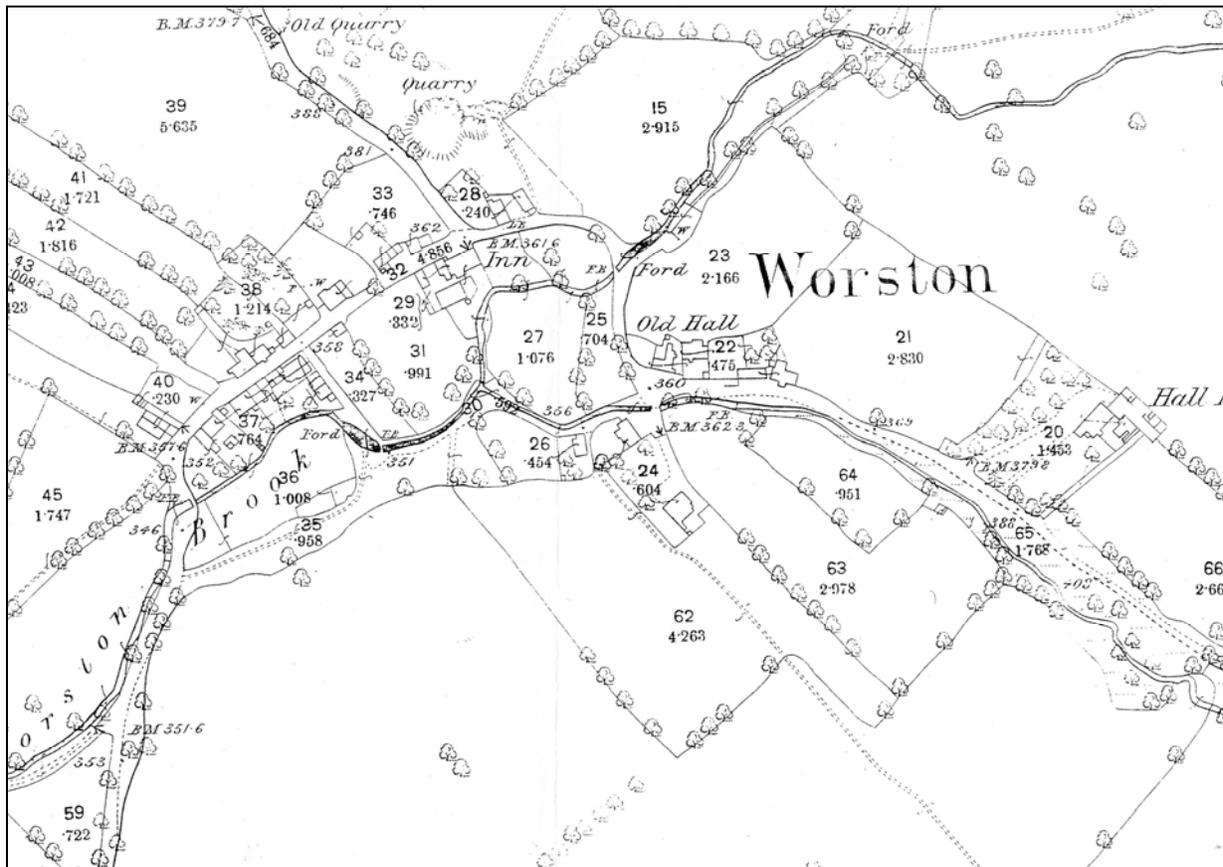
*Crow Hill from the road bridge*

The 6" OS map of 1844 shows the plan form and many of the buildings which still exist today, with long thin gardens behind those on the north side of the main street, possibly medieval in origin. These strips butt up to the Roman road, which also marks the municipal boundary. Limestone quarries on Crow Hill are a major feature. Worston Old Hall, Hall Foot House and Worston House are the principal buildings. The Calf's Head Inn is also marked. Little Mearley Hall lies to the south-east of Worston, separated by a few fields.

The 1866 OS map shows that Worston had changed very little, and although the quarries had closed they are still prominent on the map. Today, Worston is primarily a dormitory village, and all of the former barns in the main street have been converted into residential use, home or holiday cottage. The size of the Calf's Head Hotel indicates that Worston has been, and still is, a popular destination for walkers and other visitors to Pendle Hill, where the Quaker movement started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



O.S. 1848



O.S. 1886

## Spatial analysis

### Key views and vistas

The looming presence of Pendle Hill is apparent throughout the conservation area. As the hamlet lacks a church or any other significant key building in the streetscape, there are no strong vistas but plentiful views of the surrounding countryside.

### The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area encloses about 30 properties which make up the small hamlet of Worston. The majority are located alongside the main street between Club Farm and Crow Hill Cottage, generally set close to the road with gardens behind. There are gaps between buildings enabling views of Pendle Hill.



*Worston Old Hall (grade II)*

Two lesser side lanes, vehicular cul de sacs, lead south and north from the main street. The southward lane, which is unmetalled, leads to a pedestrian footbridge over Worston Brook. Beside this lane, Brookside Cottage (The Old Café) is dated 1903 although a building is indicated in this position on the 1844 OS map. The northward lane formerly led to Chatburn and Clitheroe but is now blocked by the A59. This lane also contains 20<sup>th</sup> century development.

Proceeding eastwards, there is a break in development as the road crosses the brook (a footbridge and ford is marked here on the 1886 OS map which perhaps explains the unusual width of the road at this point) and, thereafter, the thoroughfare has the ambience of a country lane, in contrast to the village street atmosphere between Club Farm and Crow Hill Cottage.

There is a wide gap in the street frontage between Robinson's Barn and the converted barn west of The Calf's Head. The area is used for car parking.

## Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

### Activities/uses

Worston is primarily residential, some properties are holiday lets. There is no church, post office (but there is a red ER post box) or shop. There is a riding manege beside farm buildings on the north side of the lane to Downham. The only public facility is the Calf's Head, a country restaurant and hotel.

### Architectural and historic character

The conservation area is characterised by mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular building with a very few buildings dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century (or containing 18<sup>th</sup> century fabric), and a similar number from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stone is the prevalent building material, mainly locally quarried limestone. Coursed or uncoursed, it is generally exposed but late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, and others, are sometimes covered in smooth or roughcast render. Most buildings are roofed with slate; a few have traditional stone slate roofs.



*Hall Croft, a 19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling*

Buildings are two storey, modestly scaled and without great architectural pretension. There appears to have been much rebuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example The Calf's Head and Worston Old Hall. The row of Pendlehurst, Little Croft and Lyndhurst dates from the 1920s or 30s. With its twin gables, it resembles The Calf's Head in form, but its verandah and use of red brick and red clay tile tells of its inter-War origins. Though a good example of its type, it is a surprising addition to this isolated rural hamlet.

### Listed buildings

There are three listed buildings in the conservation area:

Worston Old Hall (grade II) dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with possible remains of an earlier house. The most interesting part of the building is the projecting two-storey porch in which are built three stones said to have come from Sawley Abbey. Part of the front and

side walls (grade II) contain fragments of medieval dressed sandstone and a narrow gateway apparently contains the date 1577 and the initials of Richard Greenacres, the builder of the original house.

Crow Hill Cottage (grade II) possibly dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Though altered, it retains a roof of sandstone slabs, an increasingly rare characteristic of the locality. A 16<sup>th</sup> century moulded fireplace, possibly re-used, is mentioned in the list description.



*The lane leading east out of the village*

### **Key unlisted buildings - Buildings of Townscape Merit**

Marked on the Townscape Appraisal map for the proposed Worston Conservation Area are a number of *unlisted* buildings which have been judged as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This follows advice provided in English Heritage guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

The buildings are considered to be good, relatively unaltered examples, of their type where original materials and details, and the basic, historic form of the building, has survived.

The following are a few of the buildings of note: The Calf's Head Hotel was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, replacing an ale farmhouse on the site. Part of the cellar is from that original building. A curious advertisement from the 1930s announces: "*In bygone days, the Calf's Head Hotel was the rendezvous of people who came from near and far to Elect a Mayor of the Ancient Corporation of Worston*". It remained attached to a working farm up until the 1950's. In 1998 the hotel was scheduled to be closed and converted to a private residence when the current owners bought the premises.

The Mission Room appears to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century building but has a stone canopy above the door and a datestone reading R 1668 I. Its arched windows give the building a faintly ecclesiastical feel. Worston House and Hall Foot House are large 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings set in their own grounds, well back from the thoroughfare. The bridge leading to Worston

House is well constructed with rock-faced stone parapet walls topped with long rounded coping stones with channelled rustication. At the corners, there are rubbing stones with concentric rustication. Worston House, concealed by trees and shrubs, is a three bay 19<sup>th</sup> century house possibly fronting an earlier building.

### **Green spaces, trees and other natural elements**

The proposed boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to include open fields to the east of the main settlement. These are important to the setting of Worston especially as one proceeds east from the main settlement. Part of the north-east corner of the proposed Worston Conservation Area is included in the *Clitheroe Knoll Reefs* Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) particularly noted for its exposures of Carboniferous knoll reef limestones.

Trees and other greenery, notably beside Worston Brook and Worston House, add to the conservation area's rural ambience. These, and other significant trees or tree groups, are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. Lack of a specific reference does not imply that a tree or group is not of value.



*Worston Brook*

Worston Brook and its tributary are best appreciated from the public footpaths that cross the area. The brooks, and the bridges, are one of the defining features of the proposed conservation area. Worston Brook is identified in the Ribble Valley Local Plan 1998 as a wildlife corridor.

Two other 'green' spaces are of particular note: First, the area east of the confluence of the two brooks, enclosed by the road and the two brooks and crossed by a stone wall. In this

small meadow behind the main street are the remains of a reputed bullring where the stone and ring to which the bull was tethered can still be found.

Second, the area south of Worston Brook between the stone bridge to Worston House and the lane to Meadows Farm. This picturesque corner of Worston is a site of considerable biological interest containing a wide variety of flowering plants and grasses and a wildlife pond.

### **Local details and features**

The hamlet is notable for short lengths of stone cobbles and setts on both sides of the main street, occasionally demarcated by wide kerb stones. These should be preserved.

Stone walls are a feature of the conservation area. Drystone walls are common in the fields and edge of the hamlet, and mortared boundary walls between properties. The curtilage wall to the Calf's Head has a distinctively orange/red colouration. Coping stones vary. The main form is either triangular stones laid to create a pointed top or a 'castellated' coping made from with long-and-short stones on edge. Drystone walls generally have an informal haphazard arrangement of random stones on end. All three types can be seen at the eastern end of the village beside the road after Crow Hill Cottage.

Window and door openings are often surrounded with single slabs of sandstone, a typical Ribble Valley detail. This characteristic detail has been continued in some of the barn conversions but stained timber windows and large panes of glass are out of character with the hamlet's historic appearance. Joinery is typically white painted softwood.



*Brookside Cottage (1903)*

## Issues

This section provides a summary of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) identified during the appraisal process

### **Strengths: The most important *positive* features of the proposed Worston Conservation Area are:**

- Historic buildings;
- Rural setting and brooks;
- Public footpaths;
- Local restaurant and hotel.

### **Weaknesses: The principal *negative* features of the proposed Worston Conservation Area are:**

- Background of traffic noise from the A59;
- Plastic windows and doors on unlisted historic buildings (e.g. Pendle View Cottage);
- Use of dark stained wood in windows (e.g. barn conversion adjacent to Calf's Head).



*The entrance to the village from the A59*

### **Opportunities within the proposed Worston Conservation Area**

- Further areas of roadside cobbles or setts could enhance the conservation area;
- Additional soft landscaping of the open space beside the Calf's Head Hotel would help to soften the impact of the expanse of car parking.

### Threats to the proposed Worston Conservation Area

- Continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details;  
Several buildings in the conservation have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials or details. Common faults include:
  - the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC or stained hardwood;
  - the loss of original panelled front doors and their replacement with stained hardwood, uPVC or aluminium doors;
  - use of garish timber stain on garden gates and garage cladding.
- Roadside car parking may be damaging the stone setts.



*The bridge to Worston House*



*View between buildings to moorland on higher ground*

## Recommendations

### Proposed Worston Conservation Area boundary

It is proposed that the hamlet of Worston be designated a conservation area.

The proposed Worston Conservation Area boundary is marked on the accompanying map. The boundary has been drawn to enclose the whole of the settlement of Worston together with surrounding farmland that is essential to its rural setting.



*Footpath beside Worston Brook*

### Monitoring and review.

If approved, this appraisal document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- An evaluation of changes that have taken place in the conservation area, ideally by means of an updated photographic record;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including opportunities for enhancement;
- A building condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.
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### Bibliography

Victoria County History, volume VI

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**Worston - List of photographs**

- Photograph 1*      *View south over Worston from the side of Crow Hill*
- Photograph 2*      *The Calf's Head Hotel*
- Photograph 3*      *Looking eastwards towards Pendle Hill*
- Photograph 4*      *Typical stone wall with triangular stone coping*
- Photograph 5*      *Crow Hill from the road bridge*
- Photograph 6*      *Worston Old Hall (grade II)*
- Photograph 7*      *Hall Croft, a 19<sup>th</sup> century dwelling*
- Photograph 8*      *The lane leading east out of the village*
- Photograph 9*      *Worston Brook*
- Photograph 10*     *Brookside Cottage (1903)*
- Photograph 11*     *The entrance to the village from the A59*
- Photograph 12*     *The bridge to Worston House*
- Photograph 13*     *View between buildings to moorland on higher ground*
- Photograph 14*     *Footpath beside Worston Brook*