5. ARCHAEOLOGY

The Historic Environment Record (HER) is held by Derbyshire County Council. The majority of sites identified on the HER are associated with industrial archaeology, particularly the Cromford & High Peak Railway and sites associated with lead mining.

The earliest known archaeological feature in the area is a Bronze Age barrow, located on Middleton Moor, to the west of the conservation area. Spot finds include a Neolithic large grey horseshoe scraper and 3 brown flint flakes in a ploughed field to the north of the High Peak Trail at Rise End and pieces of late Neolithic/Bronze Age flint & pottery on Middleton Moor. There are also two closely-related Romano-British sites just outside the conservation area, to the north-west of Water Lane, on the northern flank of Middleton Moor. Known as “City Folds”, the larger site is comprised of a T-shaped enclosure of 3 acres, possibly a village, with a separate nucleated farmstead. Remains of lead working around the site have led to speculation that they may be Roman lead mining sites but any association is unproven.

The whole of the medieval settlement framework within Middleton-by-Wirksworth offers archaeological potential. Here, there may be reasonable expectation that archaeological evidence relating to the medieval and early post-medieval periods may survive below ground. A number of entries in the HER relate to the evidence of medieval ridge and furrow and strip lynchets, overlaid with lead workings, which lie in the former open fields to the east and north-east of the settlement.

There are areas of industrial archaeological interest in a large part of the conservation area, but most particularly:

- in the area to the south of the High Peak Trail, the remains confined to the lead industry and the sites of Ratchwood & Rantor Mine. These are nucleated lead mines – a range of features grouped around the adits and/or shafts of a mine. These also include ore works, where the mixture of ore and waste rock extracted from the ground was separated (dressed) to form a smeltable concentrate. The mines at Ratchwood and Rantor are well preserved examples of early origin and are scheduled. Ratchwood & Rantor Mines – “a site with large hillocks with flat-topped dressing floors, ruined oes and other buildings (one a ruined mine office and reckoning house), and capped shafts, one with a beehive capping. There is also a poorly defined gin circle, slight remains of a line of rectangular house teens, a pond and a small buddle dam. The two mines lie within ruined belland yards.”

- To the north of these mines, and just outside the conservation area, lies Ratchwood Mine Founder Shaft, a “large flat-topped hillock with lidded shaft, overgrown gin circle with footings of wall to one side and a small ruined oes in the hillock side.”

- in the vicinity of Middleton Top Engine House and along the length of the High Peak Trail, the remains confined to the industrial interest of the railway and its connected industries, and all aspects of the operation of the railway (e.g. bridges, embankments, revetments & buttresses, cuttings, sidings, sleepers, sections of rail, wheelpits, quarries associated with the railway)

Just outside the conservation area are a number of lead industry sites with national or international significance; Ratchwood Mine Founder Shaft, Gang Mine, which lies between Middleton and the B5036 and is known to have been working in the 16th century, and the mines in the Griffe Grange valley (Via Gellia). There are also scattered remains of lead mining activity within and just beyond the medieval settlement, in and around the conservation area.

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6. ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC QUALITY

Prevalent & Traditional Building Materials & Details

Middleton-by-Wirksworth has a large number of historic buildings, built at high density. Many old buildings were demolished during the 19th and 20th century, in association with quarry expansion, and in the 1970s and 80s, as part of a road-widening scheme. The majority of standing buildings within the historic core of both Middleton & Rise End date from the late 18th century and first half of the 19th century. The village has few architectural pretensions and therefore the range of materials and details found within the village is quite limited, although there are many subtle variations.

Limestone is the predominant building material in Middleton-by-Wirksworth and Rise End. The use of the local limestone throughout the villages and the conservation area generates a strong and harmonious link between the buildings and the surrounding landscape, with its backdrops of limestone quarry faces and drystone walls, lining the roads and snaking across the moors & hills.

Walling Materials

Stone

Even though the village was dominated by quarrying from the second half of the 19th century, there is relatively little use of Hopton Wood Stone in its finely-tooled form. It was almost entirely exported as a high quality ashlar & ornamental stone, and was used mainly for interiors, even though it weathers well outside.

There is evidence that Hopton Wood Stone was adopted for quoins in a handful of buildings, such as Foxhole Cottage (31 Main Street), and finely-dressed limestone window dressings with jambs can be found on a number of houses built between 1900 and 1922. These may have been a by-product of stone produced for the Imperial War Graves Commission. There is at least one example where stones cut into long thin slabs were used as copings for a boundary wall (at Jessamine Cottages) and these may have originally been intended as headstones.

The local carboniferous limestone that outcropped on the surface was the principal building stone. This was characteristically hard and intractable and was, therefore, used to build thick rubble walls. It is light to dark grey in colour. The 19th century photographs reveal that there seem to be as many houses & cottages that were left with a natural rubblestone face as were rendered.

There are many instances where rubble limestone was used in conjunction with large, tooled limestone quoins. The source for this shaped limestone, worked with a sharp arris, may be from the more regular beds of limestone quarried from the moor (just above Water Lane). The source of stone for some of the shaped, half-round and...
chamfered limestone copings and the monolithic gateposts found in Middleton is difficult to pinpoint. A number of 18th century buildings were built with coursed, dark grey limestone. There are clearly a number of different sources of limestone, with subtle differences in character. Overall, however, they are mostly light or dark grey with only a few buildings built from a creamier colour (eg. 31 Main Street). Time and weathering have evened out many of the more distinct differences.

The use of Millstone Grit (gritstone) is more limited, surprisingly so given the local availability of the stone at Black Rocks on the hillside opposite Middleton, at Barrel Edge Quarry.

Pink gritstone was used on many of the older buildings, exclusively for dressings in combination with rubble limestone walls. Pink gritstone was used for quoins, lintels, cills, window and door jambs and copings to gables. One of the earliest examples of this is at the Nelson Arms, where quoins and a moulded 17th century window surround in pink gritstone can be seen in the gable end. Pale yellow gritstone was also used on occasion for dressings during the 19th century, although it is much less common.

Pink gritstone was occasionally used as the main walling material, where it was laid as a coursed ashlar. Almost without exception the pink gritstone buildings were introduced from the early 19th century, the 1820s, onwards. Many of the public buildings were built from pink gritstone ashlar; eg. The Church of Holy Trinity (1839), the front elevation of the Wesleyan Chapel (1874), New Zion Methodist Church (1906) and Middleton Primary School (1846), and slightly further afield, Middleton Top Engine House (c.1830). Many of the bridges along the route of the Cromford & High Peak Railway were built from gritstone ashlar, although not exclusively so, and there are examples of massive limestone block retaining walls.

There is no tradition of rubble gritstone, although it is found at Rise End Farm. Gritstone window and door surrounds were mainly plain and squared, finished with a punched face, although in the latter part of the 19th century some of the lintels were carved with decorative patterns.

By the second half of the 19th century, some of the more substantial houses near the bottom of Hillside were being built almost exclusively with pink gritstone. Examples include 34 Main Street and East View (No.1 Hillside), a 19th century house that was dressed with “rock-faced” stone.

Render

There is a long history of the use of render in this area of Derbyshire, mainly in association with rubble limestone, even before render (or stucco) became a fashionable finish in the Regency period.

There are a variety of different types of render found within Middleton. These are distinguished by the method in which they were applied. One of the oldest & most traditional methods is known as “wet dash”; this was applied by throwing a coarse, sloppy aggregate against the walls of the building (also known as roughcast). Use of the local lime and crushed and graded limestone meant that the “wet-dash” is characteristically grey in colour and it was left unpainted, and allowed to weather naturally. Although there are instances where “wet-dash survives”, there were once many more, as large numbers of cottages have had the render removed to reveal the rubble limestone underneath.

Other methods of rendering include mixing lime with sand. This was applied with a wooden “float” to create a smooth surface. When used in combination with cement this was known as stucco. Stucco was occasionally painted.
The use of render became highly fashionable during the Regency period. It was used to create a refined appearance where ashlar was prohibitively expensive. It was usually used to cover up rubblestone walling but there are examples in Rise End where it was applied over coursed stone. Render was often “lined-out” (incised) to imitate dressed ashlar walls and in Middleton there are several examples of this practice, at 7 Main Street, 49 Main Street & Nelson Arms. With such a large concentration of buildings surviving from the Regency period, it is perhaps not surprising that there are so many rendered buildings.

**Brick**

Nationally, brick had become a highly fashionable building material by the end of the 18th century but had little impact in Middleton. A brick kiln was in use in the 18th century near the junction of Cromford Hill and Porter Lane (B5035) on Wirksworth Moor (DRO D369). There are no indications that this kiln supplied brick to the village of Middleton, although it may have provided a source for the chimney stacks, which are almost all built from a local red brick in a plain form with one or two brick oversailing courses. Even though many of the chimneys have been rendered, this was usually carried out as a repair/alteration. During the late 19th and early 20th century blue bricks were occasionally used for chimneys, a material which came from The Potteries.

Red brick was almost exclusively introduced in the 19th century. Brick was used for a number of small outbuildings, lean-to’s & privies. On occasion it was used to form squared jambs to window openings, and, in most cases, the walls were then rendered. Red brick was also adopted for front elevations to provide a more formal finish than limestone rubble. It had become very popular in the mid 19th century and it was an affordable alternative to gritstone. The brick-fronted houses were generally built of regular, machine-made brick. Examples include No. 17, No. 25 & Jessamine Cottages at Rise End and No.21 Main Street (now rendered). The most prominent brick building in the conservation area is the tall, tapered industrial chimney at Middleton Top, which served the boilers at the back of the Engine House. The bricks were fired at a high temperature and some of them have a bluish hue.

**Boundary treatments**

The universal use of rubble limestone for boundary walls gives the villages a strong identity & cohesion. Many of the rubble limestone walls were mortared but drystone walls characterise the field boundaries. Copings varied, according to what was available & easily affordable. They range from half-round, chamfered, triangular & flat limestone, as well as the rounded rubble limestone, commonly used for drystone walls and there are also examples of gritstone copings.

There are a few places where the boundary was
treated more formally, such as the coursed pink gritstone walls in front of Holy Trinity Church, and the New Zion Methodist Church, both of which were finished with a set of wrought iron railings. The entrance to each chapel was framed with wrought-iron gates and gritstone gatepiers. There are also several instances of wrought-iron railings being used in a domestic situation, in association with a plinth wall, and a number of small pedestrian wrought iron gates framed by stone gateposts.

Roofing materials & details

Photographs dating from the late 19th century reveal that some of the houses in Middleton were once thatched in “long straw” but there are no surviving examples. Instead, the village is now totally dominated by Staffordshire blue clay tiles. This versatile roof material may have been first brought into Middleton along the Cromford & High Peak Railway, via the Cromford Canal. They first became widely available in Derbyshire from the late 18th century, when the expanding canal network was able to transport these tiles from the Potteries. Staffordshire blue clay tiles are extremely durable and outlast many other roofing materials.

By the beginning of the 19th century Welsh and Cumbrian slate had started to arrive in the area but there are only a few examples. Welsh slate can be found on occasion, but it is uncommon.
In the Wirksworth area there was a local tradition of graduated stone slate roofs but there is only one complete example at Middleton, at the Middleton Top Engine House. A single course of stone slate can be seen at the back of No.10 Rise End. This tradition continued in the use of graduated courses of imported Cumbrian slate. Examples of a graduated Westmoreland slate roof can still be seen at Middleton Primary School and the front roof slope of No.10 Rise End.

**Stone-coped gables & verges**

Within this part of Derbyshire there had been a long tradition of raising the gable wall with a stone parapet, known as a stone-coped gable. The examples in Middleton are generally finished with flat stone copings, indicating mainly early 19th century origins. The eaves-line is marked by a large projecting stone called a kneeler. Examples include The Duke of Wellington, No. 13 Main Street and No. 31 Main Street. An early example may be seen at Nelson Arms (C17) and a late example can be seen at The Old Vicarage (1852).

Bargeboards can be found at Middleton Primary School, a characteristic verge detail for the mid 19th century but there are no other examples of this detail.

The majority of gables were finished simply with a plain, close verge, the tiles simply overlapping the stonework, the gaps underneath filled with mortar.

**Quoins**

Quoins were used in association with both coursed and rubble limestone structures and they are a very common feature. They vary greatly in colour, texture and size. Occasionally they were built into the wall with a raised profile, so that the wall could be rendered up to the quoins, a practice found mainly in the first half of the 19th century, but the majority of quoins were finished flush with the surrounding masonry.

Pink gritstone was used because it was locally available and could be worked and tooled for dressings. It is found from the 17th century onwards & it enlivens many walls, providing a contrasting colour & texture to the limestone. A good example can be seen at 11-12 Main Street, an 18th century building with regular coursed limestone and gritstone quoins. Limestone quoins in varying shapes and finishes were also widespread, some with a punched face and some with a smooth face. Quoins were not adopted in every instance; many 19th century buildings were built entirely from rubble limestone, with only dressed lintels and no quoins, with the purpose of being rendered.
Lintels & cills

Almost all the lintels and cills are built from squared stone, whether it is gritstone or limestone. They vary in surface finish & height, according to the fashions of the day.

Joinery

There are very few examples of original joinery in the village. As there are only 3 listed houses, most buildings currently have no protection from the removal of traditional windows. 19th century photographs illustrate that many of the windows were small-paned sashes, either treated plainly with a gritstone lintel and cill or also set between gritstone jambs. During the second half of the 19th century many houses had sash windows with “margin” lights and timber “horns” and a number of these windows survive.

Although there were a number of traditional village shops within Middleton, none of the 19th century historic shopfronts survive. There is one example of an original shop window at 34 Main Street, but this probably dates from the early 20th century.

Traditional Materials in the Public Realm

Old photographs of Middleton give a good indication of the kinds of materials that were adopted for pavements, gulleys and kerbs. A road-widening scheme that was partially implemented along Main Street in the 20th century has “ironed-out” some of the irregularities in the alignments of the kerbs and has removed many of the old gulleys and kerbs. Gulleys were predominantly made from between three and five rows of squared limestone setts. There are variants with longer, rectangular setts or limestone pitching. Kerbs were long & narrow, made from carboniferous limestone. Vehicle crossovers were made from small limestone setts.

In other parts of the conservation area, the limestone gulleys have been covered by tarmac. Along Water Lane, the Hillside & Sandy Hill there are sections of gulley that have become exposed where tarmac has worn away and there are places where limestone kerbs can still be seen. Along the winding length of Sandy Hill, the limestone sett gulleys are supplemented with pavements of gritstone setts and kerbs. One of the best-preserved examples of traditional paving is the frontage to The Rising Sun, where small square limestone setts form the pavement, contained by limestone kerbs.

Middleton had a series of public water fountains (or more accurately taps), which were provided in the mid 19th century. Large rounded limestone blocks with grooves channelled into the face, where the cast-iron standpipe and back-plate was fixed, can be
found throughout the settlement. These vary in condition and state of preservation. The best surviving example at Rise End still has its cast-iron back-plate. Griststone troughs also survive in a few locations, such as along the south side of Water Lane, where spring water flows and runs away down a culvert. A number of troughs are located on private land.

**Building Types**

Even though the village was developed from the medieval period, there are few distinguishing features within the buildings that help to identify buildings dating from before the 18th century. Instead, the pattern of building and the plan of individual houses form the most reliable method of dating buildings.

The oldest buildings would have been simple one or two-roomed dwellings. They would have had cruck-frames, encased within rubblestone walls. There are no known surviving examples of this building type in Middleton. Although there are very few identifiable buildings dating from between the medieval period and the 18th century, the medieval building pattern, with gable-ends facing the road, persisted into the 19th century and several buildings were rebuilt on the footprint of a predecessor. There are many instances where a gable frontage can be seen facing Main Street, but it is not known whether any of these properties have fabric dating from the 16th or 17th centuries.

By the 18th century some of the larger town houses were starting to be built facing the street. There is a concentration of taller buildings in the central section of Main Street. An example of a more substantial three-storey late 18th century house is Fountain House (13 Main Street). This is reputed to have its own lead mine, accessed via a door in the centre of the house, facing the front door. Further afield at Rise End there is a cluster of late 18th and early 19th century 3-storey town houses, the best preserved being 10-11 Rise End.

In the early 19th century, this pattern of building, where frontages of symmetrical form address the street, continued in Middleton with No. 22 Main Street and later with the two-storey No. 32 Main Street, but shortage of available building land meant...
that in a few cases new houses were having to be built on any available land & some handsome properties, such as 45 Main Street, were pushed to the back of the plot. Along the west side of Main Street, where there had been less opportunity to create formal frontages, the plots are generally shallow. At the upper end of Main Street, a number of houses faced south, rather than onto the road.

Middleton-by-Wirksworth may have a number of buildings with 18th century origins, but the overwhelming majority of buildings are 19th century. Although there were once terraced rows of cottages, built for quarry workers or lead miners, many have been demolished and only a handful of isolated examples survive (eg. 7-9 Duke Street, 17-20 Duke Street, 27-31 Rise End, No.4 The Fields, 1-3 Sandy Hill). There are a number of semi-detached houses, many of which were built in the late 18th or early 19th century – eg. 11-12 Main Street, 4 The Green, 12-13 The Green, 2-3 The Moor, 3-4 The Alley, 9-10 Water Lane.

The chapels within Middleton share a distinct building form. Although the Anglican Church is built in a Gothic style, it shares similarities with the Non-conformist chapels. Both the churches and chapels were built in a gable-fronted form with a single room that would hold a large congregation for worship. The principal style could best be described as Gothic Revival; the ornate English Perpendicular style was chosen for the Anglican church (designed by Thomas Newton) but a much more austere Norman style was chosen for the Congregational Church, with pointed, arched lancet windows. The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel has a classically inspired but simplified form, with semi-
circular arched windows and raised quoins. 

Mount Zion is more decorative, incorporating Gothic flourishes, such as castellations & finials. Each church or chapel has its own private frontage (or burial ground), which sets this building type apart from most buildings. This space means that in the narrow streets the architecture of the building can be better appreciated, particularly when seen from the frontage. Less attention was generally paid to the other elevations. Whilst the Non-conformist Wesleyan Chapel and the Methodist Church are integrated with the historic townscape,
the Congregational Church and the Anglican Church were set apart at extremities of the village, although over time this has become less obvious.

Small **outbuildings** are quite common. There are now very few surviving examples of barns or farm buildings within the village, used by the smallholders to keep livestock & fodder. Many of the larger farm buildings have been converted into houses, a practice which has been going on for centuries, as demands for housing have increased. However, the smallest outbuildings, sheds, privies, and other lean-to and mono-pitch structures, do tend to survive, largely unaltered, and add to the dense pattern of building and the complex relationship of interlocking buildings and roof pitches.

The only other examples of **local patronage** are Middleton Primary School, the Church of Holy Trinity and The Vicarage, which are grouped together in a small “Anglican enclave”.

There are occasions where buildings were heightened or enlarged, or occasionally truncated, in the case of the Main Street road-widening
scheme, but in most cases these alterations are covered up with render.

The architectural character of the village is dominated by individual buildings sharing similar building forms and materials. Buildings are clustered together, with interesting angular shapes made by tile-clad roofs, which seem to jostle for position, creating a strong, homogeneous identity.

The key buildings, which are local landmarks because of their location or prominence in views around the village, are:

- Middleton Top Engine House
- Holy Trinity Church
- The Old Vicarage
- The Congregational Church
- Mount Zion Methodist Church
- Nelson Arms
- The Rising Sun

The following buildings are not as prominent & are lesser landmarks, but they are generally either focal points or have a distinct architectural quality:

- Middleton Primary School
- The Duke of Wellington
- Wesleyan Methodist Chapel
- Fountain House (13 Main St)
- 10-11 Rise End
- 1-3 New Road
- Alexandra Buildings (15-18 Main Street)

There are many other buildings that are of distinct architectural quality but which are of a form that does not mark them out. Their presence is absorbed into the wider grain of the settlement.
7. LANDSCAPE SETTING AND GREEN SPACES

Preamble

The natural and man-made landscapes that provide the setting for buildings are important elements affecting any Conservation Area.

This section is based upon an examination of the planning and historical context of the Conservation Area and a visual assessment of landscape elements, being particularly concerned with the components that most influence the character and quality of the environment.

Planning Context

Planning Designations (see Figure 8)

Special Areas of Conservation (S.A.C.)

Special Areas of Conservation are designated under the provisions of the European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna. Any plan or project that is likely to have significant effect on a European site which is not directly connected with the management of that site for nature conservation must be subject to an appropriate assessment which shall determine if that plan or policy will adversely affect the integrity of the site.

There is one S.A.C. just outside the Conservation Area to the east at Gang Mine. The area is designated for the grassland plant communities which have become established on former lead workings and spoil heaps rich in heavy metals. Of its type, it is one of the most important sites in the U.K. Notable species include spring sandwort (Minuartia verna) and Alpine penny-cress (Thlaspi caerulescens).

Sites of Special Scientific Interest. (S.S.S.I.)

Natural England designates Sites of Special Scientific Interest under the provisions of Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Advanced written notice of any works specified on the list of operations likely to damage the special interest of the site for which there is no existing consent needs to be given to Natural England and consent obtained before that work can go ahead.

There is one S.S.S.I. within the Conservation Area at Colehill Quarries in the South East, and two just outside the Conservation Area at Gang Mine (see above) and Rose End Meadows to the north.

The Colehill Quarries S.S.S.I. is designated for demonstrating a number of distinctive reef environments existing in the Wirksworth area in late Dinantian times. The rocks are very variable in type and contain a rich assemblage of fossils.

The Rose End Meadows site is composed of a number of fields specially designated for the range of plant communities that have become established on former lead workings and spoil heaps. Together, these fields are the most extensive area of unimproved herb rich grassland in the county outside the Derbyshire Dales.

Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (R.I.G.S.)

R.I.G.S. is a non-statutory designation afforded to sites of significant geological and geomorphological value. The R.I.G.S. register is maintained by the Derbyshire R.I.G.S. steering group. R.I.G.S. are protected within the land use policies of statutory Local Plans.

There are two R.I.G.S partially contained within the southern part of the Conservation Area:
- Gulf/ Ravenstor R.I.G.S.
- Middlepeak Quarry R.I.G.S.

There are three R.I.G.S. beyond the Conservation Area boundary:
- Gang Vein R.I.G.S to the east
- Dene Quarry R.I.G.S to the east
- Redhill Quarry R.I.G.S. to the south west close to Middleton Top.
Local Wildlife Sites

This is a non-statutory designation afforded to areas identified as important for nature conservation. The Register of Wildlife Sites is maintained by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. The designated sites are protected within the land use policies of the statutory Local Plan.

There are 2 Local Wildlife Sites within the Conservation Area:
DD451 – Middlepeak Spoil Heaps in the extreme south east
DD371 – Hoptonwood Stone Quarry (Middleton Quarry) in the west

There are 7 sites just outside the Conservation Area.
To the west:
DD450 – Middleton Moor
DD373 – Newhoptonwood Stone Quarry
DD370 – Redhill Quarry
To the east:
DD244 – Dean Hollow
DD246 – Dark Lane Spoil by Recreation Ground
DD245 – Dean Fields, Middleton
DD336 – Dark Lane Spoil Heaps South

Local knowledge identifies that there are a number of slowworms (protected species) on the allotments, Hall Croft, Hall House and many other gardens in the locality

Protected Trees

The Conservation Area designation provides all trees with a stem girth of 75 mm and above measured 1 metre above ground level with a measure of protection. No felling, lopping or topping of these trees is permitted without providing six weeks notice to the Council. In addition Tree Preservation Orders (T.P.O.s) have been placed on a number of separate wooded areas in Middlepeak Quarry in the southern part of the Conservation Area.

Works to trees covered by T.P.O.s can only be undertaken with the written consent of the Council except where they are deemed to be dead, dying or dangerous. It may be a requirement to replace any protected tree that is felled with a tree of appropriate species and size.

Safeguarding Important Recreation Sites

The Council has identified sites that it considers are so important for recreation that it will protect them from development. One such site is the cricket ground which lies just outside the Conservation Area to the east.

The National Stone Centre

The National Stone Centre is a visitor attraction and training centre. It occupies approximately 20 hectares of land in the south eastern corner of the Conservation Area and beyond. It is based on a site which once contained six quarries and a great many lead mining shafts. Much of it is designated as a site of special scientific interest (see Colehill Quarry S.S.S.I. above).

Landscape Character

Most of the Conservation Area is split between the Limestone Slopes landscape type of the White Peak landscape character area which occupies areas to the north and the Settled Farmlands landscape type of the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent landscape character type.

The landscape character of the Conservation Area and its surroundings is heavily influenced by the underlying limestone geology not only because of its effect on surface landform but also because of the impact caused by its exploitation, and the minerals associated with it, over many hundreds of years. As a consequence, though the pastures and field patterns of the wider surroundings are still evident the overall impression is of an agricultural landscape disrupted by lead mining operations in the first
place and subsequently by massive industrial scale quarrying. Farming practice continues and as former mines and quarries are reclaimed by nature a complex and highly valued landscape is emerging.

**Landscape Character Map**

As described within The Landscape Character of Derbyshire the Conservation Area falls entirely within the White Peak landscape character area. Most of it is designated as Plateau Pastures landscape type with only the extreme south west described as Limestone Slopes.

The Carboniferous limestone is only slowly eroded creating a gently rolling upland plateau fringed in the south west by moderate to steeply sloping ground which marks the transition with the lower lying Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent landscape character area.

Overlying Aeolian drift, which is thinnest on the steeper slopes and hill-crests, has formed a free draining soil which buffers the effect of limestone on the vegetation. Also, high rainfall leads to leaching and soils are naturally acid.

Where land is farmed pasture is dominant and dairy farming most common. Most fields have, in the past, been ploughed and re-seeded to “improve” the grass and ecological value in these areas tends to be low. Some unimproved grassland remains where the ground proves unsuitable for cultivation on exposed crests, steep slopes and areas of former mineral workings. Where vein minerals (particularly lead) have outcropped at the surface and been exploited the disturbed land often supports communities of rare plants while the scarred and pock marked landscape is historically interesting for its mining associations.

On the more open ground dry-stone walls of random sized limestone blocks enclose medium to large regular shaped fields. The larger size of fields and straightness of the walls indicate enclosure of the land from the common or waste at a relatively late date. This field pattern contrasts strongly with that of narrow strip fields found around the village which is indicative of enclosure from open fields which may have taken place piecemeal over a much longer period of time. Where farming has become marginal as a profitable activity many of the field boundary walls have become neglected.

The high plateau is inherently sparsely wooded, re-colonisation of areas initially cleared of trees having been prevented by stock grazing. During enclosure there would have been few trees grown for their timber though some small plantation blocks were planted as were shelter-belts of sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus) and beech (Fagus sylvatica) in association with isolated farmsteads. In contrast tree cover on the Limestone Slopes landscape type is apparent throughout. There is more tree cover around the village with scattered field boundary trees close to the walls and amenity groups associated with individual buildings the dominant species being ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and sycamore. Most woodland is associated with the steeper slopes, railway embankments and former quarries while extensive patches of scrub have colonised abandoned pasture and former quarry sites. The overall effect is one of an open landscape with expansive views on the higher ground while a more enclosed landscape with filtered views through the trees and occasional distant views to the hilltops predominates in the south of the Conservation Area.

Quarrying in general is a prominent feature within the local landscape. Within and around the Conservation Area dramatic cliff faces either dominate the view or provide the backdrop to the village. Many are now being re-vegetated and are becoming valuable landscape and ecological features in their own right.
Topography

Middleton sits high on the edge of the limestone plateau where it starts to fall in a complex series of terraces towards Cromford and the River Derwent to the north east and Wirksworth to the south east. Partly sheltered by the steep western slope with which Main Street runs parallel the village traverses the contours, a consequence of which is the huge difference in height between areas in the extreme south east of the Conservation Area (approx 175m aod) and the north west at Water Lane (approx 325m aod). In between lies relatively level ground to the north of Porter Lane on the eastern side of the village.

The striking topography has been further dramatised by extensive quarrying of the steeper slopes with the result that the area is characterised by high cliff faces and sharp edges on the one hand and deeply cut chasms on the other.

Through all this, on the southern side, the Cromford and High Peak Railway was driven, altering the natural topography and creating its own, sometimes dramatic, features at the same time.

Vegetation

The Conservation Area is divided in terms of its vegetation cover. On the higher, more exposed areas to the north tree cover is sparse not only in the surrounding countryside but also in the village itself. Here features tend to be confined to some private gardens and public areas associated with, for example, the Millenium Garden on Stile Croft and where local pathways and verges between Main Street and Queen Street support a number of fine mature trees – rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), Cherry (Prunus spp) and Norway maple (Acer platanoides).

In more sheltered locations on the western side of Main Street, the occasional well planted private garden is a feature in the street scene.

In the lower and more sheltered areas to the south, woodland is quite extensive and tree cover more ubiquitous. Woodland is associated with the former railways, former quarry sites and the steeply sloping ground to the west of Main Street. The screen planting of woodland on embankments surrounding industrial areas between Main Street and Porter Lane has also become well established.

Small blocks of plantation woodland and field boundary trees are a feature of strip fields to the east while further south field boundary hedgerows replace dry stone walls. Roadside planting in association with the church, school, village hall, local industry and quarries as well as in some private
gardens is very prominent within the street scene to the extent that hard development is almost entirely obscured in some views along Main Street. That said, industrial development in areas to the east of Main Street, formerly occupied by workshops associated with Middleton Quarry, has a highly adverse impact on the view and the character of this part of the village. Development could be better screened with additional on site planting.

Other prominent features include the allotment gardens positioned at the centre of the village just north of the church and the attractive line of ash trees along the bank below the Rising Sun pub.

Views

Though views within the village from Main Street tend to be contained by the high western escarpment and development and roadside vegetation on the eastern side from many places on the edge of the Conservation Area the views out across the wider landscape are generally outstanding. Some of the best are;

From the National Stone Centre the view to the south over a jumble of quarry workings and wooded hillsides that disappear into the distance. Vertical cliff faces appear above the trees interspersed with grassy slopes and flatter open areas. The character is typical of the limestone slopes landscape type as it falls to meet the wooded slopes landscape type of the Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent.

From fields in the far north east expansive views can be had across the grassy dome of the high plateau towards Riber Castle, Masson Hill and Matlock Moor and the deeply incised and wooded valleys associated with the River Derwent and the Via Gellia.

From The Field attractive views through the valley are focussed on the village with the western embankment in the background.

From the top of the western edge panoramic views over the village and the greater part of the Conservation Area can be gained. These extend across the eastern plateau towards Black Rock and the high ground to the east of Wiksworth.
From Main Street, across the allotment gardens, one of the best views at this level is out across the eastern plateau and the strip fields.

**Landscape Setting**

The landscape setting of the Conservation Area is one of contrast between the higher more exposed parts which extend out onto the high limestone plateau to the north and the more sheltered central and southern parts protected by steeply sloping ground that runs the length of its western side and wraps around the village to the north. Contrast is also evident in the difference between the farmed landscape with its distinctive field patterns and open pasture and the industrial landscapes created as a consequence of extensive quarrying and railway development. The main landscape features are:

*Middleton Top*

The engine house at Middleton Top at the head of the former railway incline is the most prominent building in the local landscape. Built in 1829 it stands at the summit of the 708 yard long Middleton Incline which has an average gradient of 1:8.75

*The High Peak Trail*

The former Cromford and High Peak Railway line traverses the southern part of the Conservation Area from a high point at Middleton Top in the west to the outskirts of Wirksworth in the east. It is notable for the steep incline up which it runs in the west. Over this section it climbs the slope via a series of deep cuttings, high embankments and bridges from a low point of approximately 220m aod to 300m aod. Some of the features created in order to achieve this are quite spectacular.

In particular there is a gorge like cutting with brooding cliff faces dripping with ivy and ferns and overcast by trees.

Along its length the side slopes and embankments are invariably well wooded with ash, elm (Ulmus spp), hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna), silver birch (Betula pendula) and sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus) and a group of magnificent beech trees a particular feature. There is also a rich ground flora with bluebell, wild garlic, garlic mustard, red campion, forget-me-not and ferns common.

Views are generally confined and tunnel-like with both great prospect and enclosure being experienced at one and the same time.

At its eastern end the trail becomes more open in character with access to former sidings associated with the old Coal Hills quarry to the north and the National Stone Centre to the south. On the northern side, railway development has created an uneven surface within the quarry floor which is now colonised with stands of ash and an open, herb rich grassland with creeping buttercup, plantains, yarrow, foxglove, speedwell and lady’s bedstraw while ferns, herb Robert, foxgloves, hogweed and red campion have established on the talus slope below the quarry face.

Local knowledge has identified orchids, of which many varieties can be found around Middleton, including Twayblade and Bee Orchids as well as the more common purple variety. There is also Leadwort growing on the old spoil heaps from the ancient lead mines, which is relatively rare.
The National Stone Centre

The National Stone Centre occupies the extreme south eastern corner of the Conservation Area and, in fact, extends considerably beyond its boundaries. It is an area of former stone quarries and lead mines which now operates as a visitor attraction and training centre. It is characterised by a complex mix of quarry faces, quarry floors and talus slopes, open grassland, exposed rock and former railways. A network of footpaths allows access to most parts.

Quarrying has helped to expose the ancient reef formations that characterise the local geology and this is interpreted across the site through information boards.

Other interesting site features include a landmark stone beacon and the Millennium wall which demonstrates different styles of dry stone wall construction from around Britain.

The lower southern slopes associated with a former LNWR branch railway from Wirksworth and Old Lane are thickly wooded with sycamore, hazel (Coryllus avellana), elm, cherry and some rhododendron.

Some quarry floors now support a herb rich grassland with bugle, plantains, self heal and hawkweed. Across the site, but particularly on the slopes, scrub vegetation with hawthorn dominant and young woodland of ash and goat willow (Salix caprea) is becoming established.

Mineral Railway

The route of the former mineral railway that served the Middleton Quarry runs west to east on the northern side of Porter Lane skirting the former workshops site on its southern side. Much of the route follows a well-defined cutting with feature bridges over and with sycamore trees and a well developed ground flora on the side slopes.
The greater part of this is now operated as a narrow gauge railway. Further west beyond the point where it crosses the new industrial access road the route continues as a narrow path beneath a steep and well-wooded northern embankment which effectively screens industrial development in the view from this side.

The Fields

The Fields is a public right of way/unmade road that runs from its junction with Chapel Lane in the centre of the village out into open countryside to the east. It is a most attractive way by which to approach Middleton from this side. From just beyond the Conservation Area boundary the route follows a shallow dry valley which serves to focus views on the central part of the village set against the backdrop of steeply rising ground to the west. On the southern side thin soils barely cover the limestone on the higher ground where an open grass sward with cowslips and encroaching scrub (mainly hawthorn) has become established. To the north there is a most distinctive field pattern of strip fields defined by long, straight dry stone walls with occasional field boundary trees rising up to woodland on the higher ground.

The route continues between stone walls. Woodland, on the southern side occupies the steep embankment which serves to screen industrial development on this side. The trees overhang the path creating a sense of enclosure. To the north gateways lead off into the strip fields – some of the gates themselves are poorly constructed and the field boundary walls are becoming neglected. A characteristic feature is the stone field barn. Verges widen and are colonised by cow parsley.

The track turns sharply northwards with a high limestone wall on its western side and a lower one to the east beyond which a large mature lime tree (Tilia spp) is a particular feature.

Continuing northwards the track divides the churchyard (see below) from the Old Vicarage. To the east there is an attractive and distinctive intimate landscape of small pastoral fields variously undulating with evidence of former lead workings and with densely scattered field boundary trees occupying the higher ground in particular.

To the west lie allotment gardens which are generally well kept and contain much that is of visual interest. A high, ivy covered stone boundary wall to private gardens continues on this side up to the junction of The Field with Chapel Lane.
Churchyard

Holy Trinity Church lies on Main Street between the road and The Field and is prominent within the street scene. The churchyard is a very attractive open grassed area enclosed by stone walls with the addition of railings on the road frontage. The main features, along with the memorials, are the mature trees including fine specimens of ash, English yew (Taxus baccata) and Irish yew (Taxus baccata Fastigiata).

Millennium Garden

Located just off Stile Croft the Millennium Garden is a relatively recent development within the main residential area. It is attractively laid out with a covered seating area, pergola, “wishing well”, feature lamp standard, block paved pathways and well stocked planting beds – some of which are raised within stone planters.

The mature Norway maple trees that provide a backdrop to the gardens on its north eastern side are some of the best in the area while some of the gardens that front onto Stile Croft are extremely attractive.

Medieval Field Pattern

Though much of the area concerned lies beyond the Conservation Area boundary in the extreme north east, the farmed landscape on this part of the high plateau is very distinctive. The fields here give the impression of being jumbled together, most are quite small, many are strips while others are irregular in shape. All are bounded by dry stone walls made of the local limestone. The walls line the pathways as well as the fields.

Squeeze stiles and small stone built field barns are characteristic. Though most continue to be grazed by stock there is much evidence of disruption by lead mining and the ground is often pock marked with shallow depressions and low mounds. In these areas in particular the pasture appears to be largely unimproved and there is a rich ground flora including bluebell. Trackside verges are rich with cow parsley, sweet cicely and red campion.

Unfortunately many of the walls are in a poor state of repair.

The Green

The Green is located high up on the slope at the junction of Main Street, Duke Street and Water Lane in what is effectively the centre of the village. The “green” today is not much more than a wide grassed verge with bulb planting but it still remains an important focal point where the building line opens out around the square. Some of the long views from here are outstanding.
Western Edge

The western edge and the high face of Middleton Quarry which has been carved into it is a most prominent feature that runs the length of the village. It invariably characterises the view across Middleton from the eastern side, conversely the views that can be gained from its summit towards the east are all encompassing and quite magnificent (see above).

Towards its southern end close to the junction of Main Street with Porter Lane the upper slopes are well wooded and trees extend onto the tops above the stark quarry face that dominates to the north and is even established on the lower slopes of the quarry itself. Here, over many years, the workings have excavated the slope to such an extent, that parts of the village, formally established on the higher levels, no longer exist.

Nevertheless this part of Middleton is still characterised by a number of steeply winding lanes and paths that weave their way amongst the dwellings that remain on the lower slope.

Further north beyond the quarry workings the slope, though still steep, is more open in nature where abandoned pasture is colonising with scrub vegetation – mainly hawthorn, sycamore and ash - swathes of sweet cicely and bramble (Rubus fruticosus).

A particular feature is the spoil heap of the former Croft Mine which, though largely re-vegetated, looms large in the street scene when viewed from below.
As the slope eases in the extreme north the pasture is still grazed in an area formally occupied by hemp fields.

Running roughly parallel with the quarry face at the upper level the remains of a former tramway is a distinctive feature in the landscape. The tramway originally connected the small quarry on the western side of The Moor with the Cromford and High Peak Railway at Middleton Top. It followed the relatively level route of the former Occupation Road, one of a number of lanes probably originally constructed to access the high moor.
8. **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

This part of the appraisal comprises a spatial analysis of the whole conservation area, the character and interrelationship of spaces, key views, vistas and landmarks. These are marked on the accompanying plan (Figure 10). In places, the views and spaces cross the three different character areas.

**Area 1**

Until the second half of the twentieth century, Middleton expanded very little beyond its medieval framework.

The principal areas to have developed at Middleton were:

... the hillside to the west of Main Street, during the late 18th and early 19th century. This area is one of the most picturesque; it enjoys panoramic views out over the hills to the east with buildings scattered up the hill, approaching Middleton Moor.

... Water Lane – principally a straggly development of houses on the north side of the lane, with a separate cluster at The Moor. From the upper parts of the lane there are panoramic views over the countryside.

... Duke Street – the provision of a pub in the 18th century near to the fields, where miners worked the lead mines, provided an opportunity to develop the length of Duke Street with a series of shallow encroachments on the south side of the street. More generous plots to the north enabled further “backland” expansion, although the northern limit of the settlement followed a regular stone-walled boundary.

... New Road – the creation of New Road c1804 led to only a small amount of development along its route, possibly because of the exposed location on the summit of the hill. Most of the buildings on the northern side of The Green were already well established within the medieval settlement framework.

These areas of development lead to some of the highest points in the village, although they are sheltered from the most exposed locations & the prevailing wind. The upper slopes of the quarry at Middleton Mine have large sections of exposed mountain limestone & scree, which are mixed with regenerating grassland, shrubs & trees. These slopes do not have the drama of sheer rock-faces, but they are a massive and a dominant presence, which defines the setting on the west side of the village.

The expansion of the east side of Middleton in the second half of the 20th century has had a large impact on public perceptions of its historic character. The main swathe of housing, which falls on the rising land between Main Street, Chapel Lane and the ridge road, Duke Street, is very prominent in views from the surrounding hills, footpath network and the main approaches. It is a strong contrast with the form and layout of the old parts of the settlement and, because of its prominence, inevitably detracts from its historic character.

**Area 2**

There has been very little perceptible change to Rise End, except perhaps for the gradual spread of houses away from the focus, in front of The Rising Sun, towards Middleton & twentieth century development on the fields to the east of Middleton Road.
Area 3
Changes to the spaces within the southern part of the conservation area were dramatic and on a vast scale, entirely driven by industrial development. Quarrying, with its massive scale of impact, has shaped the landform from the second quarter of the 19th century to the present day. Most quarries have ceased working, but whilst mineral permissions exist, there is potential for further changes to the landscape.

Significant Views & Landmarks

The conservation area sits under the lee of Middleton Moor, and from the old occupation road, which contours around the east flank of the moor, & from Water Lane there are expansive views out over the north and east side of the village and far beyond to the wider landscape of Bonsall Moor, Black Rocks, Cromford Moor, Riber Castle and Matlock Moor. The relationship between the village & the landscape is very strong. Although at one time there was a complete distinction between the village and the fields to the east side of the settlement, this is now less tangible as a result of twentieth century housing development. This is located on the rising land and dominates the foreground of many high level views. The former open fields with their drystone boundary walls are now only really evident from the highest points along Middleton Moor. The fields below The Old Vicarage, however, relate directly to the historic settlement as they are contained within a shallow valley, edged on one side by a mound planted with trees, and views along this route are largely self-contained.

There is a strong sense of arrival in Middleton from the north, as the road from the Via Gellia rises and reaches a brow at Middleton. The tall walls of 1-3 New Road and the cottages lining the edge of the road opposite funnel the views where it emerges at The Green. The land falls away as it enters the village, at The Green, where there is a little more shelter. From New Road and this northern approach into the village, the long frontage & white-painted walls of Nelson Arms are a focal point, silhouetted against the hills of Wirksworth Moor, with Alport Heights in the far distance.

The approach to the conservation area from the south (Wirksworth) is equally memorable as the bridge that carries the High Peak Trail is a focal point in views along the road and creates a “gateway” into Rise End.

The views along Main Street, running in either direction are some of the most memorable within the conservation area and lead to a lasting impression of the close-knit and old character of the area.

The principal landmark within the conservation area is Middleton Top Engine House & its chimney. These sit at the top of the High Peak Trail, where the land levels off, on the limestone plateau. The group is largely hidden from the two settlements and its main impact is in the approach to Rise End from the Ashbourne Road.
Many of the most significant views, which take in local landmarks, traverse large sections of the village, in particular:

... views of the Congregational Church from the lower part of Main Street, where there is little evidence of the surrounding housing

... views of The Old Vicarage from the lower section of Main Street

... views of New Zion Methodist Church on approaching The Green from Main Street

... views of Holy Trinity Church from the occupation road and high-level footpaths within and above the hillside & above Middleton Mine

The Nelson Arms and Rising Sun at Rise End are located in prominent places, where they are focal points from a number of angles and views.

Some of the most interesting views within the village can only be glimpsed, where there are short gaps in the street frontage, either created by passageways (ginnels) or gap sites (demolished buildings), with glimpses of cottages and houses located behind buildings on the Main Street, Water Lane & Duke Street frontages.

There are numerous interesting views from high points above and behind Main Street. Many views are only accessible on foot, where paths and lanes
survive, such as the views along the winding course of Sandy Hill, the views from the footpaths & tracks below Middleton Moor and above Hillside and the views following the track known as The Fields. There are panoramic views from high points along the lanes that contour across Rise End where the most prominent landmarks are Cromford Moor and Riber Castle.

Open Spaces

The conservation area is made up of extremely dense, built-up areas and more open semi-agricultural and industrial areas.

The southern part of the conservation area incorporates large tracts of open land, mainly meadows & fields, that have been traditionally grazed. These are divided by rubble limestone boundary walls and contain the remains of lead mines, their spoil and ruinous buildings.

The former quarries at Middleton Mine and the National Stone Centre comprise large open areas of landscape, surrounded by trees. The old quarried faces of the Killer's Quarry are not publicly accessible space, although the quarries at the National Stone Centre are accessible to the public.

The linear corridor of the High Peak Trail is an important public open space. As it is now largely lined with trees, it provides long vistas, often without focal points. It has changed fundamentally over time both in use and appearance.

Other spaces include the allotment gardens, which are sandwiched between Main Street and The Fields. Together with the paddock & churchyard next door, they form an important spatial function in providing breathing space, a foil to the dense built-up frontage opposite, creating dynamic views across the conservation area between some of the most architecturally significant buildings, and also providing an open setting for some of the most distinctive buildings.

Historically there were very few formal open spaces within the settlement. The Green was the only identifiable public open space until the creation of
The Millennium Garden and the Children’s Play area and Playing Fields. These are tucked out of the way, off back streets. The former village “green” is still the visual focal point of Middleton, as the principal roads converge on The Green, but its function has changed from one of a meeting and watering place to a space that is dominated by traffic movement.

There was such pressure on the area for building land that most available spaces were developed at some time, although there are notably some areas that were never developed. This may have been in part due to topographical constraints but it is also likely to be as a result of the importance of their agricultural or horticultural use. The Tithe award indicates that the fields to the west of Main Street were Hemp Yards. Hemp was grown for the manufacture of ropes, important for the lead mining industry. The allotments were a vital part of the settlement during the Second World War, as many of the householders had no gardens. These outlying spaces provide a sense of the rural setting of the settlement and its wider upland context.