

# Heritage Statement

The Former Copperworks site, Ashbourne Road, Whiston  
HLW Developments

## 1.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

### Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a development of 11 No. dwellings on the former copperworks site in Whiston, Staffordshire.
- 1.2. The site is currently brownfield land, the copperworks having been demolished many years ago. However, the site is covered by Staffordshire HER, and lies adjacent to a row of Grade II listed cottages. Therefore, the purpose of this statement is to assess the impact of the proposed works on any nearby heritage assets and the historic character of the area.
- 1.3. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), any design should seek to “conserve and enhance” the historic environment. Section 12 of the NPPF states that LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting, with a level of detail proportionate to its importance (P128).

## 2.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

### Description of the Asset

- 2.1. Whiston village lies within the Churnet Valley, in the parish of Kingsley, just to the east of Froghall. The settlement is focused along Black Lane and Whiston Eaves Lane, spreading west along the A52 Ashbourne Road.
- 2.2. In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's 'Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales' described Whiston as "a township, with two hamlets, in Kingsley parish, Stafford; 4 miles NE of Cheadle. It has a post-office under Stafford. Real property £2,536; of which £141 are in ironworks. Pop., 708. Houses, 137. The manor has belonged since 1380 to the Giffards."
- 2.3. The site of the former copperworks is situated between Black Lane and Ashbourne Road, bounded by newly built housing to the south and open fields to the north. To the east sits 'Hyning,' a detached property built circa 1930s, and to the west, adjacent to the site boundary, a small group of Grade II listed terraced cottages.
- 2.4. In addition to Moorland Cottages, consultation with Staffordshire HER uncovers the following heritage assets located within 250m of the site:
  - Locker Farmhouse (UID:1374664) & Barn (UID:1189153) – Grade II listed 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse and barn located approximately 180m north of the site
  - Milepost at SK041 474 – 240m NE of the site
  - Stable House (UID:1374627) & Barns (UID: 1189161 & 1038025) – Grade II listed grouping, the only example in the locality made from moulded copper slag blocks, located approximately 200m south of the site
- 2.5. In relation to the site itself, the HER makes brief reference to the copperworks (HER No: 04824) – "Georgian to Victorian 1770 -1894. No remains of buildings survive;" and a spoil heap and tramway (HER No: 04825) – the 1880s OS map shows a short tramway running from the works to a tip, the latter possibly being a "unique survival within England."
- 2.6. The Whiston copperworks were built circa 1770 by the Duke of Devonshire, who owned much of the land at Whiston (as shown by the 1814 & 1839 Tithe maps). It was built to refine copper from the Duke's mines at Ecton. It was more practical to build a works near the coal mines at Foxt Wood and Kingsley, than to transport coal to Ecton. Originally packhorses would have been used, but eventually the Cauldon Low tramroads became the primary method of transportation. The tramroad to the works was built circa 1804.
- 2.7. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the copper ore at Ecton began to decline, and the works closed in 1818. They were then sold to the owners of the Mixon copper mine, William Clement Sneyd & Thomas Sneyd Kynnersley. A survey carried out during this time showed the copperworks, owned by William Sneyd, including a chaving house, weighing machine house, railway, coke house & refinery, paved

coal yard and a paved yard for laying copper. Unfortunately, the accompanying map has been lost.

- 2.8. The business was sold to James Keys & Son in 1847, who smelted ore from smaller mines outside Staffordshire. James Keys is recorded as living at Whiston Hall (now the Golf Club) in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.9. By 1890, the copperworks were no longer in use, and the buildings were demolished circa 1900-1910. The stone was used to build St. Mildred's church (1909), although documents exist at Staffordshire Records Office showing a plan of the works with stone to be taken for the building of a sanctuary at St. Mark's (presumably St. Mark's the Evangelist at Foxt).
- 2.10. By 1925, the OS map shows the smelter as demolished, although some outbuildings and waste tips survived. The site then remains relatively untouched until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 2.11. The southern half of the copperworks site (Phase 1) was subject to an earlier planning application for 13no. new dwellings (SMD/2003/1423). This was subsequently approved, and the development has recently been completed.
- 2.12. The Grade II listed Moorland Cottages (UID: 1189156), adjacent to the western boundary, were listed in 1986 and are described as a former workhouse. The listing description is as follows:

*"Early C19 with minor late C19 alterations. Coursed dressed and squared stone; tiled roof; brick end and 4 ridge stacks. 2-storey, 6-window front; glazing bar sashes with painted surrounds except to converted stable at left end which has casements. 3 entrances placed alternately with windows and inset 2 windows from ends, right-hand has corbelled cornice, all with part-glazed doors."*
- 2.13. Whiston erected a parish workhouse in the early 1800s. Workhouses began to evolve in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an alternative to "out-relief" – grants of money, food, clothing etc. to the poor. The workhouse was intended to save the parish money by providing accommodation for the destitute, elderly and infirm, whilst putting the able-bodied to work. They were often just ordinary local houses, rented for the purpose. Others, such as Cheadle workhouse, were purpose built following the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834).
- 2.14. It's believed that the cottages date from around 1772 (a similar period to when the copperworks were constructed) and were likely built originally to house workers. However, it's possible the houses were then rented out as Whiston workhouse in the early 1800s, particularly as this was the period that the Ecton mine was in decline (with the works finally closing in 1818).
- 2.15. A planning and listed building application was submitted, and subsequently approved, to construct a 2-storey side extension to 3 Moorland Cottage in 2007. A further listed building application, to replace the windows at 1 Moorland Cottage, was approved in 2012.

### **3.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT** **Assessment of its Significance**

- 3.1. To assess the significance of any affected heritage assets, this document adopts the methods outlined in Historic England's publication "*Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance*." The guidance describes four heritage values that may contribute to the significance of a place: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal.
- 3.2. *Evidential Value* is described as "the potential of a place to yield evidence of past activity." For example, archaeological deposits may provide clues in place of any written record. It is often proportional to the amount of material evidence that has since been lost or altered.
- 3.3. In this respect, the copperworks site retains relatively low evidential value, as the smelter was demolished over a century ago, and very little remains to suggest its previous use. It's likely that archaeological deposits are present below ground, which may provide evidence of the previous use of the site, but consultation of 19<sup>th</sup> century OS maps shows that the smelter and the majority of its associated outbuildings were situated to the south of the site, which has recently been built on following a course of land remediation.
- 3.4. This proposed development will be situated to the northern side, over what was essentially a refuse heap for the works, which accounts for the sloping and undulating nature of the site. Therefore, the site's ability to yield evidence beyond below ground waste deposits is low.
- 3.5. There is relatively little written or photographic record of the copperworks. The OS maps begin only when the works were already in decline towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Tithe map of 1814 shows a similar structure, on land owned by the Duke of Devonshire, with the tramroad still in use. A book of reference to a plan of Whiston in 1826 exists, but the accompanying map has since been lost. A desktop survey of the site was carried out by the HER in 2003 but provides only a brief historic overview.
- 3.6. The adjacent Moorland Cottages are higher in evidential value, as they remain relatively unchanged from when they were originally built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and as such are Grade II listed. They likely have links with the copperworks, being built around the same time (possibly as worker's cottages), although they were subsequently utilised as the parish workhouse, before conversion back into private housing.
- 3.7. *Historical Value* derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative. "The use and appropriate management of a place for its original purpose illustrates the relationship between design and function, and so may make a major contribution to its historical value. If so, cessation of that activity will diminish those values...and may essentially destroy them."

- 3.8. The closing and demolition of the copperworks at the turn of the last century means the site retains low historical value, as there is so little physical evidence that connects the history of the site to the present day. The only evidence that alludes to its past existence appears to be the slag block housing along Black Lane, and the naming of The Sneyd Arms public house, which has since become a dog training academy.
- 3.9. The listed cottages carry a high historical value, as they represent a key example of workers housing built during the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the building of the copperworks, Whiston village is likely to have been little more than a small agricultural settlement. The cottage's subsequent use as the parish workhouse adds another layer to their history, and their return to housing provides a clear connection between how we once lived, and how we live in the present day.
- 3.10. *Aesthetic Value* derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. Aesthetic value is more subjective. Certainly, when the copperworks were in use, the site was unlikely to have been particularly appealing. In its current state, the site appears as an overgrown brownfield plot of land. The HER characterises it as "fieldsapes," grouping it together with the agricultural fields to the north. However, the site is steeply sloping in parts, and was once covered in various trees, shrubs and undergrowth, the land beneath being historical refuse.
- 3.11. Moorland cottages are an attractive row, set back and raised away from the highway. Their simple symmetry, coarsed stone and timber sash windows are representative of the local vernacular during the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Aesthetic value is arguably high in this regard.
- 3.12. Whiston contains several examples of stone and brick cottages in varying designs, the most interesting perhaps being Stable House Farm on Black Lane, being constructed using copper slag blocks. The listing description speculates that they may have been built as a model to promote wider distribution of the blocks, which ultimately failed, but that perhaps the name 'Black Lane' is derived from their dark colour.
- 3.13. *Communal Value* is about the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it. As the copperworks was demolished over a century ago, its unlikely that any local residents retain a direct connection. However, it is well known within the village as the site of the former copperworks, and its likely that many people have ancestors that would have worked there.
- 3.14. The cottages, being private residences, will have limited communal value. However, like the copperworks, its possible that residents of the village may have had relatives that were once occupants of the parish workhouse, although such unpleasant memories might be less likely to be passed down through generations.

## 4.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

### The Design Concept

- 4.1. The proposals are for 11no. new dwellings, representing Phase 2 of the copperworks development, Phase 1 having been recently completed to the south of the site.
- 4.2. The new dwellings will consist of 4No. 2-Bed semi-detached, 3No. 3-Bed detached, and 4No. 4-Bed detached properties.
- 4.3. A new access road is proposed from the A52. Its location has been carefully considered following assessment of the traffic conditions. The 5m width drops to 3.5m, 10m rear of the highway, and will become a "shared space" for both vehicles and pedestrians. This avoids the need for footpaths and limits the amount of hard landscaping required.
- 4.4. The linear layout follows the A52, east to west, but in a more organic form. This makes the best use of the site, keeping everything towards the lower and flatter areas, whilst avoiding an overly engineered "housing estate" appearance.
- 4.5. The house types have been carefully designed to try and reflect the local vernacular style. The closest, and therefore most affected, properties, will be Moorland Cottages, and key features were taken from their design, such as the proportions, symmetry and window treatment. However, steps were taken to try and limit the impact at this end of the site, and so the eaves and ridge have been lowered. This means the properties sit further down within the landscape and are less likely to be of any detriment to the listed buildings. The dormer windows are a feature found on several properties around Whiston.
- 4.6. The houses are designed to look like vernacular cottages, to fit with the local area, but aim to sidestep pure pastiche by avoiding such things as uPVC "sash-effect" windows and Georgian door surrounds. They are deliberately simple and unobtrusive. The frontages are relatively narrow, with symmetrical openings, and chimney stacks to each house type.
- 4.7. The windows are simple flush casements with a single horizontal glazing bar, which reflect the casements at the stable end of Moorland Cottages. It would be preferable for these to be in painted timber, or a heritage uPVC, such as Residence 9. Doors should be timber with glazed vision panels to allow light into the hallways.
- 4.8. Materials in Whiston are a mix of stone and brick, in varying designs. Much of the new build housing, such as some within Phase 1 of the Copperworks, and a similar small development off Black Lane, have been constructed in stone. However, properties situated along Ashbourne Road vary considerably. The adjacent property, 'Hyning,' is brick with render above, while Moorland

Cottages are purely coarsed ashlar stone. Locker Farm (opposite) contains the listed stone buildings, as well as a large brick-built farmhouse.

- 4.9. Further west along the A52, the former Sneyd Arms has stone gables, lintels and sills with a brick frontage. A large single storey extension is build entirely in brick, with stone sills and door surrounds. The cottage adjacent is also in brick, while approval has recently been given for a new dwelling to occupy the land in between, which will be constructed in brick with stone quoins.
- 4.10. It was felt that a mix of stone and brick was more representative of this area of the village and would be less likely to jar with the surroundings than freshly constructed stone. The houses will have stone quoins, lintels and sills, with the remainder in a softly coloured red brick such as Birtley Old English. Roofing will be in traditional Staffordshire blue tiles.
- 4.11. Two parking spaces are provided per dwelling, but the decision was taken to situate the driveways to the sides of the properties rather than the frontages, to limit the impact of the car on the appearance of the development and the character of the local area. Similarly, garages have not been included in the proposals.
- 4.12. Landscaping will be used to soften the overall impact, with a heavily planted frontage along the A52. Each property benefits from a small amount of green space/planting to the front, as well as sizeable private gardens to the rear.
- 4.13. Any existing trees are to be retained where possible, and the areas to both the western end (adjacent to Moorland Cottages) and the eastern end (site of the old tramroad) will remain primarily untouched, retaining existing footpaths and linking to Phase 1 of the copperworks development.



## **5.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT**

### **The Impact**

- 5.1. The aim of this report is to assess the impact of any proposals on the significance of any heritage assets that might be affected.
- 5.2. Any proposals should seek to limit the impact on the setting of the village, the open aspect of the local area, and the significance of any heritage assets in the immediate vicinity. They should make a positive contribution by conserving and enhancing the historic character.
- 5.3. The site is obviously a key feature within Whiston, being in a prominent position along the A52. However, most of the village centres further west and south, around Whiston Eaves Lane and Black Lane. Therefore, for the most part, the setting of the village itself would remain unchanged by the addition of a new housing development.
- 5.4. As the copperworks themselves have long been demolished, the use of the land for development will have little effect in terms of its heritage values. However, any archaeological deposits of any significance should be carefully recorded, if found during any construction.
- 5.5. There will obviously be some impact felt by the listed cottages, but the design of both the house types and the site layout has been carefully thought out in order keep this to an absolute minimum. Existing trees and shrubbery will be left in place at this end of the site, and the adjacent houses will be the smallest semi-detached properties that most reflect the character of the cottages. They have been sited and oriented so as not to come forward of the building line, so views from and to the cottages and their setting should remain unharmed.
- 5.6. To the opposite end of the site, a large buffer of landscaping is retained between the new development and the 1930s property adjacent.
- 5.7. Given that the site currently has the appearance of unmaintained and overgrown brownfield land, a development of this kind should serve to improve its overall appearance. The site is not greenfield land, nor does it appear to offer any positive contribution in terms of heritage significance to the local area. The nature of its former use, together with the steeply sloping/undulating ground, make it unviable for use as agricultural land or even for recreational/community purposes.
- 5.8. The open aspect to the side of the cottages, whilst contributing heavily to their aesthetic value, offers very little in evidential and historic value, as the cottages would most likely have been built to serve the copperworks, rather than as standalone rural farmhouses, and therefore their location within supposedly 'open' countryside tells little of their history and original purpose. Such cottages

are common within the Staffordshire Moorlands, where industries such as mining and smelting were prevalent during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Therefore, it is argued that the addition of further housing to the copperworks site would represent less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.

- 5.9. The other heritage assets within the vicinity, such as Lockers Farm and Stable Farm, shouldn't suffer any detrimental impact on their historic significance by the addition of the development. Stable Farm is located to the south, along Black Lane, and the site is not visible from this area. Lockers Farm is a full 180m to the north-east of the site, to the opposite side of the A52, and the proposals shouldn't be of any detriment to their significance, which lies primarily with historic and evidential value. This should represent no substantial harm to these listed buildings.
- 5.10. In conclusion, the proposals offer an opportunity to remedy contaminated land from the former copperworks and put it to good use by providing much needed housing within the Staffordshire Moorlands area. The development of this brownfield site should serve to make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of Whiston, thereby fulfilling Section 12 of the NPPF (P131).

## References

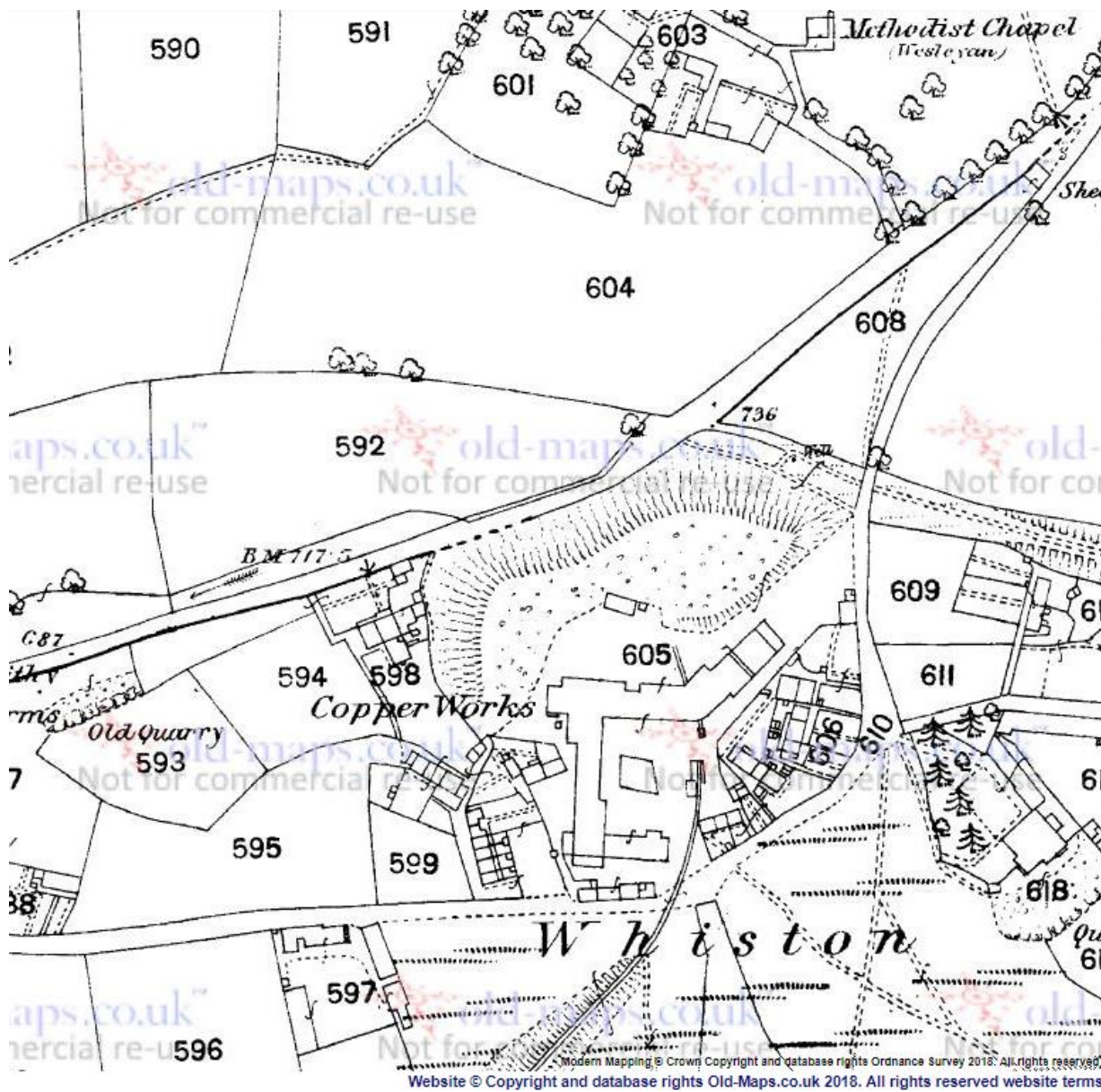
Whiston Copper Works A Desk Top Survey (UID ST3998) – SCC HER (2003): Courtesy of the William Salt Library  
Staffordshire HER  
Staffordshire Records Office  
Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance – Historic England (2008)  
[www.staffspasttrack.org.uk](http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk)  
[www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)  
[www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)  
[www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk)  
[www.visionofbritain.org.uk](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk)

**6.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**Appendix**

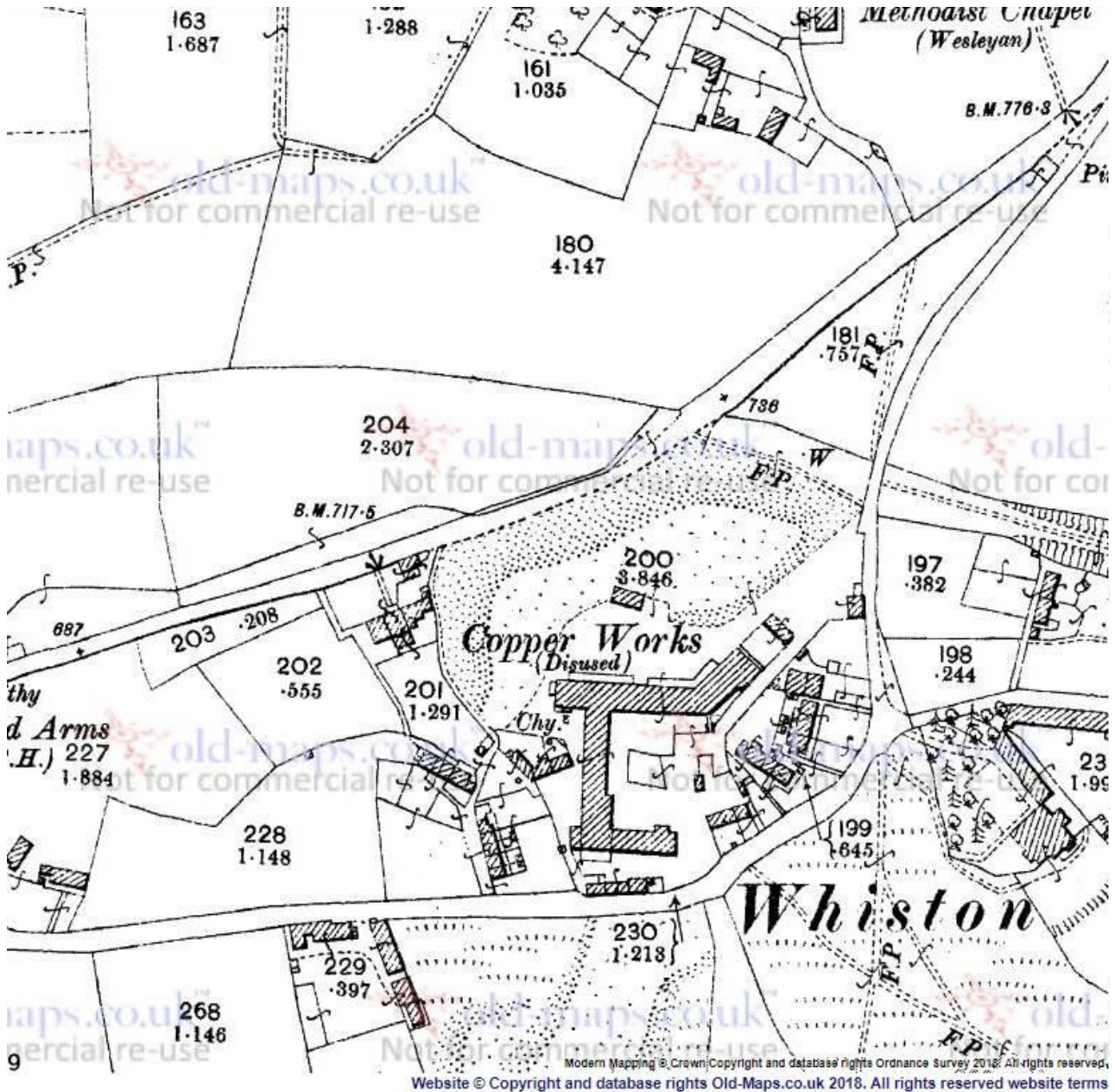


1: 1814 Tithe Map

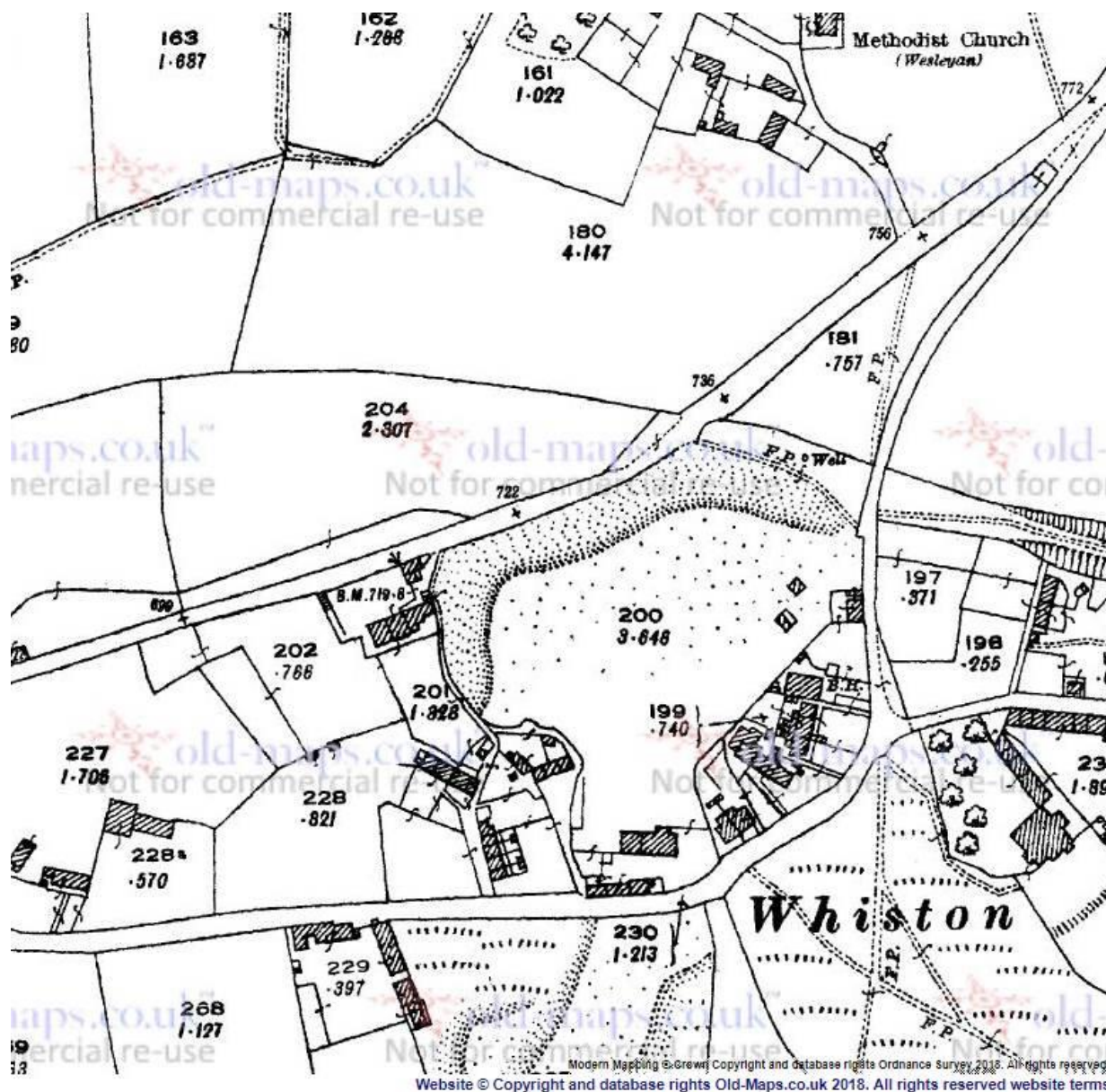


## 2: 1880 OS Map





3: 1899 OS Map



4: 1925 OS Map





5: Former Copperworks site. Grade II listed Moorland Cottages to the right. Phase 1 Copperworks development to the left.



6: Grade II listed Moorland Cottages





7: Looking east across the site. 1930s property 'Hying' to the centre, with Grade II listed Lockers Farm in the distance.