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# 1 Part One

## Summary

**1.1** New Mills is a southern Pennine mill town of dramatic topography. Whilst its development lies predominately within the 19th century, its origins, dating back to the late 14th century, are focused upon the bottom of High Street and Dyehouse Lane. As its name suggests the town developed due to the supply of fast flowing waters through the gorge. These provided the power to drive the mills that developed precariously on the waterside. As such, New Mills became an important centre for the textile industry.

**1.2** The town developed along High Street and Meal street towards higher and flatter land. Here the commercial centre developed along Market Street and later, due to the construction of high level bridges (required for transport routes to cross the Torrs) Union Road.

**1.3** In summary the main characteristics can be described as follows:

- The remains of the 18th century settlement surrounding the site of the "New Mill" with its early river bridge, informal street patterns and irregular house plans.
- The Torrs with the dramatic rock faces, the low level bridges, the steep tracks, the weirs, the remains of the demolished mills and the arches of the high level road bridges, all now preserved and managed as "The Park under the Town".
- The continued use and reuse of the surviving mills located throughout the conservation area namely, Torr Vale Mill, Hyde Bank Mill and Salem Mill.
- The area of Mid 19th century commercial development around Market Street with its improved thoroughfare and regularised building types and plots.
- The area of late 19th century speculative commercial buildings along Union Road and bold public buildings on Spring Bank Road, with their straight wide carriageways and footpaths.
- The high level bridges and mid level railway bridges defying the natural barrier of the gorge.

## Background Information

**1.4** The High Peak area (excluding the Peak District National park) has 32 designated conservation areas. These are defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

**1.5** Each conservation area has a distinct character which can be derived from a number of factors such as; topography; historical development; townscape value; open spaces; traditional street furniture and surfaces.

**1.6** Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment stresses the need for local planning authorities to define and record the special characteristics of each conservation area. The existence of a clear definition of an area's character helps reduce uncertainty for owners and developers and provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal for local plan policies and development control decisions.

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**1.7** A local authority's performance in conservation area designation, appraisal and management proposals is currently the subject of a heritage "Best Value performance Indicator" (BV219). The formal requirements of BV219b expects local authorities to publish character appraisals for new and existing conservation areas <sup>(i)</sup>

**1.8** The New Mills Conservation Area was designated in 1985 and its original boundary subsequently extended in 1986, 1990 and 1994 . The Council completed a detailed character appraisal for the area in June 2001. It is considered good practice to regularly review appraisals to keep them up to date . As such this document has been updated in accordance with the published English Heritage Guidance entitled ' Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals 2005'.

**1.9** The final document will be prepared subject to full public consultation as set out in the Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement'.

## Planning Policy Context

**1.10** Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Act imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate conservation areas. Conservation area designation is the main instrument available to authorities to promote and deliver conservation policies for a particular area. Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

**1.11** Planning Policy Guidance 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment.

**1.12** The Council's local policies for conservation areas are contained within Chapter 5 – Conservation and Enhancement of the Built Environment of the High Peak Local Plan – Adopted March 2005 and relate to the following policies:

**BC5** – Conservation Area and their Setting

**BC6** – Demolition in Conservation Areas

**1.13** In the future policies for the enhancement and protection of conservation areas and the built environment will be formulated through the emerging Local Development Framework scheduled for adoption in 2011.

**1.14** A conservation area was first designated in New Mills in 1985. Since that date it has been extended a number of times. The current boundary is shown on Map 1. This map also identifies other statutory designation within the area, namely; listed buildings; scheduled monuments and tree preservation orders.

**1.15** The historic buildings within the New Mills Conservation Area are afforded additional protection through the introduction of Article 4 Directions confirmed in 1992 and 1995. These directions affect all single family dwelling houses in the conservation area and bring under the control of the local planning authority a large number of otherwise permitted development.

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i As from April 2008 BV219 will be removed from the new list of national indicators.

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Unsympathetic alterations to boundary details, roof coverings, windows and doors can all have a detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area. These direction do not affect flats, houses in multiple occupation of commercial premises, as they do not enjoy permitted development rights.

## Location and Context

**1.16** To the casual observer the town of New Mills may appear to have few physical attractions. A "gritty" Southern Pennine mill town lying in rolling Peak District countryside. It presents no outward indications to the passer by that, at the heart of this settlement, lies an area of topographical drama, interlaced with feats of Victorian engineering and overlain with a matrix of mainly 19th century commercial, industrial and residential development.

**1.17** The Council's Landscape Character document describes the wider New Mills area as being nestled between two landscape character types – Settled Valley Pastures and Riverside Meadows, the latter confined predominately to the Torrs area.

**1.18** The principal north-south road corridor (the A6) lies on the western edge of the town. Two of the three railway lines and one of the stations lie away from the town centre with the other station and lines almost under the town. Even the Peak Forest Canal and the east-west route from the A6 to Hayfield avoid the town centre.

**1.19** The boundary of the New Mills Conservation Area (see map 1) has been drawn tightly around the area of the town which portrays the significant elements of its topographical and natural features, along with the surviving evidence of its social and economic developments. Together they provide the essential characteristics which make the central part of New Mills an area of "special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

## Origins and History of New Mills

**1.20** Where the waters of the Rivers Goyt and Sett join together, their westward flow is briefly disturbed by a gritstone saddle running north south between the adjacent hills. The resulting narrow, twisting, sheer sided gorge known as The Torrs, with its fast flowing and plentiful waters is the reason for New Mills existing, as we know it today.

**1.21** Constrained by this rocky gorge the waters provided the power source for several mills that developed on what little flat land existed or, was created on the riverside. This resulted in the formation of an important centre for cotton spinning, bleaching, dyeing and calico printing throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th century.

**1.22** New Mills takes its name from a manorial corn mill called "Berde" mill dating from before 1391. This was located near the site of the present Salem Mill, at the bottom of High Street. By the late 16th century the name New Mill was in use as a place name for a settlement which had grown up around the corn mill and which was to form the nucleus of the growing town in the late 18th century.

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**Picture 1 Bottom of High Street**

**1.23** From this centre the principal roads spread out organically along the riverside and up towards the flatter land above the gorge. High Street, Dyehouse Lane and Meal Street still have a few recognisable 18th century houses of two and three storeys in height. These are mostly built in cramped conditions on the steep slopes above the River Sett near to the mills. The house plots are often irregular in plan to suit the conditions of the site and a number are two storeys to the front with four storeys to the rear on the downhill side.

**1.24** The settlement spread southwards over the fields of the Torr Top estate and along a new turnpike road built in 1801, linking New Mills (the plural name coming into use in 1775) and Marple. This road became the present Market Street and led to the old Market Ground, now the bus turning circle, at the top of Union Road. Market Street was laid out with new commercial premises of almost uniform design in the 1830's to cater for the expanding population. In 1819 there were eight spinning mills, two paint works and two bleaching works. The population of 1,878 in 1801 had almost doubled by 1831.

**1.25** At this time the natural gorge of The Torrs provided a major obstacle to communications in New Mills. The only way to cross The Torrs, other than by the bridge at the bottom of High Street, was to make the steep descent down one of the tracks to the low level packhorse bridges which can still be seen over the River Goyt and Sett. All the mills in the gorge were served by these precipitous tracks.

**1.26** The first high level bridge over The Torrs (the Church Road Bridge) was built in 1835 as part of the new road linking the Manchester-Buxton Road (the A6) with Hayfield. Shortly after this, steam power was introduced into the mills and a second phase of mill building took place on the banks of the Peak Forest Canal at Newtown, then in Cheshire. The new bridge, with its road link to the High Street Bridge, helped communications but still The Torrs constrained the southward expansion of the town.

**1.27** A major stimulus to the growth and commerce of the town was the building of the second high level bridge, the Union Bridge, in 1884, linking New Mills in Derbyshire with Newtown. Almost immediately after its construction, terraced houses, shops and public buildings were constructed along Union Road, right up to the edges of the Torrs. In sharp contrast to the irregular pattern of development of 100 years earlier in the High Street/Meal Street area, these new properties were remarkably regular in style and size. The rapidly expanding communities of New Mills and Newtown were now conveniently linked on one level. Terraces of houses for mill workers and the new clerical

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and managerial classes, grew up across the fields to the south and east of the Torrs and up the sloping hill sides above the town to the north west, from where the occupants could enjoy the panoramic views of the Peak District hills.

**1.28** The first railway to serve New Mills came in 1857 and had its station at Newtown. In 1865, the railway from Manchester to New Mills central was opened and extended to Hayfield in 1868. These lines required bridges over the River Sett and tunnels under the town and a massive supporting stonework embankment where, the lines converged as they emerged from the tunnels into The Torrs.

**1.29** New Mills could be considered a new town of the 19th century planted onto an earlier settlement. Well into the 20th century its bustling, noisy and no doubt dirty mills and works, jostled for room along the floor of The Torrs and riverbanks up and down stream. These supported a prosperous community with numerous fine public buildings, schools and churches and a lively commercial centre.

**1.30** But with the decline and demolition of some of the mills, the closure and demolition of the older in-sanitary houses and the "axing" of the Hayfield branch railway line, some elements of New Mills' historical development have been lost forever. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the management of the conservation area and all future consideration of proposals to alter it recognise and revere the essential elements of the town's development and its urban topography.

## Building Types, Traditional Details and Materials

**1.31** Being almost exclusively from the late 18th century and the 19th century, the buildings in the conservation area are remarkably coherent in character and style.

**1.32** The local buff and light gritstone is the predominant material for walls, chimneys, door and window surrounds. Blue/black Welsh slates and local sandstone roofing slates are the main roofing materials, although unfortunately modern concrete tiles have taken the place of traditional materials in some instances.

**1.33** It is clear from the use of common red and blue engineering bricks on the sides and rear elevations of some buildings that stonework was highly regarded as the right material for the "public" faces of all buildings. It allowed the display of the craftsmen's skills, provided an assurance of high quality from the builder and expressed the owner's standing and wealth. It was only in the early 20th century that changes in architectural fashion brought exceptions to the norm, in the form of a faience facade to the shops at No's 43 and 45 Market Street built in 1913, and red clay tile hanging on the walls of terraced houses in Wood Street and Wirksmoor Road.

**1.34** It is in the use of the stone and its shaping and tooling, that one can discern differences in period and level of investment by the builders and local craft traditions.

**1.35** The earliest surviving buildings date from the late 18th century. Along Dyehouse Lane and High Street are 2 storey cottages with low doors. These have heavy stone jambs and lintels with recessed vertical sliding sash windows under wedge shaped lintels. The roofs are mainly stone flag coverings with timber eaves gutters. The former George Hotel (No 72 High Street) and No's 78-84 High Street show the slightly more formal building style of this period with bigger sash window openings, dressed stone quoins, cambered and wedge shaped lintels, decorative eaves

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cornices and entrance doorways. In the case of the latter, this is a bold attempt to stack accommodation on to a steep and awkward site. The general walling stone of this period is thinly coursed, almost as it came out of the quarry with a minimum of dressing to present even faces to the outside.



**Picture 2 No's 78-84 High Street**

**1.36** The older parts of Salem Mill and Torr Vale Mill both dating from about 1790 still contain the commonly used 2 and 3 light stone mullion windows which are now hard to find in any domestic building.

**1.37** Salem Mill, is a late 18th century four storey cotton mill. Alongside, until about 1940, was the "Old Corn Mill", a long, low two storey building. Salem Mill survives in a much altered state, having had a variety of industrial uses.

**1.38** Torr Vale is a complex building varying from two to five storeys and is probably one of the original mills used for cotton spinning, as early as 1788. In the 19th century spun yarns, candlewicks and cotton were produced. From early this century spinning and weaving cotton for towels has been the mill's specialty. Torr Vale Mill is particularly interesting having survived three different periods of power supply. Originally it was water-powered but, from 1865 a coal-fired steam engine was installed, which ran in conjunction with the water wheel until the 1940's. Electricity was introduced in 1931 but not until 1952 did the mill go all electric and the steam engine was dismantled. Regrettably a fire in July 2001 destroyed all but the lower floor of the weaving mill.

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**Picture 3 Torr Vale Mill from above**



**Picture 4 Torr Vale Mill from the Millennium Walkway**

**1.39** Hyde Bank Mill spans the River Sett in an "L" shaped four storey block on one of the corn mill sites recorded in 1767. Cotton was being spun here in the early 1800's but fire damaged the building twice during the 19th century. The Mill chimney is dated 1868 indicating the late advent of steam power to New Mills' factories. This site has recently been sympathetically converted into residential accommodation.



**Picture 5 Hyde Bank Mill**



**Picture 6 Hyde Bank Mill Chimney**

**1.40** As survivors of New Mills' earliest phase of development, the above buildings are very important historically.

**1.41** The second phase of development of New Mills, from about 1800 -1840, saw expansion southwards along High Street and Market Street. The buildings of this period were generally dwellings in 2 storey terraces of coursed, roughly faced gritstone, with semi-circular headed doorways in finely cut dressed gritstone surrounds. Windows were usually 4-paned exposed box sashes set under wedge lintels, although the earlier ones (16-20 High Street) had 16-paned sashes. Some in Market Street had the unusual detail of lead lined stone eaves gutters to prevent water pouring off the roofs onto the shoppers - such details need to be preserved. Roofs were still generally covered in gritstone flags but the availability of lighter Welsh slate with the opening of

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the Peak Forest Canal, led to the change of many of these roofs later in the century, from local to imported material. Very few stone-flagged roofs now remain and the non-availability of newly quarried supplies makes the survivors all the more precious. Along with this is the predominance of surviving "crown" type pots.



**Picture 7 Former Methodist Chapel, High Street**



**Picture 8 No's 16-20 High Street**

**1.42** Old photographs of Market Street suggest that some of the premises on the West side were built as dwellings over small shops and others were built solely as dwellings and later converted to shops. None of the earlier small shop windows survived but a number of good later ones remain.

**1.43** Other important individual buildings of this period are:

- High Lee Hall, built about 1830 for a local mill-owner in smooth finely cut ashlar, in a plain neo-Classical style.
- The first high-level bridge carrying Church Road over the River Goyt, constructed of large rusticated blocks of gritstone.
- The former Methodist Chapel in High Street, rebuilt in 1844 to replace an earlier one on the site, the first in the town, which was built in 1776.



**Picture 9 High Lee Hall**



**Picture 10 Queens Bridge over the River Goyt**

**1.44** From the middle of the 19th century through to the beginning of the 20th century, there were significant developments in the town centre and major expansions of the housing areas around it.

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**1.45** The construction of the Union Bridge in 1884 heralded the development of more shops. This started with the Jubilee Buildings of 1887, with dwellings above, the Masonic Hall and the Conservative Club, all in Union Road and terraced houses in Kinder View off back Union Road.

**1.46** Prominent individual buildings of this period include the former Manchester and County Bank of 1862 in High Street (now converted into residential accommodation); the Town Hall of 1871 (extended in 1875 and 1899); the former Mount Pleasant Methodist Church of 1892; the New Mills School (Lower) and the Mackie Memorial Library; six almshouses and St James' Church all erected in the 1880's.



**Picture 11 Manchester and County Bank, High Street**



**Picture 12 Town Hall**

**1.47** Another extension to the Town Hall, built in 1910, created the Carnegie Free Library on Hall Street, now the public library, in a combination of finely cut ashlar and coursed rubble gritstone. Much less prominent but none the less important to the town's character is the Central Station built in 1865 on the steep narrow lane leading down to Mousley Bottom and the Goyt Valley.

**1.48** Stonework of this period consisted mainly of rocky-faced, regularly coursed, gritstone for general walling with smooth faced dressings to windows and doors. Individual buildings like the Town Hall, the former Manchester & County Bank and the former Co-op store display considerable pretensions of grandeur in their elaborate mouldings, carvings and ashlar stone work. Like many of its neighbours, the former Co-op presents three tall storeys to High Street and two to Market Street.

**1.49** An unusual stone mason's tradition appears in some buildings in New Mills as in other Southern Pennine towns. Horizontal joints in general walling stone are inclined so as to project water outwards giving rise to the terms "water-shot walling". An example can be seen at No's 12 and 14 Market Street.

**1.50** This period gave the town many attractive Victorian shopfronts of which several still remain. Good examples exist towards the northern end of Market Street, Union Road and High Street. Continued partnership grant assistance has assisted private owners to undertake sympathetic repairs and restoration work to many commercial properties within the town centre. Through this, many traditional frontages been restored or reinstated which positively contribute and enhance the character of the town centre and conservation area.

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**1.51** Unfortunately others have been altered and replaced with crudely designed modern fascias and large plate-glass windows quite out of sympathy with the distinctive Victorian character of the buildings.

**1.52** The expanding housing developments of the late 19th century are represented in three areas - Midland Terrace and Kinder View, facing each other across the Torrs and the area including Wirksmoor Road, Jodrell Street, Torr Vale Road, and part of Wood Street. In all these streets the dwellings are narrow, two-storey terraced houses, built of rocky-faced, coursed gritstone, with Welsh slate roofs. There the similarity between streets ends, for all these streets display subtle differences which reflect the different aspirations of their builders and the housing standards of the times.

**1.53** Universally the windows had vertically sliding sashes, although varying slightly in detail from one street to the next, some were four-paned, some two-paned and some had a central cast-iron dividing column or mullion with original doors being four-panelled. The detailing of stonework around front doors in these houses varies widely, but it is done with skill and the obvious intention to impress, however humble the dwelling may be internally. All the stone work detailing survives but only in a handful of cases do complete sets of original sash windows and solid four-panelled doors survive..

**1.54** Some terraces have small front gardens with low walls and carved or tooled monolithic gritstone gate piers. (Sadly no examples of original iron railings or gates remain). Others open straight onto the footways.

**1.55** Roof eaves details vary too with some terraces having moulded timber fascias while most have the distinctive stone corbels for carrying the traditional gutter moulded out of a solid piece of timber. Some terraces like Kinder View, built on sloping ground have steeply sloping eaves gutters running the whole length of the row. This mill-town terrace detail must tax the skill of roofing contractors, for while the eaves are angled sharply the courses of slate are horizontal.

**1.56** Old photographs of New Mills' streets illustrate that stone setts, kerbs and paving slabs were widely used before the introduction of tarmacadam and concrete on carriageways and footways. While these traditional materials have largely disappeared several areas retain them, most notably Meal Street and Lower Rock Street. Considerable lengths of stone kerbing still survive but much less so the setts and paving slabs. The retention of these materials and their reintroduction where possible and appropriate, is as important to the character of this gritstone town as is the retention of stone-flagged roofs.

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**Picture 13 Stone setts on Meal Street**

**1.57** It is clear that, but for the timber, metals and glass used in traditional construction, the local gritstone provided the raw material for everything else, ie chimneys, roofs, walls, steps, gateways, footways and carriageways.

### Landscape Quality

**1.58** The Borough Council's Landscape Character document identifies New Mills as an urban area that sits within Riverside Meadows and Settled Valley Pastures. The Riverside meadows follows either side of the flow of the river Goyt and Sett. This cuts through carboniferous sandstone and shales creating gentle valley floors. The river corridors are enclosed due to the steep valley sides and extensive woodland. Further out from the river the landscape changes to settled valley pastures. Here the underlying geology is gritstone and shale.

**1.59** Trees and tree cover play an important part in defining the character of an area and its landscape setting. Within New Mills and the conservation area the Torrs and river gorge provide an extensive woodland of tree cover which in places dominates the urban fabric. The tree species is mainly broad leaf ash and sycamore. Many of the sycamore are self seeded and have encroached upon the high sided gorge. From the town, the gorge and tree cover provide an important and significant setting for the centre of New Mills. The setting of Union Road, Market Street, Meal Street and Hurst Lea Road are all enhanced by the tree cover that nestles beneath the built development. Given the topography, only the tops of mature trees are visible, as their base is located much lower within the gorge.

**1.60** At a higher level, High Lea Park provides a rich landscape setting for High Lea Hall. The south-western boundary of the park is covered by a Tree Preservation Order of mature broadleaf species. There is a strong linear line of mature Horse Chestnut and Lime trees that contain the eastern side of the park and front St Mary's Roman Catholic Church. This tree cover helps amplify the sense of enclosure along High Lead Road. The setting of the Hall itself is enhanced by the position of one mature horse chestnut located at its south east corner.

## 2 Part Two

### Area 1 - The Shopping Centre

**2.1** The area including all of Union Road, Market Street, upper High Street, Meal Street, Torr Top Street, Back Union Road and the middle section of Hyde Bank Road are contained within Area 1 and predominantly form the commercial town centre of New Mills. The first three streets comprise of a primary shopping area with the latter playing a secondary mainly servicing role.

**2.2** The three principal shopping streets are lined with mainly two and three-storey narrow shop units, many with good examples of Victorian shop windows, pubs and a few offices and banks. In the main the traditional small shop units have survived, varying in width from 4-5 metres, even where their shop-windows and fascias have been changed. Buildings are generally low, making the prominence of the roofs and chimney stacks important to the character of the conservation area.

**2.3** The Union Road approach to the Town Centre first goes over the Union Bridge where the high parapets obscure views down to The Torrs, but give distant views to the hills to the east and west. Union Road itself is relatively wide but enclosed by almost continuous shopping frontages on both sides leading up to the junction with Market Street and Hague Bar Road. Here the former Market Ground, now the bus and taxi station, creates a break in the frontages, affording views to the hills, over The Torrs gorge which is not itself apparent from any of the main streets.

**2.4** The change from Union Road or Hague Bar Road into Market Street is emphasised by the narrowing of the street width and the curve of the frontage on the North Side. The misalignment of all three streets helps to define Market Street and Union Road as separate spaces. Union Road climbs gradually to this junction where the street flattens out into Market Street.

**2.5** The quality of Market Street as the 'central place' of New Mills derives from a number of factors. It is on the flat whereas approaches to it are either up or down hill. It has almost continuous shopping frontages and a relatively narrow street, its northern end closed by the rising, curving frontage leading up to Spring Bank Road and its southern end partially closed by The Peaks public house.

**2.6** A weakness in the built frontage of Market Street is the open area at the junction with Torr Top Street created by the demolition of 19th century buildings. This area has been the subject of an environmental enhancement scheme to improve and reinstate traditional surface materials.

**2.7** The regular, planned form of Union Road and Market Street contrasts with the winding, informal character of High Street where a series of differing spaces is created by the curved building line, adjoining streets and alleys and the variety of heights and widths of terraced buildings.

**2.8** Meal Street, Torr Top Street and Back Union Road are generally fragmented spaces weakened by the loss of demolished buildings and the backs of others. Meal Street, however, retains its original gritstone setted carriageway and today serves little purpose in highway terms. As described already, this is one of the earlier developed streets which, with the later development of High Street, has become a backwater. In terms of adding to the character of this part of the conservation area, it is an important survivor from an earlier age and does offer potentially attractive views over Hyde Bank Mill and this part of the Sett Valley.

## 2 Part Two

**2.9** The shopping centre fades out where Market Street curves and climbs up to become Spring Bank Road, in front of the Town Hall. At this point the enclosure of the shopping streets gives way to a one-sided street with a mix of residential and public buildings, most with set back frontages, facing across the Sett Valley.

**2.10** In this area, two small "off-street" squares help to create spaces out of a one-sided street. First the forecourt and garden of the Town Hall, flanked by the former Mount Pleasant Methodist Church and the terrace of buildings on Hall Street; and second, St James Square, created by the School, the almshouses and St James Church.

**2.11** Hyde Bank Road forms the eastern edge of Area 1 and the conservation area boundary. It is from along this road that a number of views are afforded of the back of the commercial centre, namely Market Street and High Street along with views of both Torr Top Cottages and the terraces along Kinder View. These depict clearly the precarious development along the top of The Torrs. The western edge of Hyde Bank Road is heavily tree lined forming a steep bank running down to the bottom of the gorge. Although near to the centre of New Mills the noise associated with a bustling town centre is clearly lacking along this route with the only noise present being that of the water rushing through The Torrs below.

**2.12** There are a number of buildings that due to their location, style, historical development, listing or townscape quality make a significant contribution to the character of this area and the conservation area as a whole. They are as follows:

- Mount Pleasant Methodist Church, Spring Bank Road - This relates to the architectural and historic relevance of the surviving building only. The front of the site is overgrown and the land derelict. This aspect has a negative impact upon the character of the conservation area.
- Town Hall and Library, Spring Bank Road/ Hall Street
- Torr Top Cottages
- Stanley House, High Street (the former Co-op building and now in residential use)
- The Former Bank Premises, High Street
- Hyde Bank Mill, Hyde Bank Road

**2.13** Unfortunately there are also a number of buildings and spaces that have a negative contribution towards the character of the conservation area. The sites within Area 1 are as follows:

- Crabtree's Haulage Yard, Hyde Bank Road (just outside conservation area boundary)
- Wild's Scrapyard, Hyde Bank Road

### Area 2 - Lower High Street and the Old Bridge

**2.14** The old High Street Bridge was once the focus of the first New Mills community, with roads spanning out and upwards in all directions from this early river crossing. Now this area has an air of neglect and decline which spoils it from being an attractive riverside area close to the town centre.

## 2 Part Two

**2.15** From the bridge the land rises steeply on the west side, where once stood many houses and small industrial premises, up to the skyline on Spring Bank Road, now dominated by the Late 19th century school and Church of St James. This area known as Bankside has recently been developed. The form of the development follows closely that of the former buildings and has been constructed in natural gritstone with slate roofs.



**Picture 14 Development at Bankside, High Street**

**2.16** On the east bank, once dominated by the Salem Mills complex and the St George's Methodist Chapel, a semi-rural atmosphere is apparent. The demolition of the Chapel has left an overgrown burial ground and neglected boundary walls and gates. The group of mill buildings has been reduced and altered over the years lessening its architectural importance, but not its historic or townscape significance in this part of the Conservation Area.

**2.17** The introverted character of the area around the bridge with its few surviving cottages, a pub and one shop, is quite different from that high up on Spring Bank Road, the western edge of this sub-area. From this elevated position the relationship of this one-sided street is with the distant hills rather than with Bankside or the Bridge area.

**2.18** Sites within Area 2 making a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area include:

- Salem Mill (parts of), Hyde Bank Road
- New Mills Lower School, Spring Bank Road
- St James' Square, Church and Almshouses, Spring Bank Road

### **Area 3 - Midland Terrace and Hyde Bank Road**

**2.19** This small area comprises three rows of terraced cottages on Midland Terrace, (forming the edge of the conservation area), a railway cutting, the railway bridges, a short terrace of five dwellings on Hyde Bank Road, and a former coal yard (now developed for residential accommodation) . The terrace of 5 houses was built by the Midland Railway Company in 1865 to house company employees and was originally known as Beard Terrace. Next to the houses were stables serving the adjacent railway goods yard. This land later had a variety of uses before being developed for residential use.

**2.20** Trees lining the top of The Torrs along Hyde Bank Road form the western edge of this area which links visually with the town centre by views across The Torrs.

## 2 Part Two



**Picture 15 Houses along Midland Terrace**



**Picture 16 View from The Torrs looking up towards Hyde Bank Road**

**2.21** Albion Road running through the southern end of Area 3 offers, from its elevated position, long distance views of the surrounding hillside.

### **Area 4 - Torr Vale Terraces**

**2.22** To the south of The Torrs is an area of mainly terraced houses, the older parts of which are within the conservation area. The terrace on Torr Vale Road built in 1863 for workers of Torr Vale Mill with the adjacent mill managers house, are the oldest apart from a small block of three which date from the early 19th century. Those on Wirksmoor Road, Jodrell Street and Wood Street were built towards the end of the 19th century, while those on Hurst Lea Road, on the edge of The Torrs were built a few years later.

**2.23** The uniform townscape created by 2-storeyed, narrow residential frontages with similar doors, windows and chimneys is important to the character of this area. It is a quiet area with its own pub, the Rock Tavern. Like the Midland Terrace area it forms a small enclave separated from the Town Centre by The Torrs and its dense tree cover which forms the northern edge of this area.

**2.24** Physical links with the town centre are via Union Bridge or via the steep footpaths and narrow bridges in The Torrs.

**2.25** Part of this area, to the north and west of the terraces bordering on the Mousley Bottom area contain a stand of mature broad-leaved trees, where the ground drops away to Torr Vale Mills.

**2.26** The terrace along Hurst Lea Road is typical of New Mills. The terrace itself has been developed along the top ridge of The Torrs affording spectacular views of the Torrs and views of New Mills town centre across the gorge.

**2.27** The uniform townscape of sub-area 4 is somewhat blighted by the fairground site - a contaminated and untidy site used for the storage of fairground vehicles.



## 2 Part Two

### Area 5 - High Lee Park

**2.28** Created out of the estate of a mill-owners house and its grounds, High Lee Park is a recreational area of sloping grassland edged by mature trees on all sides and residential streets to the north and east. Due south the sloping ground permits views over the trees and the Goyt Valley, the mills of New Town to the hills beyond, but with no sight or sound of the river or trains below the tree line.



**Picture 17 High Lee Park**

**2.29** The Park is a quiet, leisurely place, open, but large enough for traffic noise to be subdued. High Lee Hall is the centre piece, with its walled kitchen garden and stable block. The dense belt of trees on the west side of the Park forms the edge of the Conservation Area and virtually the edge of the settlement.



**Picture 18 View of High Lee Hall**

**2.30** Also included within Area 5 is a small number of large detached gritstone properties occupying a central location at the bottom of St Mary's Road/Longlands Road. Unlike the predominant terraced style of housing, they are much larger and more prestigious dwellings surrounded by large and mature private gardens. Their location offers direct and undisturbed views across the southern part of the conservation area towards the surrounding countryside. These properties along with High Lee Hall and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church significantly contribute to the townscape quality of the conservation area and the character of this particular sub-area.

## 2 Part Two

### Area 6 - Mousley Bottom

**2.31** Where the River Goyt leaves The Torrs just downstream of Torr Vale mills, the valley broadens out into Mousley Bottom. Here, well below the level of the main Streets of New Mills is an area of semi-rural character where the principal sound is from the rushing water of the Goyt.

**2.32** The only road into or out of the area is the very narrow Station Road, leading down from the town centre, first to Central Station half way down the gorge side and then to two small industrial premises. Further on, where the land levels out, the lane gives access to a former gas works site, a former scrap yard (recently developed to provide residential development), two houses and recently renovated timber-framed barn and attached stables. Beyond but just outside the conservation area is a reclaimed refuse tip now grass sown and planted with trees.



**Picture 19 Looking up Station Road towards the town centre**

**2.33** This area has good prospects for the future. Much land reclamation has been carried out and is still going on to recover this riverside area and reinforce its natural assets. The area however is somewhat blighted by the industrial premises.

**2.34** So effective is the present tree cover in this area that one is unaware of the adjacent areas of the Torr Valley terraces and High Lee Park - even the railway line is out of sight until you approach the station up the lane. The footbridges carry footpaths, including the Midshires Way, through the area and link the adjacent areas.

### Area 7 - The Torrs

**2.35** The "park under the town" rightly describes the relationship of The Torrs to the rest of New Mills town centre. Following the old pack-horse paths down the steep sides of the gorge, one enters a different world from the streets above. The riverside shelves, on which the fragments of the mills still stand, alongside one gaunt chimney, now provide the solitude of a rural walk. Only the occasional glimpse of a building high up on the cliff tops or a high vehicle on one of the bridges suggests this is anything other than a rural setting. The waters rushing over the weirs obliterate all but the loudest of urban sounds from the town.

## 2 Part Two



**Picture 20 The park under the town**

**2.36** The one surviving mill (Torr Vale) provides a vivid illustration of how every square foot of available riverside space was once filled with buildings. Now the tree-lined cliffs of this winding gorge create a series of public open spaces through which the footpaths have been formed to create the park under the town.



**Picture 21 Dramatic siting of Torr Vale Mill**

**2.37** Torr Vale Mill occupies a dramatic site surrounded on three sides by the River Goyt where it cuts into the cliffs beneath Rock Mill Lane and runs alongside the vast retaining wall to the Manchester - Sheffield railway. Some of the best views of this complex can be seen from the viewing platform on Rock Mill Lane although an even more dramatic experience is available when viewed from the Torrs Aerial Walkway.

## 2 Part Two



**Picture 22** Vast retaining wall supporting the Manchester-Sheffield railway



**Picture 23** The Torrs Aerial Walkway

## 3 Part Three

### Conclusion

**3.1** New Mills is a town of dramatic topography and origins that date back to the 14th century. Its topography and the supply of fast flowing waters led to its development as a thriving mill town and important centre for the textile industry. Its impressive landscape dictated much of its developed form and the townscape that we still see today. Unfortunately New Mills, like most other historic settlements, has its own problem buildings and sites. However, such is the strength and complexity of the character of the conservation area, that even together these problem sites and buildings do not have an overwhelmingly negative effect on it.

**3.2** Most of the buildings have a positively beneficial role to play in preserving or enhancing the character of the conservation area, given a willing owner and the opportunities for their repair and regeneration. This, along with the continued partnership grant schemes, have and will continue to promote the enhancement, appearance and regeneration of the town.

### References

**3.3 Bryant, R and Symonds, J** (1987) *New Mills and District - A Look Back*, published by New Mills Local History Society.

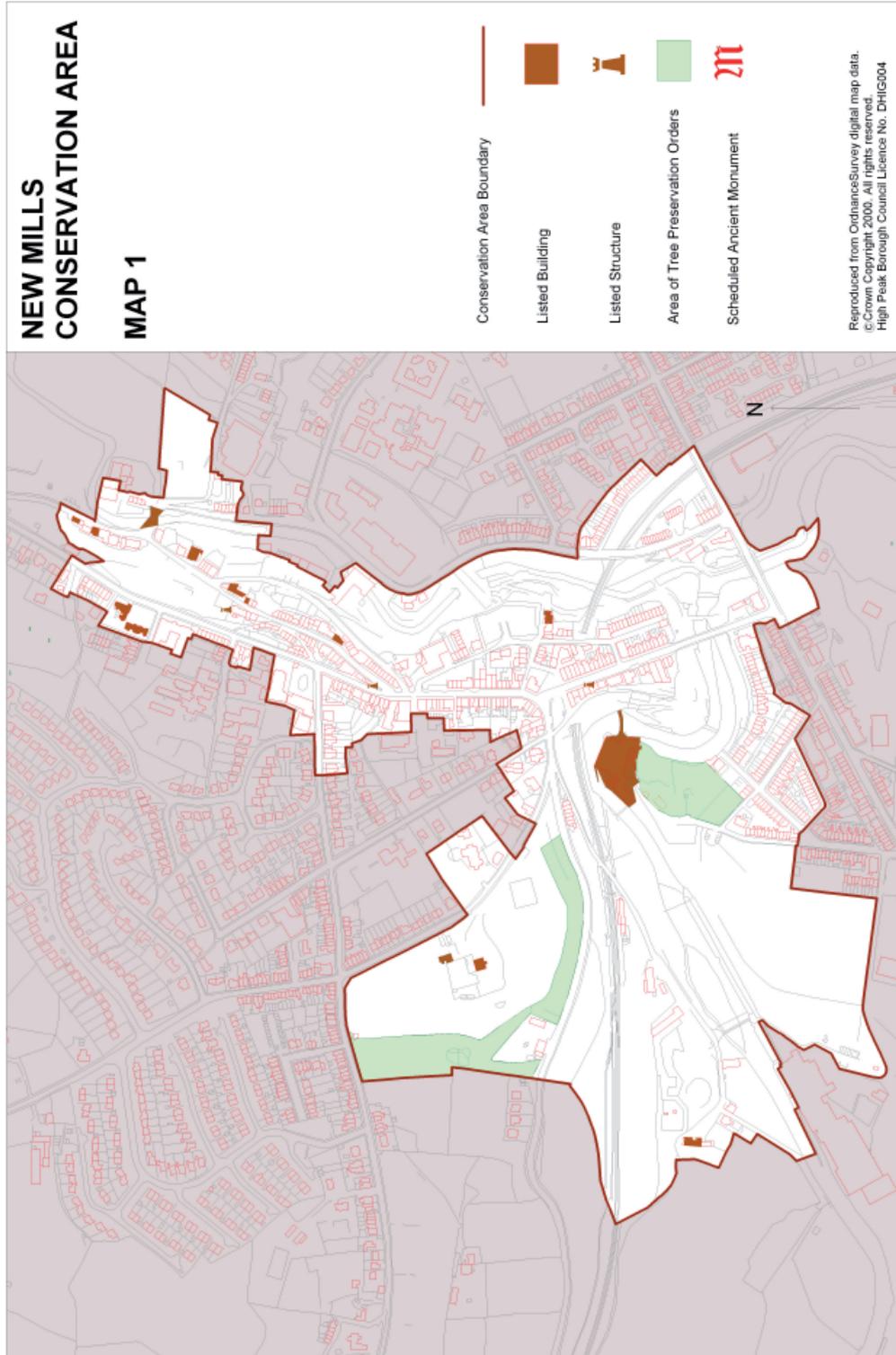
**3.4 Brumhead, D and Bryant, R** (1993) *A Short History of New Mills*, published by New Mills Heritage Centre.

**3.5 Brumhead, D** (1994) *New Mills 1894-1994*, published by New Mills Town Council.

**3.6 High Peak Borough Council** (March 2006) *Landscape Character Appraisal SPD5*

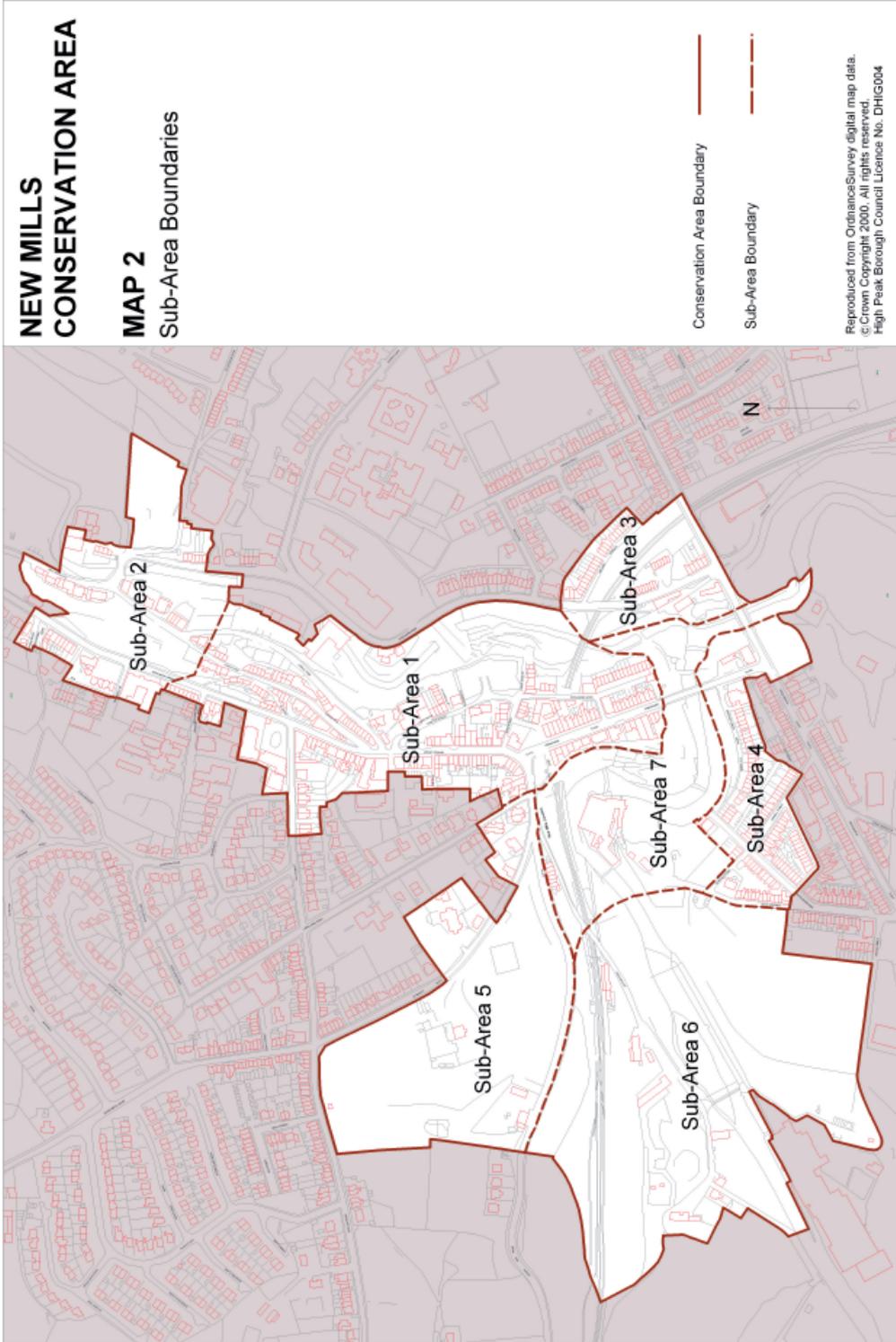
# 4 Part Four

## Statutory Designation Map 1



Map 1 New Mills Conservation Area Boundary

# 4 Part Four

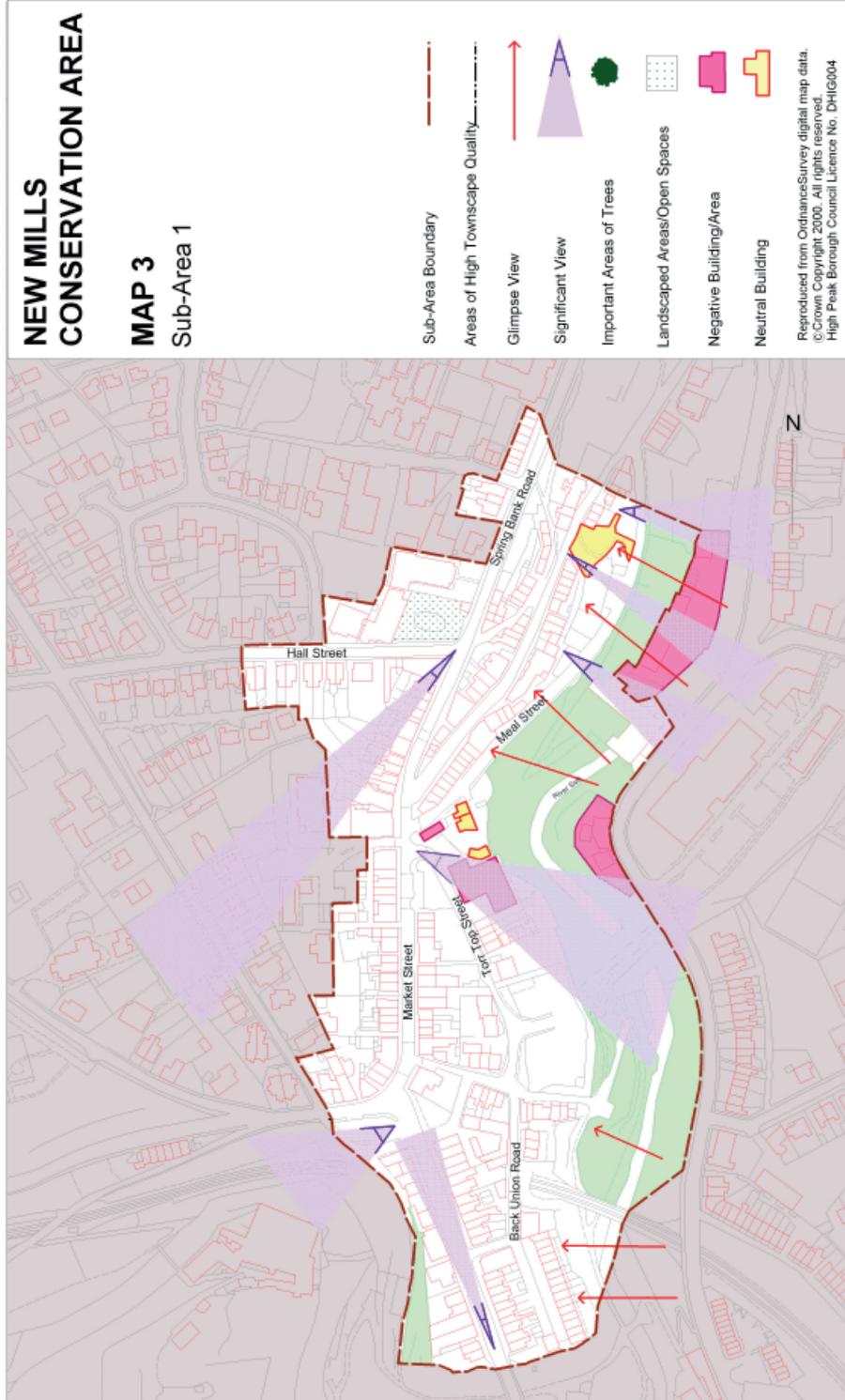


Map 2 Sub Area Boundaries



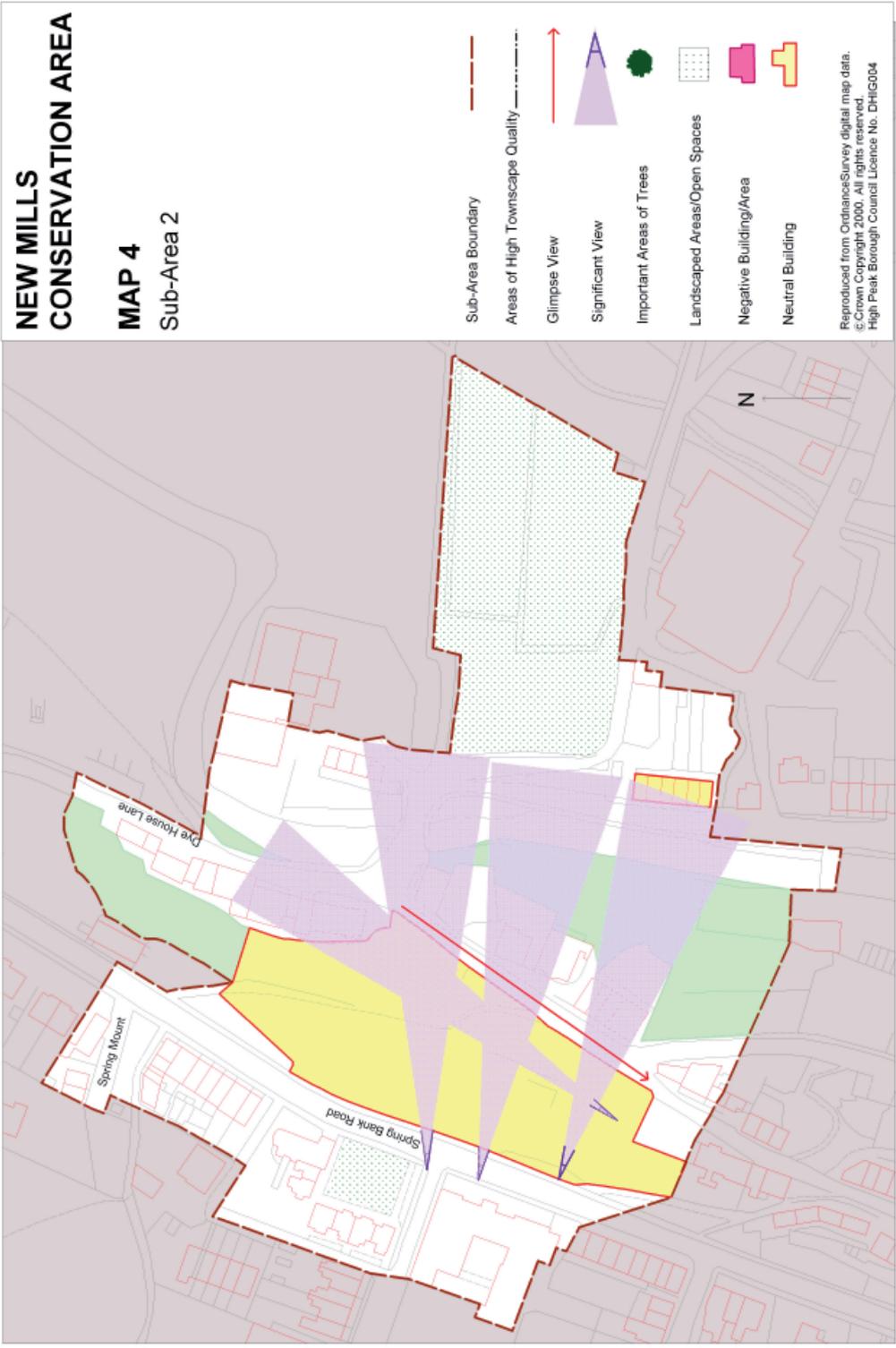
# 4 Part Four

## Sub Area Maps 3 - 9



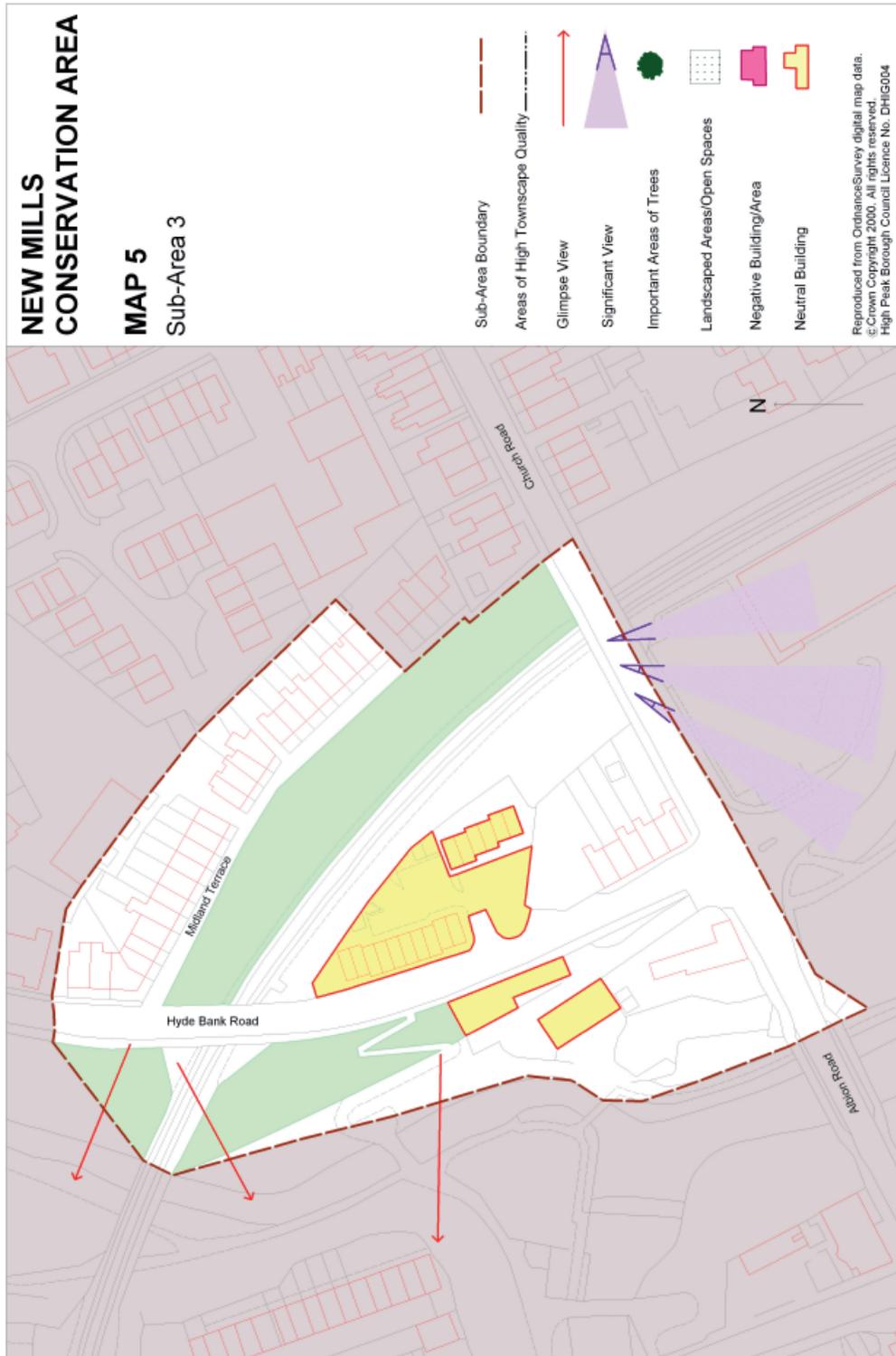
Map 3 Sub Area 1

# 4 Part Four



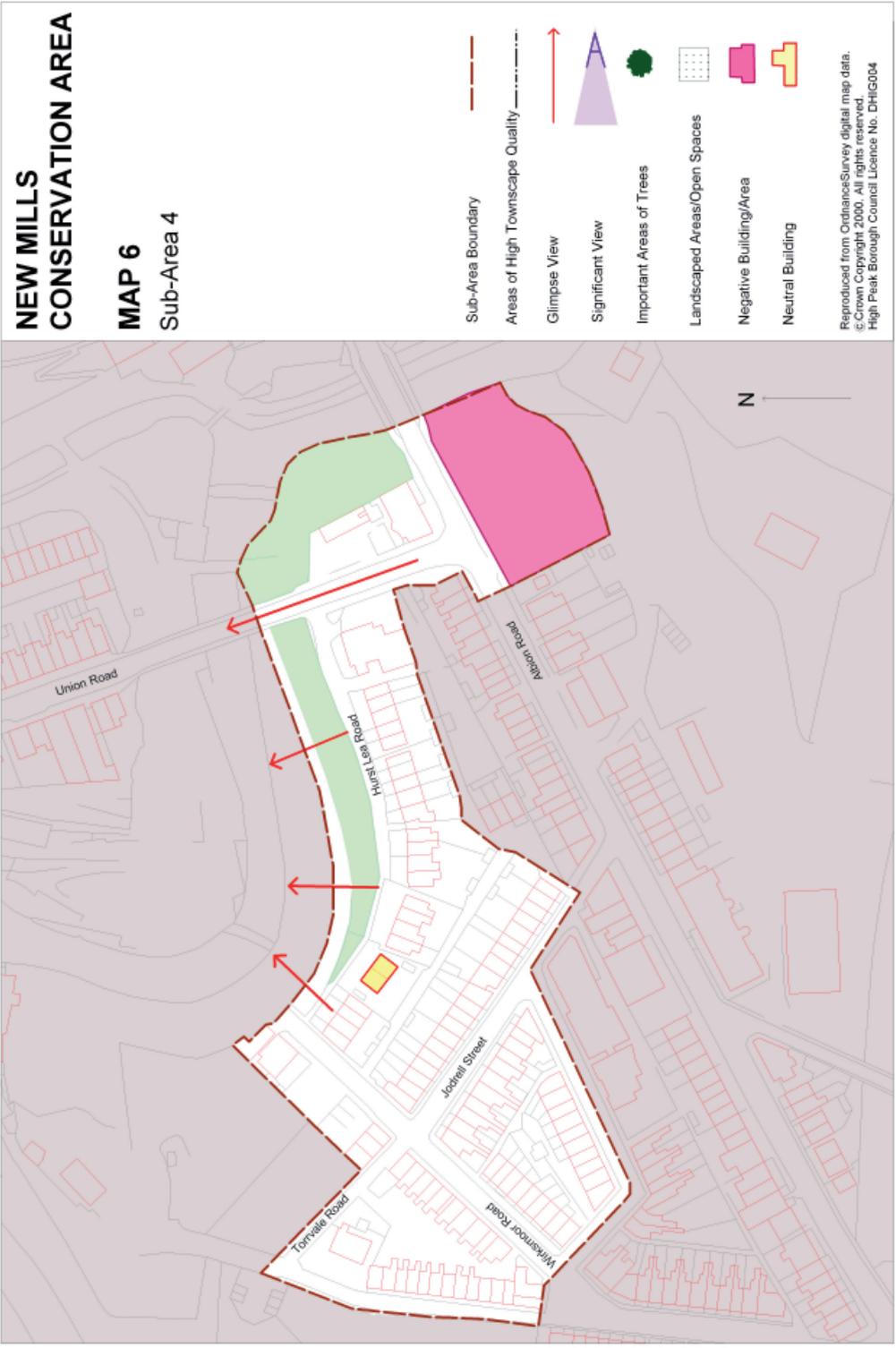
Map 4 Sub Area 2

# 4 Part Four



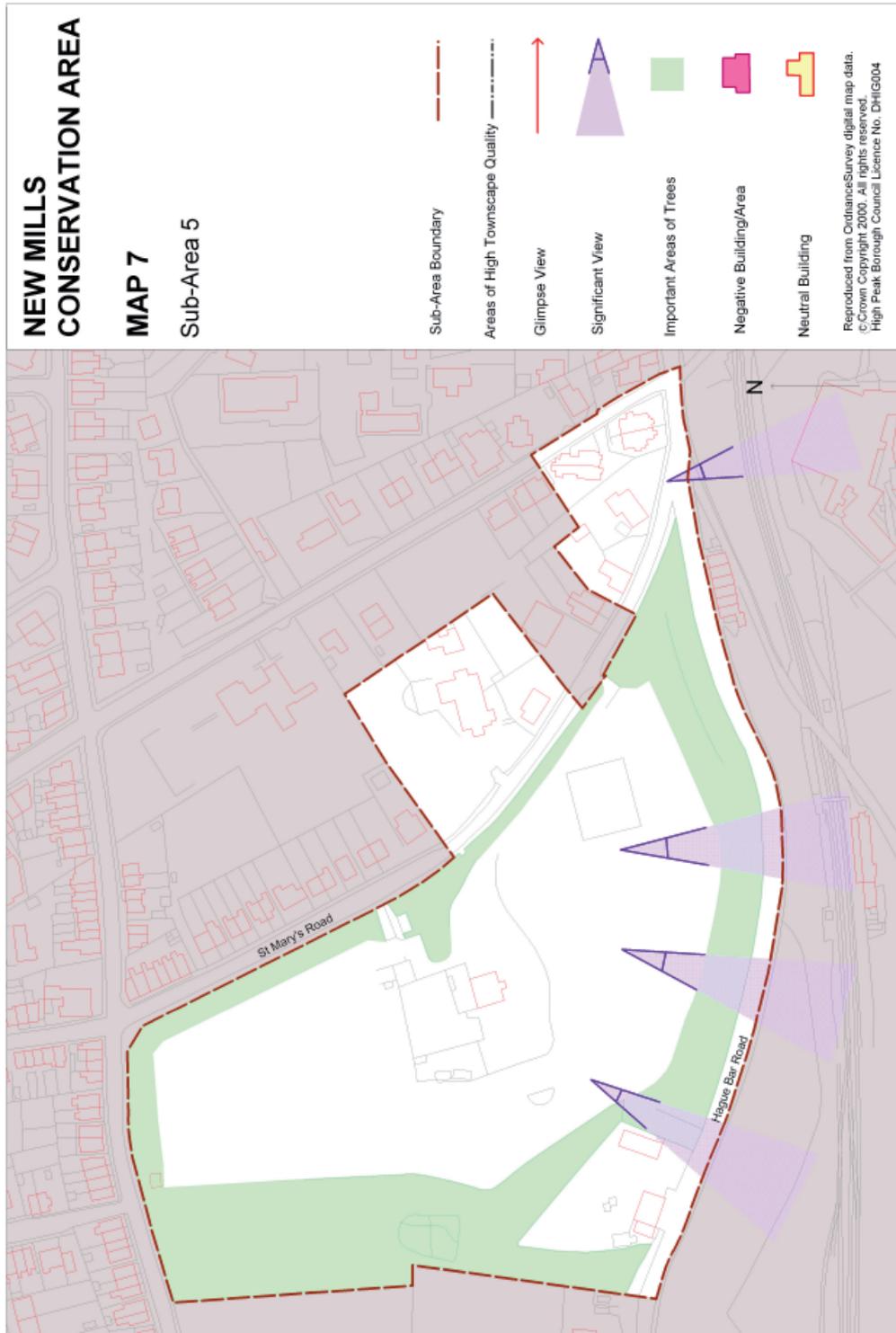
Map 5 Sub Area 3

# 4 Part Four



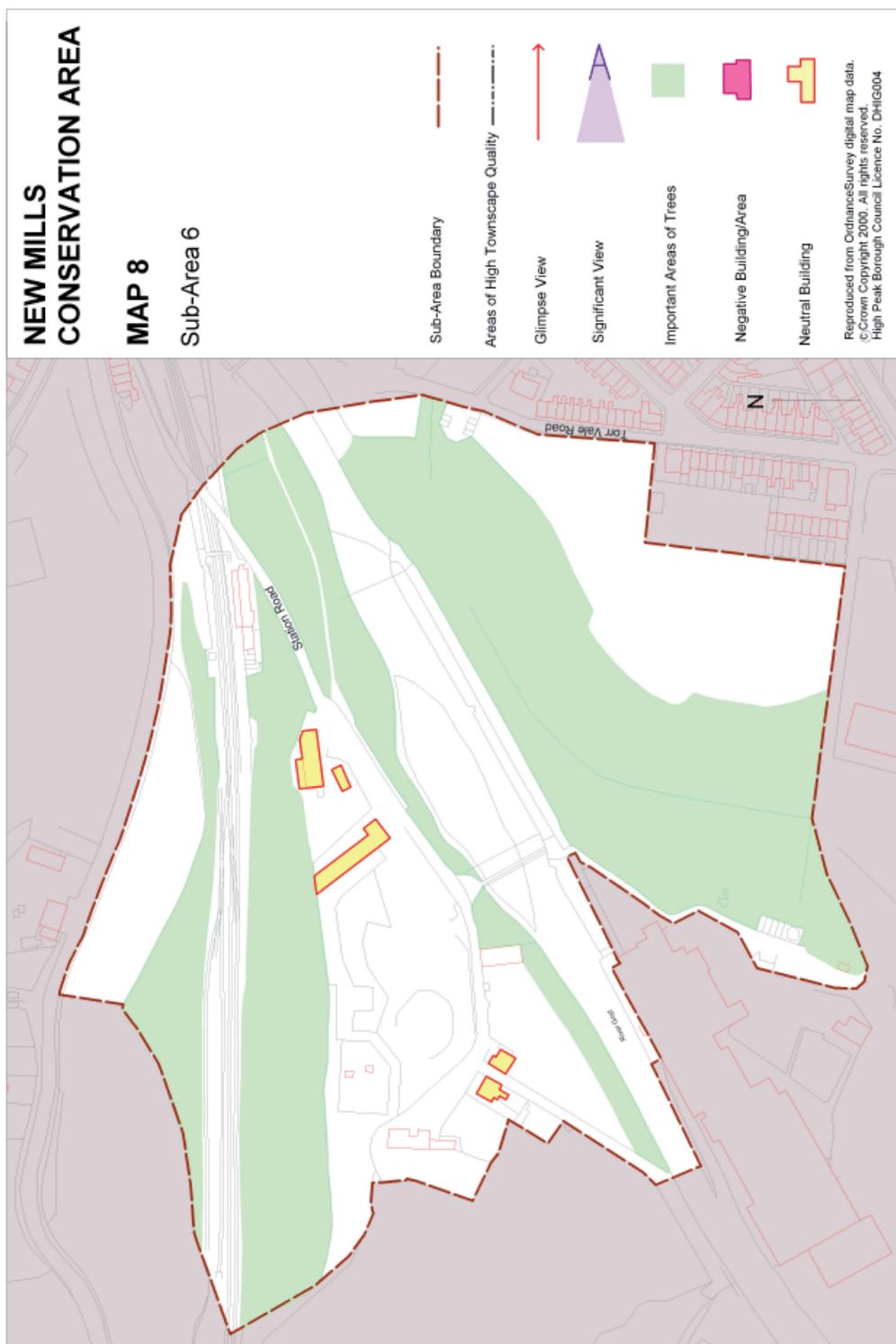
Map 6 Sub Area 4

# 4 Part Four



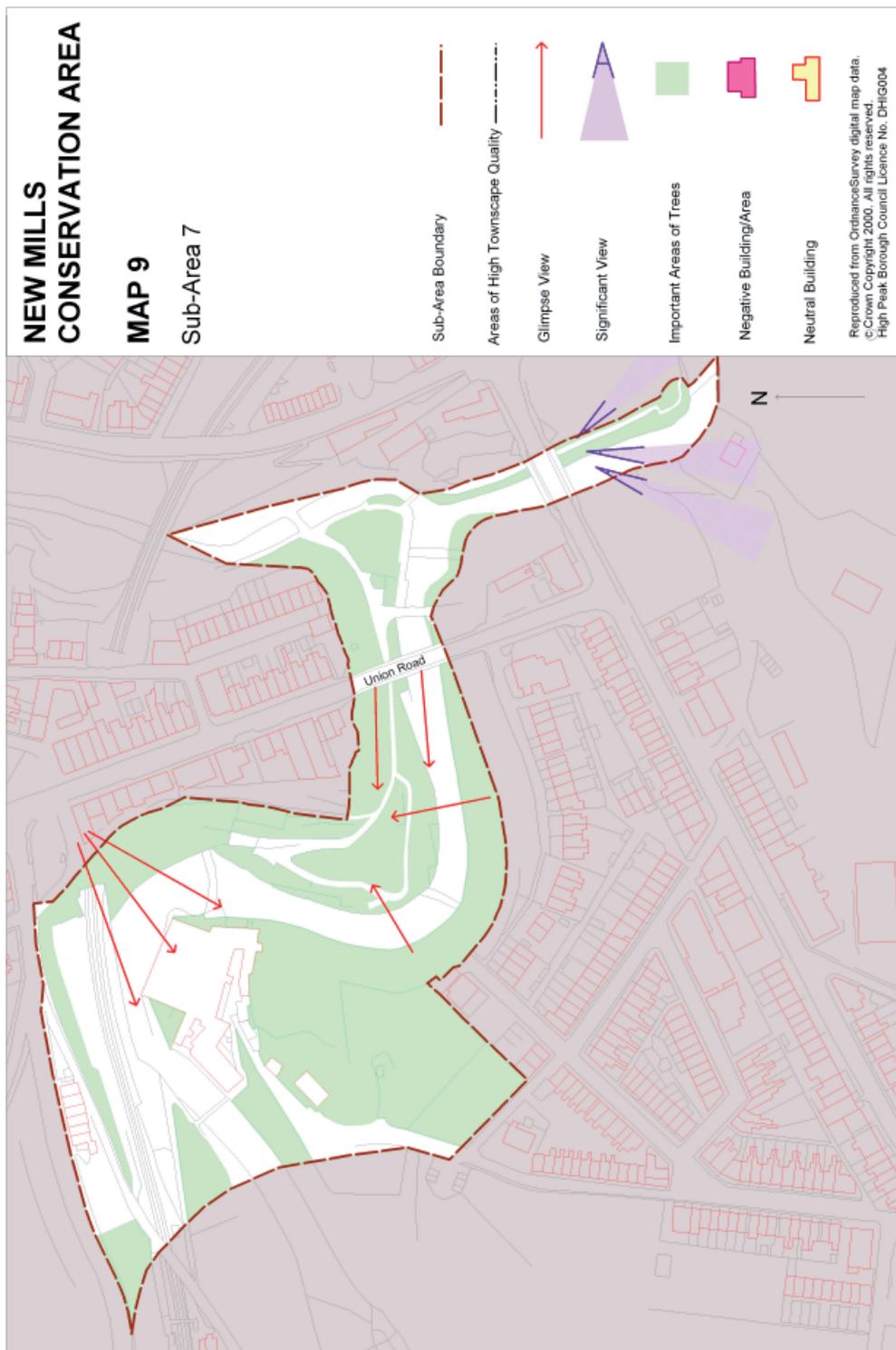
Map 7 Sub Area 5

# 4 Part Four



Map 8 Sub Area 6

# 4 Part Four



Map 9 Sub Area 7