

# Ashfield Conservation Area Character Statement



**Ashfield** is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century planned factory village set on an isolated loop of the Allan Water. The small settlement is characterised by the formal layout of former workers' cottages around a communal green. This is juxtaposed with the industrial complex of the former Ashfield Mill by the riverside. The village remained a working mill community for over a hundred years. The restricted site has witnessed no 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion and its layout remains largely as it was at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century providing an excellent example of a modest factory village of the late industrial age.

Cover: view across The Square, the former factory workers' housing enclosing the communal green.

## 1.0 General Description

**Ashfield** is a small riverside hamlet with a population of about 110 (2008) located 2 miles north of Dunblane, and 7 miles from Stirling, on the open farmland of Sheriff Muir (NS 784038). It is situated on the banks of the Allan Water and enclosed to the east by the Stirling-Perth railway line. It is accessed by a single approach road branching off the B8033. Riverside paths link the village to Dunblane and Kinbuck.

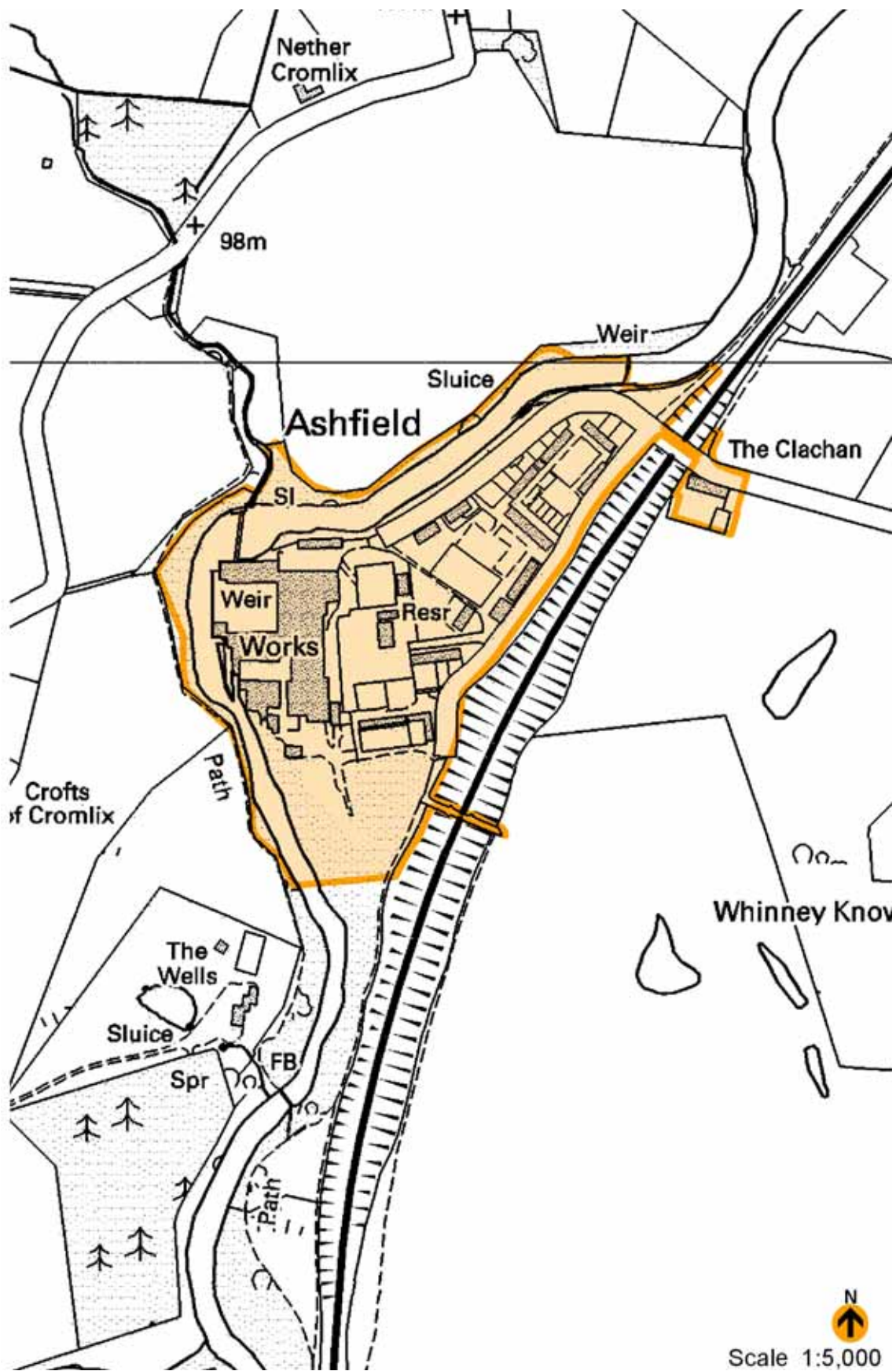
**Ashfield Conservation Area** (Map 1 & 2) consists of the entire village including the former mill complex and planned model housing, the railway bridges and the Clachan. The singular approach road passes the Clachan, a row of 2-storey flatted cottages, before crossing the railway line into the village proper (fig 1).

The Square is the most formally planned part of the village, with workers' housing set out in short terraced blocks around a long rectangular green (Map 4). The existing north-east section of The Square comprises three sides of 3-in-a row, single storey 3-bay houses which form a strong U-plan group addressing a communal drying green (fig 2). These cottages are little altered and form a very coherent group. The south-west section of The Square is less defined, enclosed on only two sides by the single storey cottages on the north-west and a symmetrical 2-storey row on the south-west (fig 3). The remainder of the south-east section has been demolished (section 2.0; Map 2) and is now open with private gardens and car parking. A number of small brick buildings (former wash houses, privies and coal sheds) are located between the cottages and add character to the setting (figs 2 & 6).

The 2-storey scale continues along Ochil View with a terrace of houses with short gardens lining the street opposite the railway cutting. This row, with the adjacent village hall, forms the south-east edge of a second square containing the former bowling green (fig 4).

The street plan to the south of the village is less formal. The Avenue is set at an oblique angle to the curving road, its houses with long front gardens providing a more rural atmosphere, which is continued with The Cottages (fig 8). The strong L-plan corner of The Steading marks the southern extent of the village (fig 7). The substantial 2-storey stone villa Ash Cottage (former mill general manager's house) is set in the middle of this area between the former mill and water tower (now in residential use).

To the west the former mill buildings occupy a significant area along the Allan Water; comprising a group of large single-storey rubble buildings, some with roof-ridge ventilators.



Map 1: Ashfield, indicating the conservation area (shaded in orange) © Crown





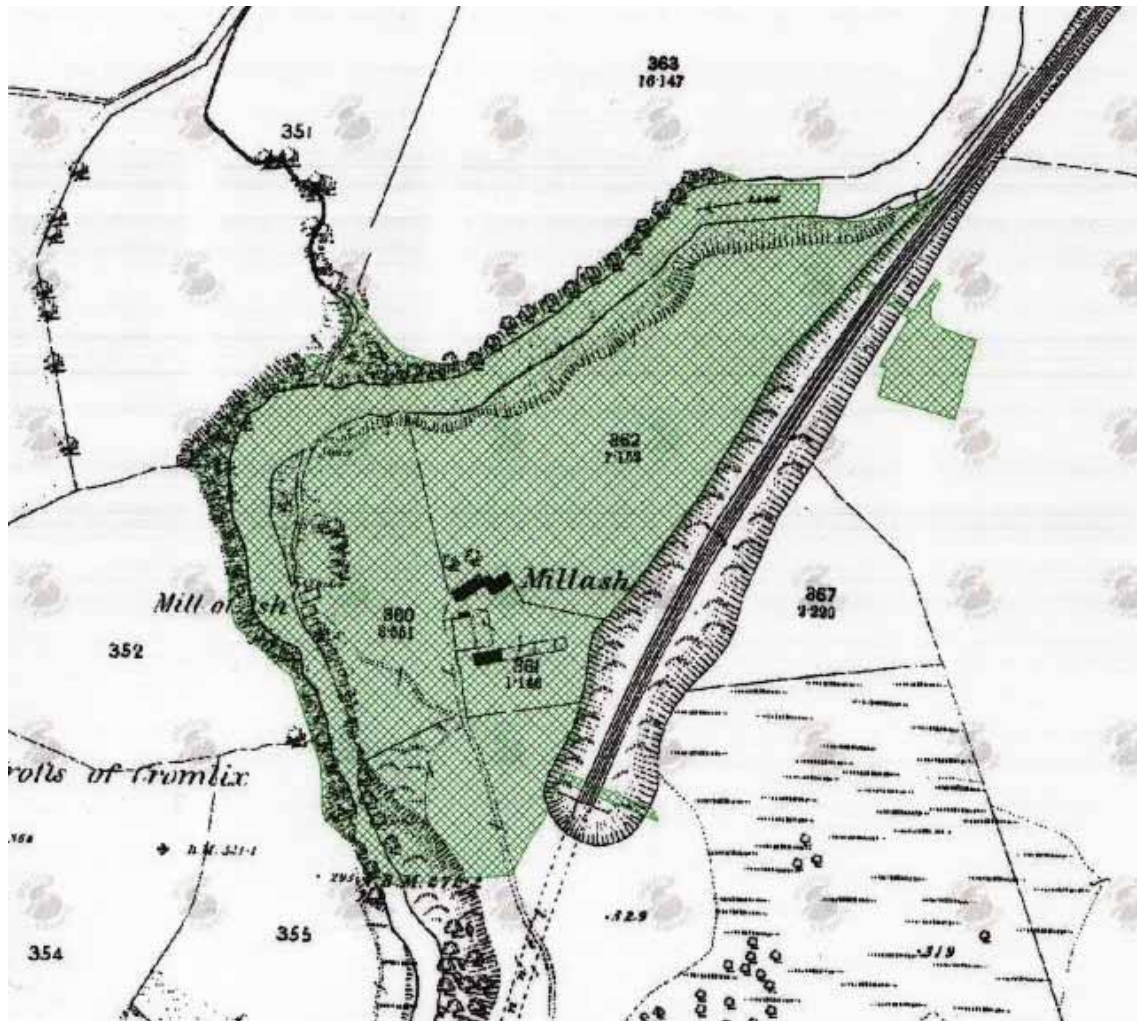
## 2.0 Historic Context

Ashfield was established as an '*industrial hamlet on the Allan Water*' (Groome, 1883, 184); the steep, narrow fall of the river at this point being ideal to harness water power. Its location upstream of some 20 other mills on the Allan was an advantage in accessing clean water required for the textile process (Dixon, 1988).

Historic records illustrate a mill (*Millask*, Stobie, 1783), and later the *Mill of Ash* on the river side and *Millash* to the east (1<sup>st</sup> OS 1862; Map 3). In 1865 J & J Pullar & Company bought Mill of Ash from John Stirling of Kippendavie, to supplement their existing operations at the Keirfield textile works at Bridge of Allan (Dixon, 1988). Pullar's Ashfield Mill was constructed from 1865 and workers housing set out formally around a square at the northern end of the site (figs 2, 3 & 5). The central area of the village contained some larger houses for senior staff and farm buildings to supply dairy produce for the village and accommodate the horses used to transport the cloth to Bridge of Allan. The Stirling-Perth Scottish Central Railway opened in 1848 and a halt was established at Ashfield to transport coal and chemicals (the siding to the north-east of the road bridge). A block on the south-east of The Square (demolished in 1976) was built prior to the village by the railway company for their temporary workers and was of an inferior 'poured concrete' construction (Williams, 1980).

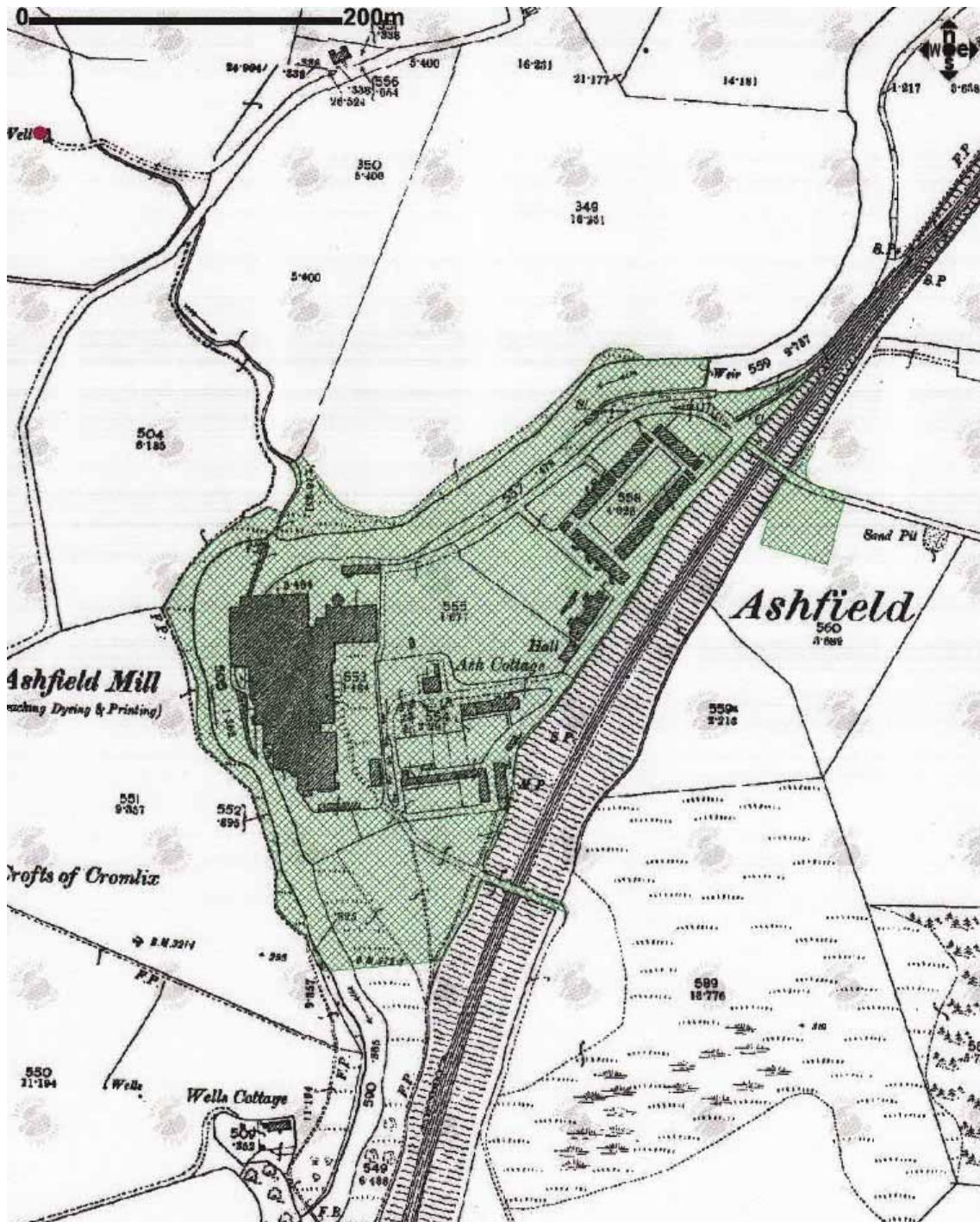
Pullar's Ashfield Mill (Bleaching, Dyeing & Printing) and the original factory village was recorded on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey (1895; Map 4). The Square (originally called Ashfield Square) now carries a carved stone '*Gladstone Square '1868*', apparently renamed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Pullars who were active supporters of the Liberal Party (fig 5; Williams, 1980). A further eight dwelling houses were built in 1898, possibly the block on Allan View (fig 4; Williams, 1980: 1909 Disposition plan); and then just prior to the First World War, The Clachan was constructed on the east side of the railway line primarily for agricultural workers (fig 1; Dixon, 1988). After the Second World War, Pullar's sold the mill and village, but Ashfield remained a working community until 1976 when the mill closed. The mill is now used as a business premises retaining the use of the water power with a turbine for electricity generation.





Map 3: Ashfield, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey (1862) illustrates the site before the village and new mill. There was already a mill (Mill of Ash) on the Allan Water and a substantial house or farm at Millash. © Crown

There are no Scheduled Monuments in the village however the early origin of the site should be borne in mind; sites may contain buildings and artefacts relating to previous uses; any findings or inquiries should be reported to Stirling Council's Archaeology Officer.



Map 4: Ashfield, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey (1895) illustrates the new Ashfield Mill and original form of the planned factory village. © Crown



### 3.0 Character and Appearance

The following table summarises the key aspects which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area:

<b>CONSERVATION AREA CONTEXT</b>	
Setting	A riverside location on an isolated loop of the Allan Water forming a distinctive triangular plot enclosed by the railway cutting to south-east.
Approach	By road through surrounding flat agricultural farm land and across railway bridge (fig 1). By foot along the river and across railway bridge; important approach by foot across field from A9 junction.
Topography	Largely flat site sloping towards the riverside to the west; as such properties on Allan View are reduced in scale (fig 4).
Views	Distant views to east of the Ochils; distant views north of Comrie moor uplands and Slymaback. In the village, views through into The Square.
Landmarks	The Square (fig 2).
Activity	Limited commercial activity at the mill complex.
<b>BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE</b>	
Key Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments	No listed buildings or Scheduled Monuments.
Key Unlisted Buildings of Townscape Value	The Square, particularly single storey cottages and outbuildings (figs 2-6). The former mill; The Steading (fig 7); Ash Cottage; The Water Tower.
Predominant Use	Residential; (former industrial).
Dominant Architectural Styles	Plain symmetrical traditional style.
Prevalent Buildings	1 and 2-storey terraced cottages; generally 2-storey properties are flatted with dual aspect and access stairs to upper flats (fig 3).
Periods of Buildings	Chiefly 1865-68; additions 1898; The Clachan early 1900s.
Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials / Construction Techniques /Texture, Colours	<b>Walls: The Square NE range</b> of cottages in dark red sandstone coursed rubble wall construction with segmental lintels to doors and windows and quoins in a contrasting cream sandstone (fig 5). Outbuildings in red brick (fig 6). <b>Ochil View, The Clachan, The Square SW range</b> (fig 3): pale pink sandstone coursed rubble. <b>Windows &amp; Doors: The Square</b> (fig 5): timber sash & case windows in 6 over 6 laying pane pattern; upper sash curved to match segmental arched lintel. Doors vertically boarded with lay light formed in 2 panes, curved to match segmental arched lintel. Now predominately painted white. <b>Roofs:</b> predominately Scots slated, projecting at the gable end with plain bargeboards; <b>Ochil View &amp; The Cottages</b> (fig 8) with overhanging eaves; short chimney stacks with moulded coping and cream cans; roof finishes are continuous over a row of properties.
Local Detail & Diversity	<b>The Square SW range:</b> curved stone forestairs with ironwork railings giving access to upper flats (fig 3). <b>The Cottages:</b> pointed-arched entrances under gablets (fig 8). <b>The Steading:</b> half dormers projecting above the eaves with ashlar surrounds and piended slate roofs; entrance doors are defined by a large ashlar surround incorporating small window and central moulded pediment (fig 7).
Open Spaces, Trees & Landscaping	Open green space enclosing the village with agricultural land to east (fig 1); Riverside setting and mature trees. Drying green (The Square); former bowling green (fig 4). Small planting strips to the front of cottages (fig 5), and gardens to the rear (The Square); Small front gardens (Ochil View). Low stone boundary walls and hedging (fig 8).
Public Realm	Layout of the model village creates a general public realm. Traffic is excluded from the interior of the village which is occupied by lawns and gravel pathways.

Table 1: Ashfield Conservation Area: Character & Appearance



Fig 1: the singular road approach to the village passes The Clachan, the only building constructed in the east side of the railway line. The village is set amongst flat agricultural land with low hills in the distance.



Fig 2: view looking north-east across The Square. The single storey cottages in groups of three 3-bay houses form a U plan around a communal drying green. Note the small brick building on the right, one of several former wash houses, privies and coal sheds which remain an integral part of the planned village.



Fig 3: the 'rear' façade of the south-west range of The Square. Properties were designed as flatted houses with attractive curved entrance stairs contrasting with the otherwise regular form of the buildings. Note there has been considerable detrimental change to this block, including inappropriate replacement window types and widening of the original single arched windows.



Fig 4: looking north-west across the former bowling green to the rear of Nos. 1-4 Allan View. This 2-storey block is reduced in scale due to the site levels dropping towards the river. The roofscape is prominent and important but has had inappropriate changes with rooflights in a variety of sizes and positions introduced, and a poorly designed dormer which interrupts the roofscape.





Fig 5: detail of one of the cottages of The Square with a carved stone 'Gladstone Square 1868'. This unaltered cottage illustrates all the characteristics of the original houses: contrasting red and cream sandstone, segmental window and door lintels, 6 over 6 laying pane timber sash and case windows (originally painted finish), boarded door with 2 pane lay-light and small planting strip in front of the cottage. The quality of materials and attention to detail illustrate Pullars intention to construct an attractive factory village.



Fig 6: outbuildings, originally wash houses, privies or coal sheds, form an important contribution to the character of the conservation area and are an integral part of the planned model village. They are constructed in brick, but maintain the architectural detail of the cottages such as segmental arches over openings.



Fig 7: west elevation of The Steading; the houses in the southern section of the village were designed for different uses and this is reflected in their architectural style although there is a continuity in the use of materials such as the red sandstone. Note the eaves dormers and distinctive door surrounds with small pediments over.



Fig 8: adjoining The Steading, The Cottages continue the more rural, less formal feel of the southern end of the village. A low row of 3 houses with long front gardens enclosed by hedging and stone boundary walls. Two of the original small gabled entrances have been extended with entrance porches which are not part of the original design.



# Appendix 1: Conservation Area Management

## 4.0 Negative Factors

NEGATIVE FACTORS	
Building Design Scale, Plot	One new block of housing on Allan View has had minimal impact due to topography sloping reducing its scale when viewed from the central area; it has also retained the size and scale of the adjacent block. Some properties have rear large extensions which compete with the scale of the original cottages.
Building Elements	<b>Incremental change and loss of original fabric</b> <b>Windows:</b> The Square NE section: enlargement of original arched single windows to form double rectilinear windows with flat lintels; The Square SW section (fig 3): 2-storey row has almost entirely lost its original windows and has a mix of styles and materials to the detriment of the terrace. This has occurred in other areas. <b>Roofs:</b> introduction of dormers, roof lights and roof vents of varying styles and in varying locations breaking continuity of the roofscape (e.g. The Square, Allan View, fig 4); large continuous box dormers on The Clachan.
Material and colours	<b>Roofs:</b> repair in differing slate types which breaks the continuity of the terrace. <b>Stonework:</b> painting of dressed stone window surrounds; poorly applied cement pointing.
Building Curtilage	Some gardens retain stone boundary walls which adds character, but others have a variety of new fencing types which dilutes the general appearance.
Streetscape	Roads and car parking areas have a tarmac finish in poor condition.
Open space & Landscaping	The open space of the two squares is important, but large car parking areas in poor condition and modern materials detract from the original composition.

Table 2: Ashfield Conservation Area: Negative Factors

## 5.0 Vulnerability of Ashfield Conservation Area

Like similar planned villages, the strength of the character and appearance of Ashfield Conservation Area derives from the coherence of layout, design and materials of the buildings as a group, as well as their individual building details and quality of traditional materials. Overall, Ashfield has preserved its character, however there has been significant incremental change leading to the loss of original elements, and replacement has not always been made in appropriate materials or designs. The reason for this is not clear but the lack of listed building status of any the buildings (unlike Deanston) could be significant. The conservation area has an Article 4 Direction to assist in its appropriate management. This would suggest conservation area management in Ashfield in the past has not been sufficient to control change appropriately.

Conservation area management should aim to protect the unique and near original planned layout of the village, its traditional buildings (design, elements, materials) and encourage enhancement when opportunities arise. The main risk areas are:



- *Wholly unlisted fabric.*
- *Already altered listed fabric (should not be regarded as a precedent).*
- *Buildings in multiple ownership; changes to one property affect the group and conservation area in general.*
- *Erosion of original fabric with inappropriate replacement and repair affecting individual properties, their grouping and the wider conservation area context.*
- *Poor development management / enforcement in the conservation area.*
- *Roofscape erosion: a key component in the character of the individual rows, particularly of single storey cottages.*
- *Erosion of the planned layout by new development.*

## 6.0 Buildings at Risk and Sensitive Areas

There are no properties currently on the Buildings at Risk Register in the conservation area, and none are considered to be at risk. The former mill complex is now partially vacated and some buildings are in a poor condition. However, the owner is in resident ownership having converted the gatehouse and water tower, and uses part of the mill infrastructure as a water-powered electrical generator.

## 7.0 Conservation Area Boundaries

The boundary of the conservation area is considered to be an appropriate definition of the area of special architectural and historic interest.

## 8.0 Listed Buildings

There are no listed buildings in Ashfield and it is not known if the village has been surveyed by Historic Scotland. The buildings have considerable importance and may merit statutory listing particularly those which enclose the northern section of The Square, the associated outbuildings, and individual houses such as Ash Cottage. It is recommended that Historic Scotland review Ashfield in its entirety. Notwithstanding this, buildings identified either through this appraisal, or by other means, as having some architectural or historic interest, but which do not meet Historic Scotland's criteria for inclusion in the statutory List of listed buildings may be included in a local list compiled by Stirling Council.

## 9.0 Opportunities for Planning Action

Stirling Council, primarily through Development Management and Enforcement, should ensure that the special interest created by the historic form and special qualities of the conservation area outlined in this report are not eroded by poor quality development, unsympathetic alteration and replacement, and inappropriate repair.

The previous draft of this appraisal recommended that the current Article 4 Direction for Ashfield(1977), whereby planning permission is required for Classes I, II, IV and XI of the

1975 General Development Order, be revised to bring it up to date with current legislation and to extend the Article 4 coverage in relation to those issues outlined in sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this appraisal. However, it is considered that the recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) that took effect on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2012, remove the need for the existing or any new Article 4 Direction. Planning permission is now required for most development within conservation areas including alterations and extensions to buildings, walls, gates and railings, creation or alteration of hardstanding areas, satellite and micro-renewals equipment.

Whenever required statutory consents are not obtained for development, enforcement action should be taken to ensure the protection of the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

## Appendix 3: Methodology & Bibliography

### Methodology

The purpose of this document is to provide a concise illustrated *Character Statement* of the conservation area. The research was undertaken in March 2011 by Sonya Linskaill RIAS RIBA, on behalf of Stirling Council, Planning Department. This document was updated by Stirling Council in July 2012.

The brief required that key features and factors which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area are summarised in a character statement. Significant issues in relation to the future management of the area were also to be identified. The concise nature of this statement does not allow all important aspects of the conservation area to be described, or to be described in great detail. Exclusion of any element or aspect does not imply it makes no contribution to the conservation area. It should be noted that this document is not a *Conservation Area Appraisal* which would provide further detail and analysis.

### Bibliography

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### Maps

- Ordnance Survey (1861): 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey, Stirling Council license
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