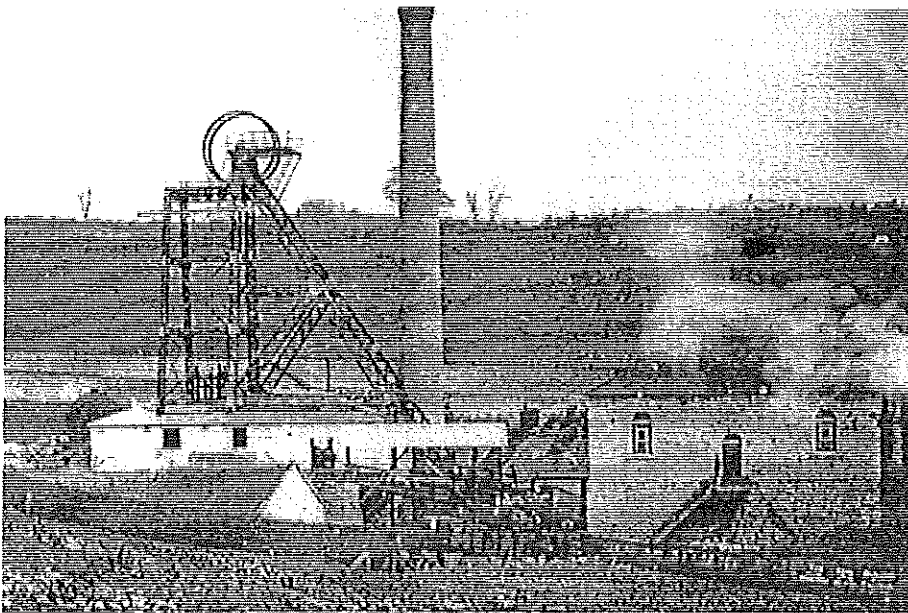


# Conservation Area Assessment

## RADSTOCK



**Strategic Policy**

**Bath & North East Somerset Council March 1999**

# CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT FOR RADSTOCK DESIGNATED 25 MARCH 1999

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Planning Context and History

1.1.1 Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) designated the town of Radstock in North East Somerset as a conservation area at its Planning, Transportation and Environment Committee on 25 March 1999. The initial proposal went to public consultation in Radstock in 1997 and in response to comments made, consideration was given to extending the boundary to include areas considered to be of special interest and significance to the local community. The boundary of the designated conservation area was therefore subsequently reviewed and as part of this process a preliminary character appraisal of the area has been carried out and is included in Section 4.0 of this report.

1.1.2 The primary legislation in place to preserve and enhance the historic environment is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under section 69 of the Act, a duty is imposed on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Historic areas are recognised as significant components of our cultural inheritance and economic well being and there exists firm public support for such areas of distinctive quality and character. Designation imposes a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of the character or appearance that define an area's special interest. The emphasis within conservation areas is on ensuring local character is strengthened, not diminished, by change.

1.1.3 The key reference to government policy on all development affecting conservation areas is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*, (PPG 15). The single most significant element which gave rise to the proposal to designate Radstock as a conservation area was the town's well preserved mining past. The nature of the conservation area is therefore different from the typical conservation area found elsewhere within Bath and North East Somerset in a number of ways as follows:

- Its significance results from its industrial past and not surprisingly the area incorporates uses which can broadly be called industrial. PPG 15 in paragraph 4.16 recognises that new development will take place in conservation areas and that 'the emphasis will need to be on controlled and positive management of change'. Planning decisions should take account of the character (including historical evidence which contributes to the character of the area) and appearance of the conservation area. PPG 15 in paragraph 4.20 states that 'the objective of preservation can be achieved either by development which makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance, or by development which leaves character and appearance unharmed'.

- The conservation area is relatively extensive in order to incorporate the main coal-mining areas, buildings and associated features which contribute to the historical form and character of Radstock. The conservation area also includes areas of open landscape reflecting the almost unique character of Radstock whereby the surrounding countryside comes close to the heart of the town without significant industrial development engulfing the coal-mining areas as has occurred elsewhere in Britain. The distinct topography reflects the distorted and faulted geological formation which made coal-mining possible and ultimately gave rise to the character of Radstock which the designation as a conservation area seeks to preserve. Areas of open landscape have been included where they have a direct visual relationship with the core areas of historical interest, where the open landscape has directly influenced the form and nature of development and where they contribute to the character of the conservation area. These areas should be distinguished from areas of open landscape outside the conservation area which may be important in the context of the setting but do not have such a close connection with the core areas of historical interest.

## 1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to make recommendations for the delineation of a conservation area boundary for Radstock in order to preserve and enhance the area. The report includes an assessment of the physical remains of buildings and the key elements of the townscape and landscape, which contribute to the character of the conservation area. Eight distinct character areas have been identified and key elements, which define the character and appearance, are described for each. The assessment has also identified the extent of loss or intrusion, i.e. the negative factors, which detract from the special character of the area and the existence of any neutral areas which are defined as those areas which neither enhance nor detract from the appearance of the conservation area. A brief indication of appropriate objectives is included for each area.

This report will provide a framework within which future proposals for change can be assessed. It will form the basis for any future conservation area study, which would contain proposals and policies for the preservation or enhancement of the area and would form supplementary planning guidance to the Wansdyke Local Plan and the B&NES District-wide Local Plan which is currently under preparation.

## 1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 This appraisal follows a checklist set down by English Heritage in their guidance document, 'Conservation Area Appraisals'. A careful and factual analysis of the area has been made incorporating the established guidelines for assessing and defining character within a wider format. The document is not intended to be a comprehensive and detailed synthesis of all existing knowledge about the archaeological and historic resource of the town, nor is it a conclusive assessment. Further research and archaeological survey work is urgently needed to assess the potential for further surviving tangible and intangible remains of intrinsic importance. A conservation area is not a static environment but an area liable to continuing growth and adaptation and for this reason changes should be monitored regularly.

- 1.3.2 The appraisal is based upon the assimilation of a variety of data and site visits. Major sources consulted have included the Avon Extensive Urban Survey Archaeological Assessment Report (La Trobe-Bateman 1998), a desk and field based assessment of standing archaeological remains in Radstock, commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Built Heritage Group (Gould 1996), English Heritage Guidance Notes, the Wansdyke local plan, aerial photographs and field visits. For a full list of documents and sources consulted, see the bibliography at the end of this report.
- 1.3.3 Two exhibitions and consultations have been held in Radstock, in association with the Single Regeneration Bid participation events. These have indicated support for a conservation area in Radstock. Details of the responses are held on file by the Built Heritage Group. Full consideration of the public consultation exercise has also been undertaken, examining all subsequent comments, and these have been taken into account in this study.

## 2.0 ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENT

### 2.1 Location and Population

2.1.1 Radstock is located on the northern edge of the Mendip Hills in the Wellow Brook valley, approximately 12km south west of Bath in the former coalfields of north Somerset. The town lies at the nexus of five steep-sided valleys and the tributaries of the Wellow Brook flow into the town from the north and south. It has a population of approximately 20,500.

### 2.2 Geology and Topography

2.2.2 The sub-surface geology of the area is complex with recent alluvium deposits following the valley floor of the Wellow Brook and a combination of keuper marl, limestones and clays forming the valley sides. These formations date from the Triassic period of the geological succession. Of particular interest are the white lias limestones, which give rise to the local building stone of Radstock and contribute markedly to its local identity. Beneath the sub-surface formations are the upper coal measures, which gave rise to much of the town's development when the resources were exploited in the eighteenth century. The valley floor lies at about 70 metres above sea level, but many houses in the town are situated above this level, perched on the valley sides and rising to a height of more than 150 metres AOD.

2.2.3 The topography of Radstock reflects this distorted underlying geological formation<sup>1</sup>, which made coal mining possible, but also contributed to its eventual collapse due to its uneconomic nature. Surrounded by hillsides and sited at the confluence of the Wellow Brook and its tributaries, the town has a distinct landscape backdrop with the countryside encroaching close to the centre of the town. The ridges comprise extensive tree cover, with remnant strips of woodland providing a sense of enclosure and focusing views across the town's valleys to the wider countryside beyond. In addition to this natural tree cover, plantations on the spoil heaps, which locally are referred to as batches, and quarries form distinctive tree groups on or up to the surrounding ridge tops and reflect the natural phenomenon of the highly folded topography and the intense coal-mining activity of man.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3 Historical Development

2.3.1 Little is known about the early settlement history of Radstock, although the presence of several Bronze and Iron Age features in the landscape surrounding the town suggests that the potential for prehistoric material is relatively high. During the Roman occupation the Foss Way was constructed across the landscape and there exists significant remains at Camerton, 2km north of Radstock and Stratton-on-the-Fosse, 5km to the southwest. Whilst Radstock was mentioned at Domesday, evidence for the medieval settlement is restricted to early features in the church and the site of the current manor house. The survival of 'fossilised' fields on the steep sided valleys

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<sup>1</sup> Marks, S, Radstock, Midsomer Norton and District Museum Society, 1997 Radstock-Landform, Landscape and Townscape.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

around Radstock indicate their enclosure in the late medieval period <sup>3</sup> but the extent or form of the village is not known.

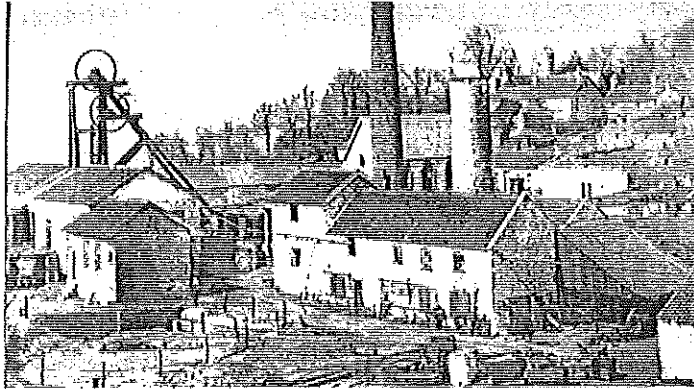
- 2.3.2 There is no evidence for major change in the village until coal mining began in the eighteenth century. The discovery of coal in 1763 led to the development of Radstock as the centre of coal mining activity in north Somerset until the 1950s. In the mid-nineteenth century six large collieries were working in the town with further pits to the north and west beyond the urban centre. The development of transport was essential to the survival of the coal industry and the Somerset Coal Canal. The tramways and the eventual arrival of the railways in 1854 had a significant impact on the morphology of the town with a shift away from the old historic core around the church of St Nicholas to the hillsides surrounding the coalmines.
- 2.3.3 Falling national demand and competition from more economical coalfields led to the closure of the last remaining pit in 1973. In 1933, Radstock was united to Midsomer Norton to form the new Urban district of Norton-Radstock. With the decline of the mining industry the economy has diversified and in some cases utilised land and buildings at the former pithead areas. There is however, significant outward commuting to Bath.

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<sup>3</sup> Trobe-Bateman, E 1997 Avon Extensive Urban Areas Survey 1997 - Norton Radstock.

### 3.0 THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AREA

#### 3.1 Coalmining



3.1.1 Radstock is one of the best preserved coal mining towns in England and unlike its midland and northern counterparts it still retains many important colliery features. It is a rare example of an early industrial landscape where small-scale mining existed in a rural community and has left an important local legacy. There remains an unparalleled collection of horizontal steam winding engine houses, a rare example of a screens building, an isolated powder house, huge planted spoil heaps and haulage inclines used to transport the coal.<sup>4</sup> The industrial architecture of the area contrasts sharply with the traditional farming communities of south Somerset.

3.1.2 Although each mine had its complement of buildings and gear, it was the all pervasiveness of this activity, which is of greatest significance. The most conspicuous existing remains of this activity are the spoil tips or 'batches' as they are known locally. In almost all cases they have been planted and have become prominent features in the landscape. Their distinctive profile forms a historical marker where the former mining has ceased.

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<sup>4</sup> Gould, S 1996 Desk Based Field Assessment of Standing Archaeological Remains in Radstock, North Somerset.

## 3.2 Communications



- 3.2.1 Perhaps the most striking reminder of the coal industry is the transport infrastructure in the town. Transport was essential and to overcome the huge costs of road haulage the Somerset Coal Canal was opened in the early years of the nineteenth century. However, problems with the canal led to its replacement in 1814 by a tramway that ran along the former towing path. Railways came late to the area but in the second half of the nineteenth century Radstock became an important junction of the Somerset and Dorset Railway and the Bristol and North Somerset Railway which subsequently formed part of the Great Western Railway and passed through the town. Although the railways are no longer in use, parts of their original routes have been retained as public footpaths as have the many former collier's paths and narrow gauge tramway routes and branch railways that led from the main railway lines to the collieries.

## 3.3 Housing

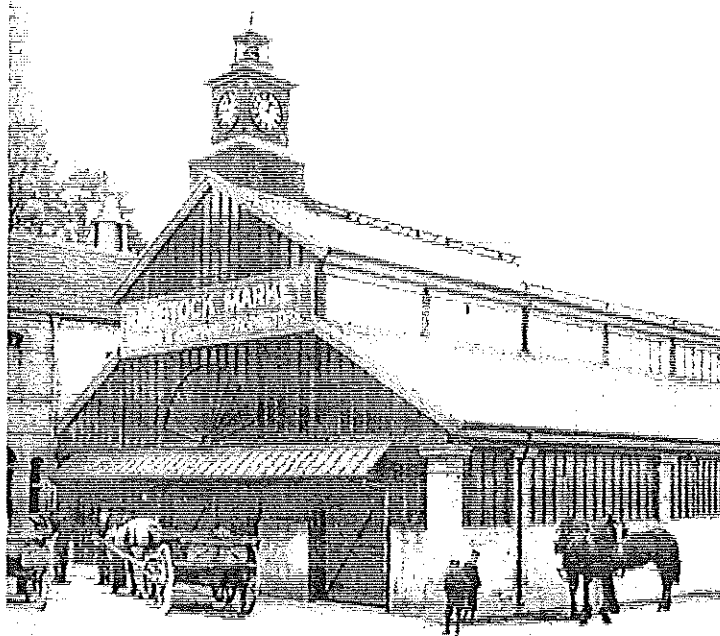


- 3.3.1 As the size and number of collieries increased in the Radstock area, more people were required and were often housed in small terraces erected by the coal owners. The construction of terraced housing on the northern slopes of Radstock transformed the appearance of the town during the nineteenth century and exceptional groups of these



survive. With a shift away from the old medieval core of the town, a scattered settlement developed on the valley sides close to the coalmines. They formed a separate industrial community, which both avoided and could not be seen by the more respectable residents within the old historic core. None of the terraces which survive are listed but their contribution to the town is unparalleled in their exceptional quality and character. They are not typical of the cramped industrial town but built on the edge of established agricultural settlements, each with their own privies and extensive allotment gardens. They also reveal an important hierarchical worker/manager relationship reflected by the manager's housing which was deliberately built above and in full view of the works. Several of these large detached houses survive and not only contribute to the special character and intrinsic quality of the town, but reveal important historical associations in a period of rapid social and economic transformation.

### 3.4 Public and Municipal Buildings



- 3.4.1 The industrial features associated with coal mining were only one element of a much broader socio-economic landscape that included housing, shops, chapels and municipal buildings. The rise in the miner's living standards in the mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth century was reflected in the growing number of shops and associated retail outlets. The Co-operative movement had a great impact on the development of the town and a large number of buildings in Radstock including a new bakery in 1893 and terraced housing were erected. For the collier the public house was the most important social building and although many have since been demolished or converted, the names of the few remaining reflect the influence of the industry, such as 'The Railway Inn' at Wellsway.
- 3.4.2 Religious instruction was provided by the many churches and chapels within the area. Most of the colliers were ardent Methodists and the chapel had an important influence on the mining community. Reading rooms, libraries and community halls became increasingly common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the

Working Men's Institute (1866) is a testimony to this movement and remains an impressive building, listed at Grade II. The Somerset Miners Association Union Office also survives and has recently been converted into a dwelling.

### 3.5 Local Details



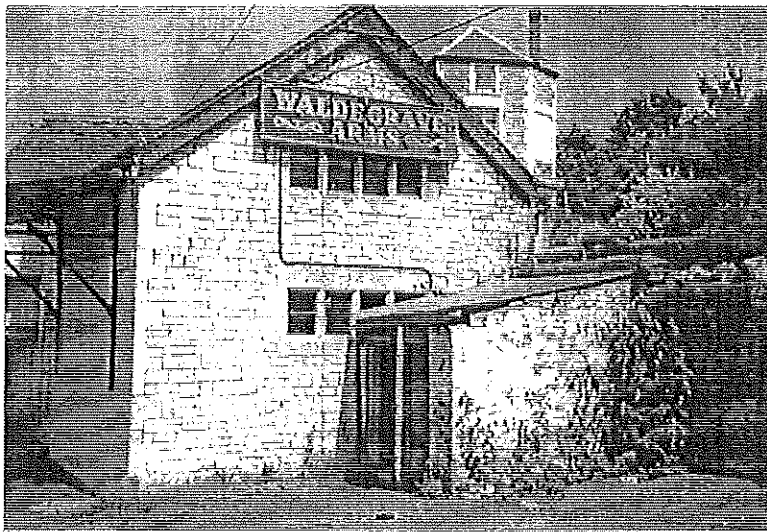
- 3.5.1 The prevalent and traditional building materials reflect the local geology of the area. White lias stone laid as squared coursed rubble appears to be the common material for the miner's terraces, whereas oolitic limestone used for lintels, quoins and dressings in white lias squared coursed walling, is found in Baptist Chapels and nineteenth century shops. Welsh slated pitched roofs are the dominant roof form and pennant sandstone is found in boundary and retaining walls. Vertically sliding timber sash windows are prevalent and carved bargeboards emphasise important elevations as in the 1874 Baptist Chapel on Wells Road. It is these locally distinct architectural details that help to shape the character of Radstock, emphasise the town's industrial legacy and impact upon the views into and out of the town contributing significantly to the atmosphere of the place.

## 4.0 CHARACTER AREAS AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE BOUNDARY

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Eight distinct character areas have been identified within the conservation area. One area, Upper Braysdown, is a detached area and also the area of Mill Road Industrial Estate is not included in the Conservation Area. The character of each area is described with reference to topography, landscape and townscape character. This section also includes justification for inclusion within the conservation area and preliminary objectives for managing and enhancing each area.

### 4.2 Area 1 - Coomb End and Clandown



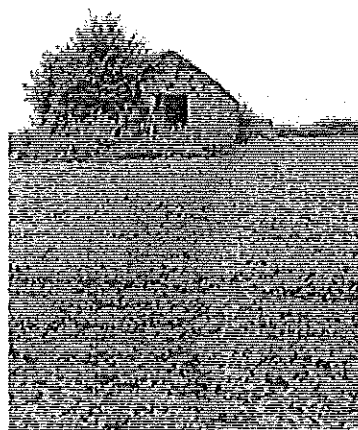
4.2.1 The identity of Coomb End and Clandown is given by the three former collieries of Clandown, Old Pit and Middle Pit and the main line railway, which occupied the valley floor. The area currently includes a rather amorphous mixture of commercial uses, housing and semi-derelict land. At the southern end of the road there exists a certain degree of terracing contributing to a sense of enclosure and continuing the developed character of the urban core. Proceeding north, however, along the Coombend valley, the surrounding countryside comes close to the valley bottom. The undeveloped southwest facing slopes below the Bristol Road are a significant feature of this area.

4.2.2 Of particular historical interest are the remains of Middle Pit Colliery on the west side of Coomb End. Opened in 1779 and worked for over 150 years until its closure in 1933, the engine house is the most obvious surviving feature and has recently been converted into offices; it was recommended for grade II listing as part of English Heritage's Monument Protection Programme. It is one of the largest surviving examples on the coalfield and the pride and success of this particular company is reflected in its architectural detailing. Most of the other buildings have been demolished, but the pithead retaining wall and the course of the railway siding also remain. Further up the valley is the site of Old Pit, the first of the Radstock collieries. The spoil heap was flattened and re-excavated in 1987 and 1988 and is the only visible surface feature remaining from the pit complex. However, the site has not been developed and the footings of the colliery buildings may survive. At Clandown,

only the tree covered spoil heap remains in recognition of its former activity. It has been designated in the Wansdyke Local Plan as an area of local landscape/nature conservation interest. To the north, a converted church and the surrounding area are designated as an area of Distinctive Environmental Character and has a good cover of trees.

- 4.2.3 To complement this industry, there exists evidence of the socio-economic landscape of the mining community. The Primitive Methodist Chapel (1840) survives alongside a terrace of local stone built miners cottages (1893) and at the corner of Coombend and Bath New Road is the Waldegrave Arms Public House. At Clandown, terraces and a former brewery (now a private dwelling) survive alongside essentially negative areas of modern flats such as Fosse Green, Springfield Place and Bidwells scrapyard.
- 4.2.4 The conservation area boundary embraces this important former mining valley and its associated transport infrastructure. Although much of Coombend is characterised by neutral areas of small scale industry such as car breakers yards and businesses, the survival of significant coal mining features and related buildings is a tangible reminder of its rich heritage. Approaching the town from the north, the Clandown batch is seen long before any of Radstock becomes visible. It is the relationship of these historical features to the present day landscape of Radstock along with the former communication routes of the valley floor and the areas on open landscape on the steep valley sides, which form an integral part of the special character of the area.
- 4.2.5 Any development should seek to avoid infringement upon the historic fabric and character of the area, maintain the line of the railway open and respect the historical constraints of the valley. Enhancement and management is likely to include objectives to restore and renovate the historic fabric and to foster means of interpreting the historical development of the area.

### 4.3 Area 2 - Foss Way Ridge



- 4.3.1 One of the unique features of Radstock is the way the open countryside comes close to the heart of the town. Unlike other hillsides surrounding the town there has been very little development on the steep sided ridge rising to the west of the Coomb End valley. This area is included within the conservation area because of its strong visual

relationship with the developed area of Radstock. Its distinct topography forms an important component of the views from Coombend to the northeast and Wellsway and the Wellow Brook valley to the south. The hillside is characterised by grazed fields and on the plateau by an arable landscape. This landscape includes the Roman Foss Way, which lies to the west of the town, in a southwest to northeasterly direction. Long since disused, except as a footpath, the stretch survives because in places it was very steep and later roads found an easier gradient. The whole zone along this road has good archaeological potential because of the possibility of survival of associated roadside features. Its hedgerows define a significant edge to the fields and the western hedge forms a clear conservation area boundary.

4.3.2 A manager's house which is now a private dwelling, stands on a terrace overlooking Middle Pit colliery and is listed grade II. A rare example of a Gunpowder House with an earthwork incline also survives in an isolated field above the valley, listed grade II but derelict and in a poor state of repair. It is likely that the mining community used the Foss Way. There is also a footpath from the manager's house, which crosses the ridge to Rookhill Cottages and down to Clandown Colliery. This connection between the two collieries and the social significance to the mining community are important features of this character area. Although a distinctly natural area of countryside, it has influenced and been influenced by man. Its distinctiveness draws equally on the senses and experiences as much as on historical associations. It encroaches into the core of the town, sandwiched between two well-developed valleys, providing an interruption or background to the urban fabric. This area is integral to the historic development of the town and is perceived as part of the core area of historic interest.

4.3.3 Objectives for the management of the area will include retention of the existing agricultural land use and hedgerow boundaries. It is considered that the area should remain undeveloped to retain its open character and distinct relationship with adjoining developed areas.

#### 4.4 Area 3 - Wellsway



4.4.1 The predominant features in the Wellsway area are the Wellsway batch, the dismantled Somerset and Dorset Railway and the unlisted miners terracing to the southwest. The planted spoil tip constitutes a picturesque focal point and historical

marker and is designated an area of Local Landscape/Nature Conservation Interest. To the north is the now grassed over line of the railway and earlier tramway. This characteristic and somewhat unique survival of the former communication route is of immense significance having played a valuable role in the success of the town. Its contribution to the town is now seen in terms of its recreational value, a small car park, adventure playground and public conveniences created by the Town Council as a commencement to the 'Linear Park'. This earthwork railway continues into the core of Radstock, providing open and accessible green spaces and incorporating a natural element into the busy urban core. The Wellow Brook and ITT's well 'treed' valley through the northern section makes a positive contribution to the area.

- 4.4.2 To the southwest is a significant area of unlisted miners terracing built in the local stone tradition and forming ordered rectilinear estates with projecting gabled end houses. New development has also taken place within and surrounding these terraces which neither enhances nor significantly detracts from the conservation area. Their bland appearance does not make a positive contribution to the area and there may be potential for some enhancement, but they follow a similar plan form, including comparable allotment gardens and for this reason do not intrude.
- 4.4.3 A short way to the north is the remains of Wellsway pit which includes an outstanding two cylinder steam winding engine house; a weighbridge (both recommended for Grade II listing by the Monuments Protection Programme) and the colliery stables, currently designated as an area of Distinctive Environmental Character. The conservation area boundary includes this surviving pit complex with its associated miners housing, planted batch and the earthwork rail formation. Where the railway crosses the A362 Somervale Road, the boundary has been drawn to include only the adjacent linear field to the west of the batch, which is important to the setting and may preserve an earthwork incline. Similarly, the boundary excludes the Norton-Radstock College to the south, which although located on the site of South Hill House, the largest house in the town built for the manager of the Radstock collieries, there is little surviving evidence after demolition and redevelopment in the 1960s. The avenue survives along with a substantial section of the estate wall, but a detailed ground survey is required to assess further archaeological evidence.
- 4.4.4 Enhancement objectives should seek to conserve built structures and renovate for appropriate uses and should seek to maintain the historical integrity of the area.

## 4.5 Area 4 - Historic Core



- 4.5.1 The town centre of Radstock lies at the nexus of the five surrounding valleys and at the confluence of various watercourses. The current layout of the urban core is heavily influenced by the former communication routes, which have passed through or terminated in the town centre and for this reason it constitutes an important junction. The Somersetshire Coal Canal terminated at a wharf south of the Waldegrave Arms and tramways provided the connection to the collieries. There also existed two stations in the town for the Somerset and Dorset and the Bristol and North Somerset Railways. Although neither railways are currently in use, parts of their original routes have been retained as public footpaths as have many former collier's paths, narrow gauge tramway routes and branch railways that led from the main railway lines to the collieries. To the north of the Radco superstore, there exists the line of the former canal and later Somerset and Dorset railway which survives as a prominent landscape feature and town centre park.
- 4.5.2 The town is crossed by busy main roads, which combined with earlier communication routes, creates an irregular and rather nebulous central area. The historic core of the town is centered on Church Street, notably the medieval church of St Nicholas (largely rebuilt in the nineteenth century) and Manor Farm which currently dates from the early eighteenth century and occupies the same site as the medieval manor house. Both buildings are listed grade II. It is likely that a weekly village market was held in the medieval period, at the junction of Church Street and Fortesque Road, reputedly the site of a village cross and now an open space occupied by the War Memorial. An island of buildings, mostly retail outlets relating to the mining community, is encircled by Fortesque Road and The Street. Although not listed, they make a significant contribution to the established character of the town and reflect the build up of successive historic periods. These buildings are included in the Area of Distinctive Environmental Character. On the east side of Fortesque Road, however, is an intrusive row of 1960s shops, with little attention to appropriate forms and detailing. The extent of intrusion is further emphasised by the vandalism and graffiti to the rear of the shops in an area of derelict railway land, where the surviving platform is masked by undergrowth. This 1960s work may provide a sense of enclosure to an irregular shopping centre, but presents a negative and contrasting

appearance to the more ornate late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings on the west side of the road.

- 4.5.3 A number of buildings in the centre are listed, such as the Radstock Working Men's Club and the Market Hall. Both are significant and reflect a rise in the miner's living standards and several more require consideration for listing such as Victoria Hall, The Bell Hotel and the buildings on the west side of Fortesque Road. The most intrusive and visually disruptive building in the heart of the town is the 1959 Radstock Cooperative Society Store (RADCO) and its associated car park. The scale of the building does not relate to any other nearby building and its 'footprint' is out of keeping with the incremental development of the town. In addition, the building does not respect the natural contours of the site.
- 4.5.4 The conservation area boundary, therefore, encompasses the entire urban core (including negative areas), due to its integral role in the shaping of Radstock and its evolution as the historic nucleus of the town. Included in the setting is a hillside to the south containing significant archaeological potential. Its position and steep sides contribute to its imposing appearance and significance as an open area and to the historic core of Radstock. It also includes a meadow designated as an open Area of Amenity Value in the Wansdyke Local Plan (Deposit November 1995) and is an important component of the setting of St Nicholas Church, Manor Farm and the surrounding area.
- 4.5.5 Enhancement and management should endeavour to retain the organic form of the centre, including maintaining and redefining the historic boundaries and routes.
- 4.6 **Area 5 - Ludlows and Tynning Coal-mining Area**



- 4.6.1 Ludlows and Tynning colliery epitomise the height of mining activity in Radstock. The area contains a well preserved landscape of batches, pit buildings and the associated socio-economic development of miner's terraces and co-operative buildings. To the northeast of the character area lies the large batch of Tynning colliery and to the southwest, the smaller Ludlow batch encroaching into the town



centre. Both batches have been recently re-graded yet remain integral to the special quality of the town.

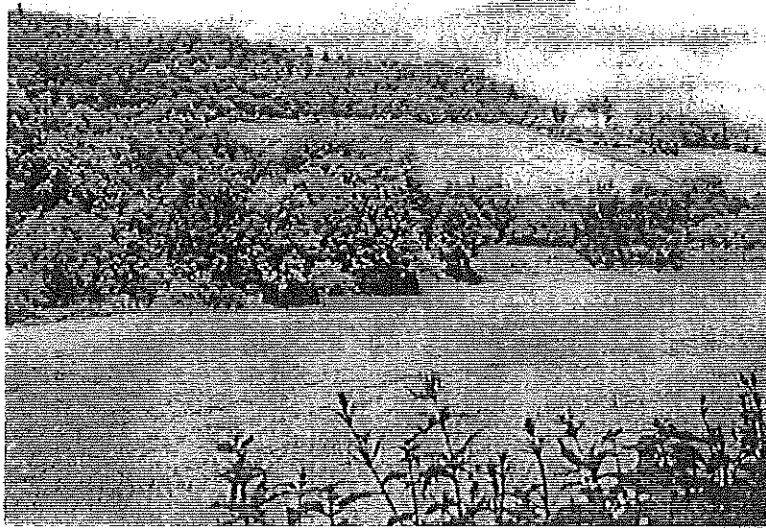
- 4.6.2 Lower Whitelands terraces are unusual because of their length and three storeys. Both are fronted by extensive allotment gardens with privies to the rear. These were the first purpose built miner's terraces, constructed in the 1840s and forming a separate industrial community, the first evidence of social control. Further terraces were erected in the second half of the nineteenth century and although closer to the town, Waldegrave Terrace and Waterloo Cottages reflect further social manipulation by the presence of a larger house at the end of each terrace occupied by colliery officials. The boundary includes these unlisted terraces and others, on each side of Bath Old Road with their associated gardens, all of which are fundamental to the mining legacy of the Somerset Coalfield.
- 4.6.3 Ludlows pit was sunk in 1782 and contains good surviving nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, which have been converted to light industrial uses. The engine house, screens building and pit baths have all been recommended for grade II listing by the English Heritage Monument Protection Programme. The survival and reuse of these historic buildings is further evident to the north, where the workshops for the Radstock collieries have been re-fronted and are currently in use by a local timber merchants. The intrinsic value of these buildings is enhanced by their continuing use by local businesses.
- 4.6.4 Mill Road contains an industrial estate and adjacent sewerage works (which have been omitted from the conservation area) and are situated within a valley important for its communication routes and previous industrial activity. The line of the railway is now preserved as a footpath and cycle route and has been included within the boundary along with an eighteenth century watermill, built on medieval foundations. The fields to the south are significant to the character of the conservation area and the industrial area reflects the industrial ethos of the area and therefore does not appear to be out of character.
- 4.6.5 Enhancement and management in this area should seek to respect the historical linear form of development and the relationships between the open areas of landscape and the developed areas. Any development should respect the valley's historical associations, which serve as a reminder of its once active contribution to the prosperity of the town.

## 4.7 Area 6 - Upper Braysdown



- 4.7.1 The character area at Upper Braysdown is unusual in its isolation. The conservation area boundary is detached here and encircles the area of special interest. Upper Braysdown represents the best example of an industrial landscape of small-scale mining co-existing in a rural community. It exists on the edge of an established agricultural area and forms a satellite and insular community, which was nevertheless firmly associated with the rest of the town.
- 4.7.2 The colliery buildings are mostly hidden by two terraced rows of stone built miner's cottages and two castellated towers stand on either side of the roadside entrance. Evidently built with display in mind, these towers formed a grand entrance for visitors and businessmen and may also have shielded unsightly pit buildings from the views seen by local gentry. The site remained intact until 1970 when it was almost completely demolished. The pithead baths survive, along with the miner's cottages, towers, the well-planted batch and an earthwork formation of an incline, which ran from the mine to the Somerset and Dorset Railway. The main pit site is now used as a council depot.
- 4.7.3 The agricultural land immediately surrounding Upper Braysdown has an important relationship with the mine, as it retains the original collier's paths and forms significant views over the valley towards Tynning and Upper Writhlington batches. There exists, therefore a strong connection between the pit complex and the wider setting, which should be considered when examining proposals for landscape improvement as designated in the local plan.

## 4.8 Area 7 - Writhlington Collieries



- 4.8.1 Like Upper Braysdown, the Writhlington collieries are characterised by their industrial legacy within a distinctly rural area. The landscape forms a visual envelope around the collieries with the settlement of Writhlington to the south. All the principal colliery buildings at Upper Writhlington have been destroyed, but the offices, blacksmith's shop and stables survive as private dwellings. In addition to these ancillary buildings, a large stone built manager's house was built above the colliery yard, which survives as a good example of the surveillance inherent in the relationship between workforce and manager.
- 4.8.2 The spoil heaps at Lower Braysdown and Upper Writhlington are mostly hidden by trees and in the 1980s Lower Writhlington was re-worked and re-planted. However, they all remain prominent landscape features above the town and merit inclusion. The track bed for the disused tramway which transported coal wagons to a coal depot at Frome Hill also survives to the rear of Frome Road. It is open to view from the public footpath, which crosses the fields to the north and disappears when it reaches the garden of number 25, Frome Road. Surviving as a property boundary and footpath to the east of Northfield, are the remains of the haulage incline, which transported coal from Upper Writhlington Colliery to the depot. Together with the remains of the tramway embankment, this hillside north of Frome Road is of intrinsic importance to the special character of the area.
- 4.8.3 In addition, there exists a substantial band of mature lime trees running parallel with the terraces to the east of Northfield. They form a significant landscape marker and can be clearly seen from the opposite hillside. They are shown on the 1931 Ordnance Survey Map but not the First Edition 1883 Map. It is assumed they are associated with the row of terraces shown on the 1931 OS map, and may have been planted to shield unsightly views across to the Writhlington Collieries. A similar band of trees also exists to the north of Hylton Row and Seward Terrace, which although surrounded by a modern housing estate, may have served the same purpose in protecting views to industrial landscapes. However, this band of trees together with Hylton Row is surrounded by substantial new development, much of which act as significant detractors has not been included

4.8.4 From this valley, views of Tynning and Braysdown batches along with the associated miner's terraces of Whitelands and Waldegrave, form significant focal points and add to the importance of this character area. Similarly, the reciprocal views from the opposite hillside, are dramatic and characteristic of the transformation of the natural landscape by the coal industry. There needs to be a presumption in favour of preserving these important views and in particular further development should be avoided on the hillside below Frome Hill and along the valley to the south of Lower Braysdown.

4.8.5 Objectives for this area should seek to preserve / restore the buildings and features associated with the mine and the historical features of the area. A particular characteristic of this area, which should be retained, is its isolation surrounded by agricultural land.

#### 4.9 Area 8 - Great Western Railway Land



4.9.1 The former site of the Great Western Railway is linear in character and flanked by steep valley sides providing a distinct element of enclosure which naturally restricts views to and from the area. The northern most tip of the character area encroaches into the urban core of the town and is sandwiched between Fortescue Road and the A362 Frome Road. The A367, the major artery for passing traffic, forms the northern boundary of the site. Following the site in a southeasterly direction, the landscape becomes distinctly rural; entering a landscape of pasture well defined by established hedgerows.

4.9.2 The remains of the GWR platform are still visible to the east of Fortescue Road. The railway line including trackbed and sleepers along with a continuous link to Frome also exists. Several of the ancillary railway buildings remain and are in varying condition, the most important being the Engine shed, opened in 1866 and allegedly designed by Brunel. Although not listed due to modifications to its roof covering, it is a rare example of an early engine shed, and taken together with its associated surviving setting it makes a significant contribution to the character of the area. To the southwest of the shed is a surviving earthwork incline leading from Huish colliery to the associated landscaped batch and connecting both to the railway line. From the

top of the batch, the tramway route survives to Haydon with occasional rails and sleepers surviving and important views across to the north and east of Radstock.

- 4.9.3 The importance of this character area is not only inherent in the quality of the surviving historic and archaeological remains, but it is the former uses within the area which have helped shaped its character. In addition, the views into and out of the character area, and its natural linear form are important to its special character and need preserving. The GWR land is testimony to the significance of the transport infrastructure of the town. The railways were essential to the coal industry and remain integral to Radstock's past and to the town's present form. Any future development should be sympathetic and of a high quality respecting the line of the railway and recognising the importance of the valley. Its archaeological and cultural heritage should be retained as far as possible, respecting the relationship of the historical town and the landscape with its distinct landform.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1** The conservation area boundary for Radstock has incorporated a review of comments received following public consultations in 1997 on the previous boundary and in 1998 on the final boundary. Recommendations for the delineation of the boundary have been made based on the special architectural and historic interest of the town. The boundary encompasses the historic built core of the town, the mining settlements and associated landscape, which is integral to its industrial past. Radstock and its setting need a sympathetic and comprehensive development plan, which befits its status as a conservation area. The built form should retain its historical and architectural value and development should attempt to integrate these features and consider carefully materials appropriate to the locality and building styles. Areas of visual significance and ecological importance should be conserved wherever possible. Areas of open landscape, included for their close relationship with the history of the town are important considerations in influencing the present and future character.

**5.2** In the compilation of this report, there has been an emphasis on defining the boundaries of the conservation area in addition to a full character analysis. In order to provide an effective report for future consultation, a consistent and rational approach has been maintained throughout in determining the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the town. It is hoped that this justification will provide a sound basis for a development plan and that enhancement strategies will reinforce the special interest of the area.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

**5.3.1** That designation of the Radstock conservation area will ensure preservation and enhancement of the distinctive character and quality of the historic town.

**5.3.2** That this appraisal will form the basis for a conservation area study, containing proposals and policies for preservation and enhancement and forming supplementary planning guidance to the Local Development Plan.

**5.3.3** That public support for the conservation area will be fostered through preparation of publications and through public consultation.

**5.3.4** That the conservation area will be monitored, updated and reviewed periodically as further research and information comes to light.

# RADSTOCK CONSERVATION AREA

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