

People and Planning Northumberland Local Development Framework

Bedlington Conservation Area Character Appraisal

January 2011



Contents

1	Summary	5
2	Introduction	9
3	Location and Context	11
	Location	11
	Boundary.....	11
	Context	12
	Views of the Area	14
4	Historical Development	16
	Development History.....	16
	Pre-Map History	16
	Armstrong’s Map of 1769	16
	Fryer’s Map of 1820	17
	Greenwood’s Map of 1828	17
	Tithe Award Map of 1843	19
	First Edition OS Map c1860	19
	Second Edition OS Map c1897	21
	Third Edition OS Map c1920	23
	Modern Map c2000	23
	Conclusions.....	24
	Archaeology	24
5	Spatial Analysis	26
	Development Pattern	26
	Layout, Grain and Density.....	26
	Views within the Area.....	30
6	Character Analysis	32
	Land Use.....	32
	Architectural Qualities	34
	Form, Height and Scale	36
	Features, Detailing and Materials.....	38
	• Masonry.....	38
	• Doorways	41
	• Windows.....	42
	• Shopfronts.....	43
	• Roofs and Rainwater Goods	47
	• Dormer Windows and Rooflights	50
	• Chimneys	50

Contribution of Spaces.....	51
• Front Street	52
• Market Place and Gap site	54
• Side Streets and Alleys	55
• Churchyard.....	56
• Private Gardens, Yards and Forecourts	58
Loss, Intrusion and Damage	60
• Neutral Parts	60
• Negative Parts.....	61
• Incremental Change	62
• Loss and Replacement of Original Architectural Details.....	62
• Inappropriate Designs, Methods and Materials	64
• Condition & Vacancy	66
• Other Pressures for Change	66
7 Management	68
8 Further Information & Guidance	70
Figures	
1 Bedlington Conservation Area	4
2 Development Pattern, Density and Layout.....	27
3 Other Designations	76
4 Proposed Boundary Modifications & Clarification of Existing Boundary (extract from CAMS)	80
Appendices	
A Character Appraisal of Proposed Additions to Boundary	77

1 Summary

Introduction and Context



1.1 Bedlington Conservation Area (1971) identifies one of the older and more attractive settlements in south east Northumberland. From the north lip of the River Blyth, the linear development pattern rises up a ridge, with many changes in level evident. Underlying sandstone and coal

measures are key to the history and appearance. The boundary is drawn tightly around Front Street, Market Place and connecting roads because the setting is very different (but a recent review proposes small additions). The town is not prominent in the landscape apart from on approach from the south.

Development History

1.2 Bedlington's history is long, likely with Saxon origins. Tradition says St Cuthbert's remains rested at the site of the church in 1069 and, from an early date, the church, supposed Bishop's palace, mills, hospital and markets would secure the town's status as a local capital. Until 1844, Bedlington was part of Co Durham, the principal tenants associated with the Old Hall (demolished in 1959).



Tithe Award Map of 1843

1.3 Although farmland burgage plots surrounded Bedlington into the twentieth century, the market town began change to an industrial one from the 1730s using ironstone and coal. The town became pivotal to infrastructure production for the new railway industry led by the Stephenson's of Newcastle (but trains never came to Bedlington, the nearest line passing to the east). Commerce, industry and housing flourished, plus churches, schools, institutions and many pubs. By the late 1900s, collieries and miners' terraces were added, plus upmarket housing and a football ground.

1.4 The later twentieth century brought change. The setting was lost to mass modern housing and low density development to the north. A dual carriageway ran through the rural road pattern at the west end, and demolition took place at Market Place. Some new development was very bulky whilst some was fitted in more suitably.

1.5 Bedlington's history has been full of incident but, despite the usual modern intrusions, it retains much of its historic authenticity from substantial eighteenth and nineteenth century survivals, and probably also from earlier below-ground survivals.

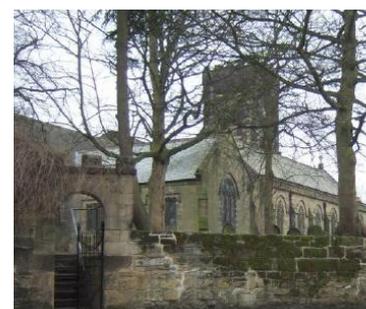
Development Pattern



1.6 Despite a complex history, the development pattern today is quite straightforward – one long street with a central elbow, creating three parts: Front Street West, Market Place, and East End Front Street. Linear plots perpendicular to the street on the north side mostly have buildings to the front, extending a sharp urban edge through the area, broken in a few places (e.g. Market Place, alleyways). Merged plots erode the tight grain in places. The south side's larger, less uniform plots are less coherent, but development here is laid out behind a generous arc of public and private open spaces the length of the area, a very attractive feature. Density throughout is low with large gardens or yards, eroded in places with infill. Plot access was planned from the front but some rear lanes have been added. Long

enclosed views along Front Street are significant, stopped at the Market Place turn, and enlivened by trees.

1.7 Some historic land uses still exert an influence (religious, administrative, pubs) but little of Bedlington's industrial past survives above ground. The north side's original housing set the dominant domestic scale, even if most is now retail or commercial. The south side has a mix of religious, commercial and civic uses, plus residential.



Architectural Qualities

1.8 Most buildings are pre-1918. Few have outstanding qualities but, together, create a coherent backbone of special interest. The dominant form is two storey domestic scale with a pitched roof, simple and rectangular with small rear offshots. Many are terraced or joined into rows, with modest variety in height and scale. On the south side are more individualistic buildings with larger proportions and livelier forms and detailing (e.g. church, pubs, police station, and



school). A few single storey buildings survive. Several recent buildings successfully fit in but others do not respond well.

1.9 The architecture has recurring themes. Most masonry is local sandstone, much quite



simple, some more decorative. Brick is less common but adds to the matured scene in places. Render is

often an expediency used inaccurately. Traditional doorways and windows are set in reveals, with most openings plain and some with decorative quoin surrounds. Window openings are vertical; bay windows are not common. Some



original doors survive and a few historic sliding sash windows, but most are replacements in unsuitable modern styles and materials. Landmark buildings have bolder windows and doors. Shop fronts are key, with several traditional timber features (or elements thereof) in place, most quite plain. Many are altered, in poor repair or

have shutters. Some shops are converted from houses and have a 'hole-in-the-wall' appearance.

1.20 Changes in ground level mean roofs are quite prominent. The simple shapes and slight variations in pitch and height are key to character. Blank gables are common but hips are also seen. Common materials are natural Welsh slate and single lap clay pantiles, creating a spirited roofscape, but artificial or imported replacements have a pervasive negative effect. Eaves are plain (a few are decorative cornices) and early verges use large triangular blocks. Rainwater goods are not prominent. Some roofs have large gables, but dormers and rooflights are not common (apart from a few large, intrusive, modern ones). Stout chimneys are recurrent features.



Contribution of Spaces

1.21 Front Street's grassy banks and trees of give a strong green character, adding greatly to the distinctive appearance, but engineering and traffic paraphernalia are too prominent in places. The roundabout at the west end is very intrusive. The war memorial is a pleasant point, whilst Market Place and its Cross are strong anchors at the heart of the town, even if the gap site and the fussy modern surfaces are intrusive. Side alleys are modernised. Church Lane and Bell's Place have good character. St Cuthbert's elevated, secluded churchyard and vicarage grounds are rich with trees. Front gardens on the south side add to the green scene, even if incoherently, whilst large nearby forecourts could be greener. On the north side, a few small front gardens have been eroded.



Back yards are good evidence of the historic development pattern, and some contain historic outbuildings and walls.



Loss, Intrusion and Damage

1.22 Major losses took place before the area was designated (e.g. Old Hall, Market Place demolitions). But a general erosion of character continues to mask overall integrity through incremental loss of features and unsuitable designs and materials. Much can be rescued through development or restoration. The public



realm is in good condition, but many buildings are not. Some are 'at risk' including the old school. These issues are discussed in detail in the accompanying Management Strategy.

2 Introduction

Conservation Areas

2.1 Conservation areas are “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”¹. They are designated by the local planning authority using local criteria.

2.2 Conservation areas are about character and appearance, which can derive from many factors including individual buildings, building groups and their relationship with open spaces, architectural detailing, materials, views, colours, landscaping, street furniture and so on. Character can also draw on more abstract notions such as sounds, local environmental conditions and historical changes. These things combine to create a locally distinctive sense of place worthy of protection.

2.3 Conservation areas do not prevent development from taking place. Rather, they are designed to manage change, controlling the way new development and other investment reflects the character of its surroundings. Being in a conservation area does tend to increase the standards required for aspects such as repairs, alterations or new building, but this is often outweighed by the ‘cachet’ of living or running a business in a conservation area, and the tendency of a well-maintained neighbourhood character to sustain, or even enhance, property values.

- The first conservation areas were created in 1967 and now over 9,100 have been designated, varying greatly in character and size.

Town Planning Context

2.4 Designation remains the principal means by which local authorities can apply conservation policies to a particular area². The Council has a duty, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. It also has a duty, from time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for preservation and enhancement, and to consult local people on them³. The local planning authority also has extra powers in conservation areas over demolition, minor developments, and tree protection (see page 73). Government policy in PPS5⁴ requires that local planning authorities have evidence about the historic environment and heritage assets in their areas and that this is publicly documented.

2.5 The Wansbeck District Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2007, replacing that adopted in 1994. The Local Plan will continue as the principle planning policy document for the former Wansbeck area until its policies are replaced by local development plan

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s69.

² Government is currently undertaking a wide-ranging review of heritage protection legislation and guidance, which may lead to changes to both in the short term. Current issues in the review have informed this document.

³ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s72 and s71

⁴ Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE2, p.4

documents to be prepared as part of the new Northumberland Local Development Framework.

2.6 More specific local planning guidance is contained in the following:

- *Bedlington CA Management Strategy*, draft SPD, June 2008
- *Wansbeck Design Guide*, adopted as an SPD in July 2007
- *Shopfront Design Guide*, adopted as planning policy in October 2007 and incorporating existing adopted guidance in:
 - *A Guide To Advertising In The Bedlington Conservation Area*
 - *Shopfront Security Measures for Bedlington Conservation Area*

2.7 *The Wansbeck Design Guide* is an adopted supplementary planning document (SPD) and the conservation area management strategy will be adopted as an SPD.

This Character Appraisal

2.8 This character appraisal was in the main prepared during late 2006 and 2007 by North of England Civic Trust. It forms evidence for the conservation area management strategy SPD.

2.9 By its very nature, this document cannot be exhaustive. Omissions should not necessarily be regarded as having no special interest or making no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The character appraisal should be updated every five years or so, taking account of changes in the area and further understanding of the place.

3 Location and Context

Location

3.1 Bedlington is located in south east Northumberland. It is 5km south of Ashington and 7km south east of Morpeth, whilst Newcastle upon Tyne, the regional capital, is 17km to the south west. The centre of the conservation area is at grid reference NZ 260 818.

3.2 Commercially, Bedlington has the role of a secondary retail and service centre. The town, like many other settlements within the former Wansbeck District, suffered a great deal from the decline of the deep coal mining industry. Although considerable effort has gone into diversifying the local economy and the creation of new employment opportunities, the number of new jobs created has not yet been sufficient to offset previous losses suffered through the closure of all working collieries in the area during the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, unemployment levels in the area remain consistently higher than regional or national levels.

3.3 Bedlington, like other settlements in the area, shows no ongoing signs of serious economic decline, but does suffer from general long term under investment in fabric in historic buildings and spaces which requires regenerative investment. This would raise the quality of its appearance and the vitality as a local centre.

Boundary

3.4 The conservation area was designated on 2 April 1971. The boundary, based on development pattern lining Front Street and Market Place, has not changed since, but a boundary review has recommended small additions, as set out in Appendix A.

3.5 Starting in the north-west corner at the back of Wharton Arms PH, the boundary crosses the Glebe Road at the underpass and runs east along the back of plots on the north side of Front Street West until Tallantyre's. At this point it turns north and then west to include a large green open space fronting Market Place (known as the gap site). It then continues south west, still following the back of plots on the north side of Market Place and Front Street, taking in the top ends of development on Vulcan Place, Bell's Place and Hollymount Square, but excluding development on Barrington Court and Spring Park. It then heads south west across Front Street at the top of Bedlington Bank, turning to include Nos.53-58 Millfield, and then heads north west along the back of late twentieth century development on the south side of Front Street East. At the west end of Millfield Court, it continues westwards, turning in and out to follow the back of larger plots near the middle of the area including St Nicholas church and its former vicarage. It then crosses Church Lane, continuing to follow the backs of plots facing the south side of Front Street (including the Council Office's car-park), but excluding former commercial buildings associated with former Elliot's Garage and housing behind it and on Church Lane, Church Close, Windsor Gardens, Windsor Court, and Clovelly Gardens. It crosses Hartford Road and then turns north to include the Masonic Lodge group, the former

Police Station, the Red Lion PH, Nos.1-2 Brown's Buildings on Ridge Terrace, and the Wharton Arms PH, finishing back at the junction with Glebe Road.

Context

Geology and Landscape Character

3.6 The conservation area is in the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain countryside character area (No.13)⁵. This plain is characterised by widespread urban and industrial development, extensive urban fringe development large-scale open-cast mines and reclaimed deep mine sites. There are also sandy beaches, rocky headlands, large open arable fields with scattered country houses, prominent blocks of mixed and coniferous woodland, broadleaved woods on steep valley sides, estate parkland and wetlands areas, particularly in areas of mining subsidence.

3.7 The geology underpinning this closely coincides with the Northumberland coalfield comprising mainly Upper Carboniferous mudstones and sandstones with numerous coal seams, plus heavy glacial debris such as boulder clay. These deposits give rise to a relatively featureless till plain landscape, with few exposures of underlying rock apart from at the incised valleys of the Rivers Blyth and Wansbeck. It is this handsome, honey-coloured Carboniferous sandstone that was used to construct many of Bedlington's buildings from early times onwards, and it is the coal measures which are the basis for its economic history since before the Industrial Revolution. It is also likely that many early local bricks will have been made from glacial clay deposits.



Local sandstone is used across the conservation area. The area's rural landscape origins are still discernable in one or two places.

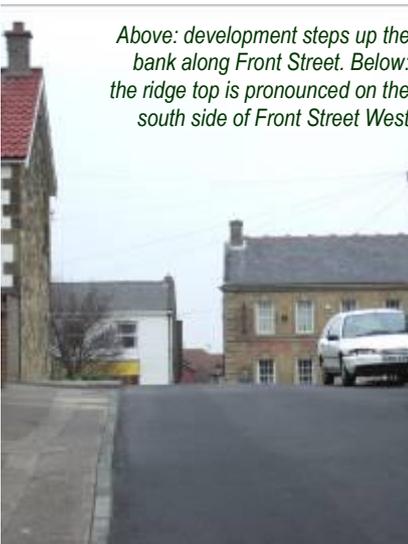
3.8 The 2000 Landscape Character Assessment of south east Northumberland, completed as part of the Northumberland Coalfield Enhancement Strategy, identified four distinct landscape areas in Wansbeck: coast, valley of the River Blyth, valley of the River Wansbeck, and Willow Burn and Sleek Burn valleys. The conservation area is sited north of the lip of valley of the River Blyth.

⁵ Countryside character areas, devised by the Countryside Agency, provide a context to local planning and development. There are 159 areas in England, unique in terms of land form, historical and cultural attributes.

Topography and Aspect



Above: development steps up the bank along Front Street. Below: the ridge top is pronounced on the south side of Front Street West



3.9 The development pattern of the conservation area follows a relatively high ridge, being the northern watershed at this point of the River Blyth’s deeply incised valley. Land climbs westwards away from the river, and Front Street rises with it from the relatively flat, low east end above the river valley lip, to a modest peak at the west end roundabout (this continues west along High Ridge). Most development follows this pattern and is laid out with an introverted aspect towards the road.

3.10 The difference in level between the highway and buildings along it is quite profound in places, particularly on the south side. This raises buildings up in views and requires particular attention to matters of siting, form, height and visual impact when considering new development.

3.11 As is typical of the

building type, one of the earliest developments in the town, Bedlington Old Hall (now demolished), was laid out to take advantage of a wide southerly aspect near the top of the modest peak. This topography has therefore left the Council Offices, which replaced the Old Hall, uncomfortably prominent both in the town centre and in long distance views from the south and north.

Setting and External Relationships

3.12 The conservation area boundary is drawn relatively tightly against the back of the development pattern lining Front Street and Market Place. The setting beyond this is very different, characterised by mid to late twentieth century suburban and urban fringe development to a low density. North of the area, Schalksmuhle Road runs almost parallel with Front Street, lined with a largely incoherent series of housing developments, flat-roofed retail sheds, large low institutional buildings and expansive car-parks. Much of this land was reclaimed from mining and industrial development in the late twentieth



Sprawling development to the north with several remnant rural trees



century. To the south, and around the south eastern tip is a pattern of more dense suburban streets, mainly mid twentieth century semis in garden plots, with some late twentieth century terraced infill.

3.13 Dotted with small stone buildings and open fields, the road heading south from East End Front Street winds steeply down the river valley side to a heavily tree-covered bridge. From the west end of Front Street, short early and mid twentieth century terraces line Hartford Road and High Ridge heading south and west. The road north from the west end of Front Street was heavily engineered in the 1970s to become a dual carriageway with underpasses, a drastic intrusion that was never continued northwards, leaving an anachronistic stub urban bypass at the mouth of a medieval market street.

3.14 Front Street is a busy road as traffic stops off and passes through in its way around south east Northumberland. Schalksmuhle Road somewhat acts as a bypass to Front Street, but still resulting in heavy use of Vulcan Place, creating a busy junction with Front Street at this central part of the conservation area. Other roads into the conservation area are minor residential streets.

Views of the Area

3.15 The town is not particularly prominent in the landscape from further afield but five building groups provide a modest landmark skyline on approach from the south. The tower of St Cuthbert's Church is the most prominent, followed by the former Police Station & Courthouse, a tall building on an elevated site. These are joined by the steep pitch of Trinity Church, the complex roof slopes of the Catholic church (outside the conservation area to the west), and – the least suitable – the stumpy flat roofed tower of



Mid twentieth century semis characterise setting to the south east



Large 'gap site' car park used for weekly markets behind Market Place



Intrusive urban bypass engineering battles with historic layout at Front St West



Traffic and parking through Front Street and Vulcan Place can be intrusive

the Council offices, bristling with antennae. Protecting this view from development in the conservation area's setting will be important.



Bedlington from the south showing the skyline formed by: 1. RC Church (outside the conservation area), 2. former police station and courthouse, 3. Trinity Church, 4. Council Offices, and 5. St Cuthbert's Church with its wooded churchyard and adjoining vicarage gardens (protected by TPOs – see page 73)

4 Historical Development

Development History

Pre-Map History

4.1 Bedlington has a long history. Although little is known of its early existence and archaeology, its name means “the tun [settlement] of Bedla’s [or Betla’s] people” which strongly suggests Saxon origins. Its journey to becoming a major service village began about 900AD when the district was acquired from the ancient parish of Woodhorn by the bishop of Chester-le-Street.

4.2 In the eleventh century, after Norman rule had been secured in the North, the district became an outlier territory of the County Palatine of Durham under the direction of the hugely powerful Prince Bishops of Durham who exercised all the temporal privileges of the King in the areas under their control. There was another similar outlier at Norham on the Scottish border. Bedlington was the natural capital for the district which was officially known as Bedlingtonshire until as late as 1844 when the Bishop of Durham finally ceded it to Northumberland.

4.3 Tradition claims that there was a Saxon chapel on the site of the current St Cuthbert’s Church, and that the name was the result of St Cuthbert’s actual remains being lodged here over night on 2 December 1069 by monks fleeing from King William’s men. Although evidence for this is uncertain, it is clear that Bedlington’s status would have been assured from the Norman period onwards by its church becoming the parish church and the building of a Bishop’s residence (reputed to have been where the vacant church hall is now), a Bishop’s mill and a pre-1203 leper hospital within its boundaries.

4.4 The shire was administered up to 1536, like any other county, by a sheriff but, in Bedlingtonshire’s case, this was done on behalf of the Bishop of Durham, the overlord of the County Palatine. The seat of the Sheriff and later principal tenants of the shire has been associated with the Old Hall on Bedlington’s Front Street, comprising a fifteenth century pele tower with an early eighteenth century block attached, that was pulled down in 1959 to make way for the current Council Offices whose front façade curiously mimics the appearance of the Old Hall with its tower and three storey building attached at the right.

4.5 With its administration and support of the powerful Bishop of Durham, its parish centre status and, no doubt, its flourishing markets, Bedlington’s future as the commercial, spiritual and administrative capital of a substantial rural area was secure for many years.

Armstrong’s Map of 1769

4.6 The year 1736 was a landmark in the development of the town, although it may not have seemed so at the time. In that year Bedlington and its shire began the move from a rural economy to an industrial one with the opening of the Bebside Ironworks on the south side of the River Blyth. In 1759, the Bedlington Ironworks were established when the Maling family built a blast furnace on the Bedlington bank of the river.

4.7 The three main locations of this new industrial activity in the valley, which strangely accord with the three main operations involved, are separately described 30 years later on the 1769 map as 'Iron Mines' for extracting raw materials, a 'Forge' for processing them, and 'Staiths' for transporting the finished products by river boat.

4.8 The southern boundary of Bedlingtonshire is shown following the River Blyth in the east and taking a curve north west just beyond Hartford Bridge, before swinging round Netherton and heading north. Although for size Bedlington is only challenged on the map by Stannington on the Great North Road (also shown with a parish church), its influence as the capital of its own shire is much greater and would soon be further enhanced by industrial change.

4.9 The village is shown basically as a single linear street, climbing south-east to north-west up a ridge, with good north-south and westerly road links into the heart of the shire. No bridge is shown at the eastern end of the village where there was likely to have been a ferry only, as most wheeled cross-river traffic used Hartford Bridge, long the first up-stream bridge across the River Blyth. This would have had the effect of concentrating most of the trading activity at the western end of Bedlington, perhaps leaving the eastern end more tranquil.

Fryer's Map of 1820

4.10 Across this map the name Durham begins to appear in large letters indicating the shire, whose boundaries are also shown in green, is part of an adjoining county and not of Northumberland. The village appears little different from Armstrong's map except that the bend in Front Street (now Market Place) is clearly shown. There still seems to be no bridge over the Blyth at the east end of the village.

Greenwood's Map of 1828

4.11 Here the full title and status of the shire is shown in large letters as 'BEDLINGTONSHIRE Part of DURHAM'. The iron works downstream is shown and named. The works were just entering their heyday – just seven years before, the company had invented a new malleable iron rail which was much superior to the competition and, because it was much favoured by the Stephenson's of Newcastle, was being promoted for the many new railways being built at the time. The company already branched out into engine construction too, again to service the new railway mania at home and abroad. The engine works became a huge undertaking on the north bank of the Blyth which, inevitably, fostered further growth and status for Bedlington town.

4.12 Greenwood's layout of the town now shows a large space at the west end, a small irregular space where the Market Place is now and a narrower area along the east end, past the Vicarage garden. Any or all of these spaces could have been occupied by markets but it is most likely that markets were held near the Market Cross since its construction in the eighteenth century.

4.13 There is still no sign of a bridge over the river at Bedlington. But the village does seem to have had three new additions. A windmill had appeared at the east end; built in 1821 and survived until 1869 when a steam driven mill was built along side it. Close to the cross marking St Cuthbert's Church, the Vicarage is especially mentioned. A new vicarage had been built in 1835 incorporating its eighteenth century predecessor as a service wing at the back. Finally, what appears to be a new side road now runs northwards from the quieter eastern end of the town, to what looks like isolated gardens on the edge of the river scarp. These gardens belong to two new mansions: Spring View, built before 1828 by the principal agent at the iron works, and Holly Mount, built in 1824 for Michael Longridge, a major owner of the iron works, who occupied it until 1861. Spring View still survives (Holly Mount was demolished in 1949) so the legacy of Bedlington's industrial past endures.



Tithe Award Map of 1843

Tithe Award Map of 1843

4.14 This is the earliest, readily available measured map of the town and is the first to show a bridge crossing the river at the eastern end, dating it to sometime between 1828 and 1843.

4.15 The west end is shown to have a wide and open market space and the current Market Place appears as an incidental open space, perhaps capable only of taking overflow from the main market at the west end. The east end is much narrower but likely still to be capable of carrying outdoor trading functions if necessary. The south side of the west end is shown almost as continuously built up as the north side, quite unlike today.

4.16 The plan shows new and intensive residential development for industrial workers off Front Street at each end of the town, most likely related to developments at the iron works and at the new Bedlington 'A' Pit which opened in 1838, only 5 years before the map was drawn. Workers terraces and Methodist chapels in Coach Road, Chapel Row and Walker Terrace were built by the owners of the iron works in the early 1800s, surprisingly close to their own mansions.

4.17 St Cuthbert's church is shown with the extraordinary plan that was created out of the old church in 1818. The old north wall was pulled down and replaced with a large semi-circular extension, complete with galleries. This had the effect of re-orientating the worship space to north-south, completely contrary to the time-honoured east-west of most Christian churches throughout the world. The reason given for this strange expansion was the growth in working population at the booming Bedlington iron and engine works but the real growth of the town did not come until the second quarter of the nineteenth century (in 1801, there were 789 people in the town, but by 1821 it had more than doubled to 1,862). This unusual arrangement at the church lasted nearly 100 years as it was not until 1912 that the extension was demolished and the original orientation restored.

4.18 Although huge burgage plots are shown on this tithe map, much of the population was now crammed into the usual narrow yards, like Wilson's Yard at the west end, located close to the entrance to the plot from Front Street. As the industrial population grew, these yards would have become as overcrowded and unsanitary as similar yards in the big cities of the time.

First Edition OS Map c1860

4.19 The most significant change on this map is the appearance of the Bedlington Colliery, named 'Doctor Pit' after Dr John Moore Bates who, in 1855 as a director of the coal company, cut the first sod for the colliery just a few hundred yards north of the Market Place.

4.20 Already by 1860 two large burgage plots behind the north side of Front Street East, had been given over to two long terraces of miners houses, each complete with a nettie (separate toilets block) and narrow allotment plot. On this map they were both called Bell's Place but by the Second Edition of c1897, one had become Old Colliery Row. The presence of a United Presbyterian Chapel at the end of one of the rows

suggests that Scottish immigrant workers were now working at the iron works or the collieries, and had brought their religion with them. The iron and engine works had only a few more years to run as it would cease trading in 1867.



First Edition OS Map c1860

4.21 By 1860, Bedlington Old Hall was now in the ownership of the Bedlington Coal Company, having been sold by the Bishop of Durham in 1844 to the Barrington Coal Company. Both companies used this ancient building to house miners. Further along Front Street West is shown the court house, now the community centre. Church Row at the top of Church Lane comprised more industrial housing for the growing population. The Post Office at the time was between two pubs on the north side of Front Street West, and the Mechanic's Institute, founded in 1850, occupied a property on the north side of the Market Place.

4.22 Part way down Church Lane was the town's pinfold, used to impound stray animals, and a little further down is Tower Cottage, a late eighteenth century stone dwelling. At the far end of Front Street East, the round plan of the tower of Bedlington Mill, powered by wind to grind corn, is shown. Finally, on Vulcan Place is the town's National School, another barometer of the growth and age of the population. Scattered throughout the town, several smithies are marked and there would certainly be many more unmarked metalworking buildings in the yards behind Front Street. Some of these will have had rural origins for machinery repair and horseshoeing but others will have

developed to carry out minor iron work operations in support of the huge Bedlington iron works below the town.

4.23 The spread of pubs and inns between the west end and the east end has varied throughout the years. At this time, when the west end was still the main market space, there were twice as many as in the quieter east end.



Second Edition OS Map c1897

Second Edition OS Map c1897

4.24 By 1897, a colliery village had developed around the Doctor Pit on the northern edge of Bedlington. About 300 cottages in six streets (of which Shiny Row appears on this map) were built between 1870 and 1900, after which date there was little new pit house construction as miners were lost to new pits and more houses were opening up in Ashington.

4.25 A new combined police station and courthouse was built at the west end and the old court house near the Market Place became the Mechanic's Institute. Two churches had moved from the quiet east end to the busier west end and infilled the old gaps in the south side of Front Street West: the Presbyterians from Bell's Place in 1892 and the Primitive Methodists from Chapel Row in 1905. Their relocation began the break up of the coherent enclosure of the south side. In 1864 a catholic church and school were built in the town but they did not secure a Front Street location. They were built in a back street – Catholic Row – behind the then new police station.

4.26 At the top of Church Lane, Church Row was replaced by the village infant's school in May 1874. Both sides of Front Street East, which up to now had contained some gaps between buildings, were now completely developed. More of the grounds of Holly Mount have been sold off for workers housing and the old drive up to the house had become Hollymount Road. Vulcan Place, likely named after the Roman god of fire to commemorate the two blacksmiths shops that operated there, had been developed with more upmarket terraced houses, indicating the rising housing expectations of the townspeople.

4.27 The post office was now in the Market Place which, although now more built up on its west side, remained undeveloped on its south side. To the north, in 1876, a coal-fired gas works was built within the Doctor Colliery site. Finally, the west end was still ahead of the east end in the pub and inn count, but at six versus eight, the latter was beginning to catch up.

4.28 In this late Victorian period from 1860 to 1897, the layout and life of most English towns was influenced by the development of passenger rail services to or through them. In Bedlington this influence was missing as the rail service bypassed the town to the east, creating the new settlement of Bedlington Station which, as a dormitory and low level service village for the developing industries surrounding it, would have diverted some investment pressure or opportunity away from Bedlington itself.



Third Edition OS Map c1920 (composite)

Third Edition OS Map c1920

4.29 Most new development since 1897 in the town and its associated colliery had occurred along Vulcan Place and the road to Bedlington Station, as well as a little along the ridge road to the west. There remained a huge swath of open farm land sweeping round the town from the east to the north – the town could still be seen as a separate entity in the landscape.

4.30 At the west end, new facilities appeared: the Prince of Wales picture house opened close to a new mission room, and the Catholic Church and school group had been further extended. In the centre of the town, St Cuthbert's Church had lost its semi-circular extension, whilst the major changes at the east end included more housing on the former gardens of Holly Mount, and Bedlington Mill becoming disused. Bebside Mill just across the river was also ruins, part of the growing dereliction that was the legacy, for a time, of the once grand industries of Bedlington. A new football ground and pavilion, another facility for the growing recreational interests of the town, had been added to the south.

4.31 It was in the early years of the twentieth century that the pubs were revised again. The West End's were being developed with the Blue Bell rebuilt in 1903, the Sun a few years later, and the Market Tavern and the Northumberland Arms revamped about the same time. At the east end, the picture was the opposite with the closure of the Wheatsheaf in 1908 beginning a series of surrendered licences that was to include the Oddfellows Arms and the Bridge Inn. Pubs are indicators of commercial trends and it was clear that the commercial life of the east end was declining at the beginning of the twentieth century in favour of the west end.

Modern Map c2000

4.32 As expected, the last 80 years of the twentieth century wrought considerable change in Bedlington, transforming it from an identifiable settlement in the landscape into an historic core embedded in an almost solid mass of modern development, including Bedlington Station, stretching along the north bank of the River Blyth.

4.33 To the south, modern housing had been built right up to the boundaries of the historic town, while on the north the removal of the Doctor Pit, spoiled land and colliery housing after the closure of the colliery in March 1968, provided a large area of reclamation in single ownership and close to the old town, ripe for planning in the wider interests of the town as a whole (and Front Street in particular). Not only was there room for public open space but also for car parking, a new health centre, library (moved in 1975 from its old premises in the community centre on Front Street West), courts (vacating the 1888 courthouse and police station), some housing, and a small supermarket to compliment the retail use on Front Street which offered limited space for large grocery retailers. Unfortunately, to facilitate these changes in the 1970s, the road junction at the west end of the town was improved out of all scale to the old town, and required the side-lining of the Trotter Memorial Fountain from the crossroads to its present verge location.

4.34 In the west end and Market Place, pressures for development had resulted in new purpose-built shop units replacing older buildings, some having a much larger development footprint than before and providing a design challenge to the older buildings around. The Thursday market was now held on the large car park to the north. A new catholic church imaginatively combining the old with the new had been built in Catholic Row. The demolition of the Old Hall had made way for the council offices and the mechanic's institute and library was now the community centre.

4.35 The Market Place had unfortunately lost its enclosure to the north while the large site to the south – never built on in the recorded life of the town – was now filled with a stone social club (of 1926) and a modern garage, showroom and offices, Elliott's Garage (currently vacant but the subject of proposals). In 2000, St Cuthbert's Church was modified again to accommodate both social and worship space in the one building, thus freeing the church hall for other purposes.

4.36 The east end had also seen change. Bedlington Mill had long gone and much of the south side of Front Street East was demolished in the last quarter of the twentieth century to be replaced by terraces of housing in a rather self-conscious traditional style but with natural stone façades. Fortunately, the terraces were packed together to maintain the continuous enclosure of Front Street East on the south side, but one or two gaps were beginning to appear in the north side.

4.37 Although Spring View still survives as a reminder of the Bedlington iron and engine works, Holly Mount had gone as had workers cottages associated with both houses, to be replaced by modern housing behind Front Street East and a new retirement home on the main street itself at the entrance to the old town.

Conclusions

4.38 Because of its status as an important service centre, Bedlington's history has been full of change and incident. The twentieth century saw the last of the local industrial remains, but in spite of the usual depredations of modern times, Bedlington still retains much of its historic authenticity from substantial eighteenth and nineteenth centuries survivals and also from fragments from earlier times. In this respect, although not analysed here, Bedlington's historical development does have considerable significance in the overall historic development of south east Northumberland.

Archaeology

4.39 Comparatively little is currently known of the archaeology of Bedlington but Northumberland County council has recently commissioned an *Archaeological Assessment of Bedlington* (draft, February 2007) which examines the evidence for the survival of archaeological remains in the town and assesses archaeological potential in relation to development. The assessment says:

“From medieval times until the mid 19th century, the scale of the core of Bedlington seems to have remained fairly constant. It included a church, over the medieval period a court and bishops palace, a string of domestic dwellings, probably single storied and thatched, running along Front Street with a Market

Place at the western end, and all set within an agricultural landscape. The 18th century saw some changes, buildings frequently grew in scale, numbers from this time still survive and industries began to develop alongside the town, but The 19th century saw the massive development of the coal industry in the area, massive increases in population, the construction of purpose built workers houses away from what had been the traditional heart of the settlement, and the shift from a largely agricultural economy to an industrial one.

“Bedlington’s past is really a story of two successive towns: a small market town and an industrial town thriving on mining. The mines have, of course, all gone, as has much of the evidence for this industrial period and some of the earlier town still shows through; 18th century stone buildings, the medieval and later church of St Cuthbert’s, the layout of the town along a ridge with a broad market place to the west, and the stone walls which still divide some properties, probably, in origin, existing from as early as medieval times.”
(Section 6.5)

4.40 The assessment concludes that:

“The most likely areas to discover remains will be around the ‘demesne’ to the west of St Cuthbert’s and the church itself, the plots around the Market Place and Front Street and the site of the Ironworks along the River Blyth. Unfortunately, with the exception of the church, all medieval buildings appear to have been destroyed and there is little opportunity to carry out above ground recording of early buildings. The earliest domestic buildings in Bedlington date to the 18th century. Therefore any evidence which will throw light on life in the medieval period or earlier will be derived from buried deposits under present day buildings and open spaces.” (Section 6)

4.41 A sensitivity map of the area has been completed as part of the project.

4.42 There are 59 entries in the Northumberland County Sites & Monuments Record concerning Bedlington. Although many of these entries mention buildings and sites included in the above history, they also include late prehistoric square enclosure crop marks south of the town (11783) and Bronze Age burial cists found in Mill Field (11747), both of which could have early implications for Bedlington.

5 Spatial Analysis

Development Pattern

5.1 Even if the historical analysis set out above suggests the sequence of development in Bedlington has been long and complex, the development pattern seen on the ground today is quite straightforward – Bedlington has one long core street with an elbow at the central Market Place, creating three distinct parts. So distinct, in fact, that they have gained separate formal and informal names over time:

	West	Market	East
1897	West End	Market Place	East End
1920	West End	Market Place	East End
Modern	Front Street West	Market Place	East End Front Street
Vernacular	“top end”	“market”	“bottom end”

5.2 This pattern, though undoubtedly created in stages over time, was lined with single strings of linear plots perpendicular to the street and stretching away from it. Behind these were further linear plots stretching away into fields beyond. On the south side, one or two much larger plots have survived including at the church and one that once contained Bedlington Old Hall.

Layout, Grain and Density

5.3 The detailed layout of these plots on the ground also has coherent characteristics, but does contain a few quirks of history which highlight differences between the north and south sides.

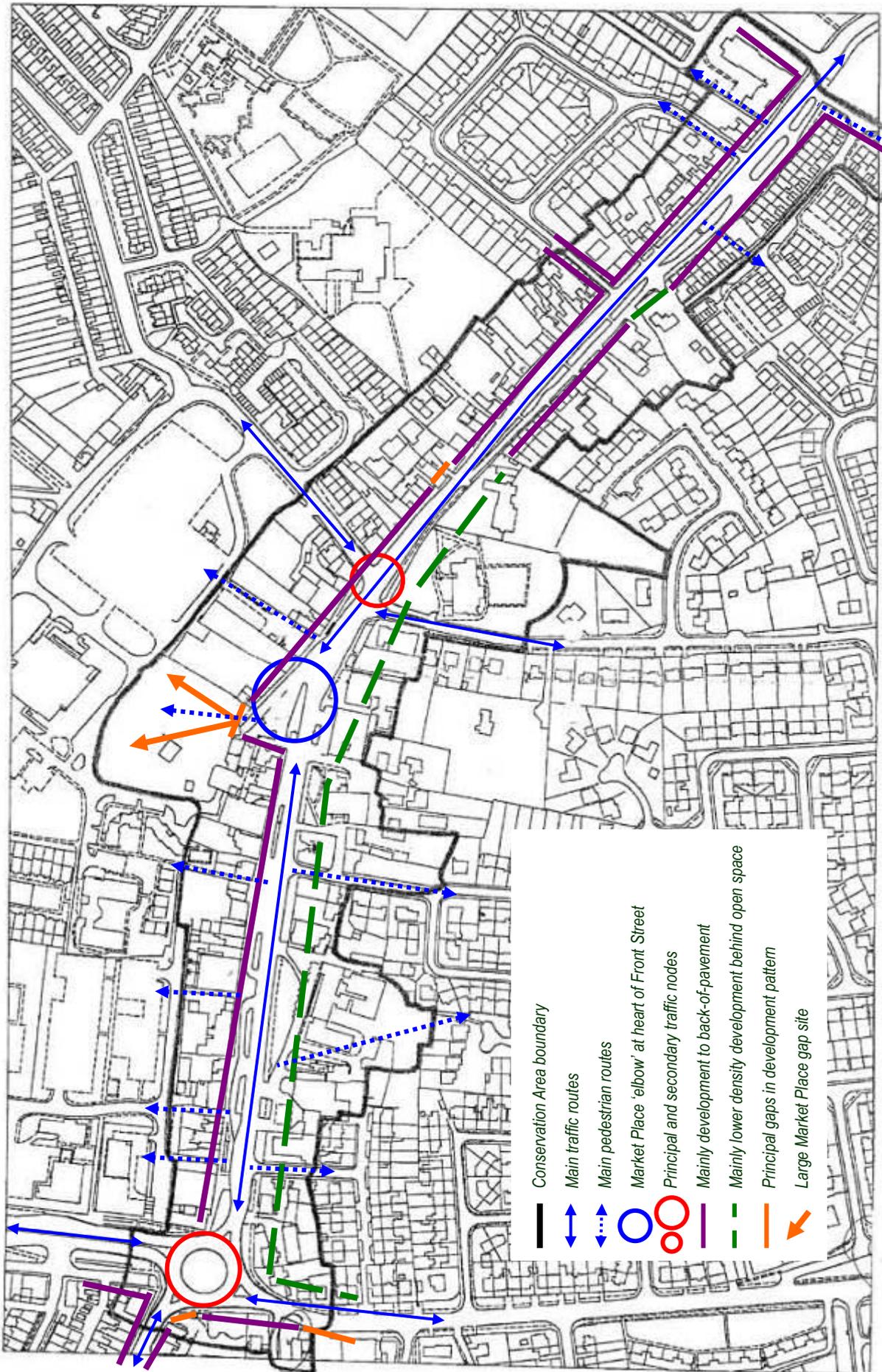
5.4 On the north side, nearly all development is pushed to the front of the plot and presents a sharp back-of-pavement urban edge. This edge has the appearance of extending in an almost unbroken line along the entire length of the conservation area on the north side, in the west half being set back behind the grassy banks which separate the pavement from the highway.

The line is broken only by alleyways, by the large gap site at Market Place and a smaller gap site at No.90 East End Front Street; it has also been slightly set back at the west end roundabout by late twentieth century redevelopment.



The north side of the street has a back-of-pavement development pattern, set behind public open space at the west end





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NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of the Management Strategy which accompanies this Appraisal has produced a revised proposed boundary – see Appendix A.

Fig 2: Development pattern, density and layout



The tight pattern is broken by gaps on Market Place and Front Street East



5.5 In addition, there are modest front gardens which relax this layout near the middle of Front Street West, its widest part. This layout is highly distinctive of the northern side of area and an important part of Bedlington’s coherent character. The grain is tight with narrow plots packed in, although this historic character has been eroded in places by adjoining plots being combined to create larger development sites (e.g. Nos.42-44 Front Street West and Nos.10-14 Market Place). This erodes the historic integrity of the place and encourages large footprint developments which fail to respond to the closer grain of historic buildings.

5.6 A similar story is told on the south side, but in a less coherent way with the impact of open space much more prominent. Here, larger, less uniform plots are laid out away

from the highway behind wide, varying stretches of sloping open space, some private gardens, some public grassy banks. The first available historic map of the town shows how this side of Front Street did generate a coherent linear edge like that opposite, but what only becomes clear on the First Edition OS Map is the nature of the open space in front of it – a thick strip of undeveloped sloping land which left the highway itself closer to development on the north side of the street



Modest front gardens slightly relax layout on the north west side



Combining adjoining plots to make larger sites erodes historic grain

than the south. This undeveloped sloping land survives as a significant and distinctive arc of open space, almost the entire length of the south side of the conservation area. It has, however, been eroded in places – in Front Street West, two nineteenth century churches



West end south side comprises individual buildings set back behind an arc of open space, most green, some eroded to hard surfaces



(Trinity Church and the former Primitive Methodist church) were confidently sited forward of this line, an arrogance usually forgiven these days for the period and building type; meanwhile incremental development at the town’s original courthouse (now the community centre) and adjoining inn (now the Sun PH) has pulled this point slightly further forward than the remainder. At the far west



One or two 'public' buildings step forward of this set-back line

end, too, an originally complex, tight yard layout has been eroded and altered over time, leaving modern buildings sited prominently in front of historic ones. The remainder of the south side of Front Street West sits comfortably behind open spaces, be they formal front gardens or open forecourts,

and generates a generous, low density scene with hints of a rural past, and without the tightly packed urban grain of the north side.

5.7 After the important low density layout of St Cuthbert's church and former vicarage, a sharper, more coherent urban edge is retained in the layout of East End Front Street's south side, the undeveloped sloping land in front unbroken and highly distinctive.



Most of the south side's east end reverts to back-of-pavement but still behind an arc of green open space

5.8 At the hard, steep ridge at the elbow of Front Street, two distinct responses to development came in two different periods. The earliest development was St Cuthbert's Church and cottages at Church Row (later replaced by the school and its playground) which were laid out on the top of the ridge, resulting in prominent retaining walls onto the highway below (existing shoring below the school and playground does not present an attractive face to Market Place). The remainder of this ridge, opposite Market Place, was not developed



Earlier development pattern in the middle of the south side was high up behind retaining walls (eg. churchyard); later, the ridge was excavated to create plots opposite Market Place

until the twentieth century perhaps due to the challenge of this topography. When it was, the ridge was essentially excavated away to provide flatter plots opposite Market Place, now the social club and the former Elliot's garage. Both, however, responded to the pre-existing arc of open space on the south side of the street by incorporating low density layouts with forecourts to the front.



Carriage arches are included in some of the back-of-pavement layouts as; originally, rear access was not possible



Bedlington Conservation Area

5.9 Despite the tight grain, density is relatively low throughout

the conservation area, with only one main building on each plot and large areas of yard or garden behind or in front of it. Some of this density has been eroded over the years with backland development and infill, to the detriment of the area's historic development pattern. Access to the rear of each plot would originally have been from the front (carriage arches are included in the layout of many of the unbroken terraces) or off side alleys. This largely remains the case and some sites are essentially landlocked, but several back lanes were formalised during twentieth century re-ordering north of the town (unfortunately 'cleansing' much of the character and setting to the rear as a result).



Plot layout on the north side sees large open yards, some later over-developed, increasing density and eroding development pattern

Views within the Area



5.10 Although the main street climbs east to west out of the River Blyth valley and up a sandstone ridge, there are few hill top vistas or panoramas due to the mostly tight enclosure of buildings along each side of the street. Occasionally, it is possible to get glimpses of distant views through the narrow gaps along the



Views within the conservation area are linear, channelled by the tight development pattern and enlivened by street trees and topography

north side of Front Street West (e.g. from outside the former Police Station at the western end roundabout) but these are incidental and accidental, providing little value as defined vistas. (Within these views beyond the area, however, there are rows of large trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders, at Milne Court and between Schalksmuhle Road and Oakapple Close.)



5.11 The only key views, therefore, are those to and away from Market Place along Front Street, in both directions. Visual containment is almost unbroken, creating strong enclosure. The composition and protection of these views is critical to the character of the conservation area as they define its experience. The long, funnelled views are always lively, the ends of each view defined by confident historic buildings at the west end, heavy river valley tree cover to the south east, and, in the middle at the Market Place elbow, a varied sequence of views of historic buildings seen at an attractive oblique angle and enlivened by topography.

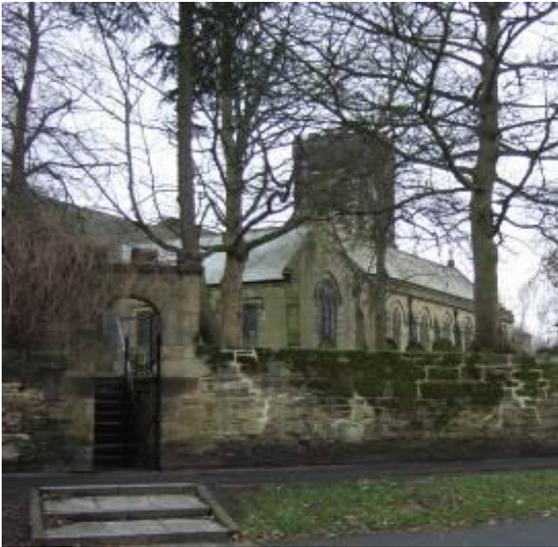
Top: topography is prominent at the centre of the conservation area. Middle: the Market Place elbow creates long inviting views into the area from the far west end. Bottom: views fall away along East End Front Street

6 Character Analysis

6.1 Although there are three distinct parts to the conservation area (see page 26?), these do not vary sufficiently in detailed character to be defined as distinct sub-areas. The character analysis below therefore addresses the whole area but highlights differences within it. Each sub-section below sets out what is typical about the area under that heading before highlighting aspects which differ from the norm, thus giving a clear analysis of the area's local distinctiveness.

Land Use

6.2 Bedlington has always been an important service settlement, and this continues today.



Above: Religious buildings are a key historic land use. Right: the Council Offices are an administrative base of the County

6.3 As the prime centre of medieval Bedlingtonshire, Bedlington is thought to have contained a palace for the Bishop of Durham, a manorial hall as the seat of the Bishop's bailiff or principal tenant, and a major market for local produce. It is also likely to have had a court and other such Medieval local administration as necessary, on behalf of both the Bishop and his principal tenant. The influence of this early period on modern Bedlington is still quite significant. St Cuthbert's Church and its vicarage have an unbroken parish status which continues to make this Anglican precinct both a spiritual and a townscape focus of the town.

Although the non-conformist churches did get a

foothold in Front Street, providing the street with some distinctive late nineteenth century buildings, the Catholic church failed to find such a position and so has been confined to Catholic Row, a back street at the far west end of the town where its undoubted old and new architectural qualities are unfortunately hidden (outside the conservation area).

Although the old manorial hall was demolished in 1959, its local administrative legacy lives on in the Council Offices that replaced it, plus other municipal uses including the former police station and courthouse (and other uses outside the area including the new police station, courts, job centre and library). The legacy of the market survives in Market Place and in Front Street, where trading continues indoors in the many house-to-shop conversions from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An open air market



is run in the large car park to the north of the area, but the valuable legacy of space at Market Place itself could be much better utilised.

Main uses are ground floor retail/services with a mix of commercial and residential above. Below right: many were originally residential, later converted to shops. Bottom left: There are several former farmhouses. Bottom right: There are several modern local uses such as petrol station and funeral parlour



6.4 In contrast with this religious and administrative past, the influence of Bedlington's large scale past industrial activities is only indirectly felt today. Virtually nothing above ground survives – in or around the conservation area – of the once massive industrial plants, spoiled land and workers terraced housing. The removal of the Doctor Pit left a



Pubs are a key land use

large area of open land to the north of the area which has struggled to gain a coherent urban development pattern through reclamation and development ever since. Spring View, the pre-1828 mansion, is now a unique reminder of how Bedlington iron works changed the town.

6.5 Today, the uses tend to vary on the north and south sides of the area. On the north side are mainly shops and commercial upper floors with some residential at either end, whilst the south side has a more mixed up collection of religious, commercial, civic and community uses, with more residential at either end. The original residential use of most of the buildings on the north side of Front Street has determined the domestic scale of the whole town, a scale which still predominates even though many of the pre-1918 farmhouses, townhouses and ordinary village houses have changed to retail and commercial uses. This has strongly influenced late twentieth and early twenty-first century purpose-built shops and housing on Front Street, many successfully designed to blend in with their house-converted-to-shop neighbours.

Architectural Qualities

6.6 Most of Bedlington's buildings are pre-1918 and have a modest residential scale and a uniformity of style and materials. This predominant building type provides the backbone of the special interest of the conservation area, few having any particular outstanding qualities but which together provide a coherent and significant layout and form.



Modest domestic-scale buildings in uniform materials are the backbone of the area's architecture



6.7 Against this domestic-scale backdrop, discussed more below, a few other types and sizes of buildings do stand out. On the north side,



Pubs, whether purpose-built or converted from large townhouses, create a good collection of quality architecture

principal among these are the pubs, such as The Grapes PH (formerly the King's Arms), a Victorian pub converted from a grand early eighteenth century stone townhouse. There are other large former townhouses now in commercial use, e.g. Barclays Bank in a late eighteenth century house in brick with decorative stone dressings. Like many older towns, Bedlington has boasted many pubs



Barclay's Bank is another converted Georgian townhouse

since early days. In the past they seem to have been plain simple buildings, sometimes no more than extended parlours in modest houses but, after 1900, there seems to have been an expansion in the town of replacing old pubs and building new purpose-built ones. Now Bedlington's range of pubs includes the colour washed stucco of the Northumberland Arms PH (1859) and the Sun PH (1900s), the mock half-timbered gables of the Market Tavern PH, and the handsome brick and stone dressings of the Blue Bell PH (1903). These are lively and interesting local buildings which, together with the surprising number of pubs converted to new uses, provide visual and historic variety. Many will also be the focus of the town's stories – an essential part of the area's special

interest – including that at The Sun, which was the scene of a notorious murder of a woman and two policemen in 1911.

6.8 St Cuthbert’s Church and its vicarage, with their close proximity and extraordinary history of alteration and change, provide historic and architectural intricacy and variety. As well as buildings, the Market Cross’s stone pylon, believed to be late eighteenth century, has an attractive period simplicity that adds enduring architectural quality to the conservation area.



6.9 Other key unlisted buildings include the following:

- Former Police Station & Courthouse: this robust 1888 Victorian public building is large enough to act as a gateway into the town as well as bringing some containment and visual interest to the huge 1970s roundabout by which it stands.
- Laird’s House (now the Top Club): this is both architecturally and historically interesting, created from an eighteenth century farm to Victorian pit offices to a modern private members’ club and offices.
- Former Primitive Methodist Church: decorative 1896 (or 1892?) building on the south side of to Front Street West, it breaks forward into the street providing an appropriate point of visual interest.
- Former School: a simple but prominently sited building on an elevated corner, its symmetrical gables and Welsh slate roof are conspicuous features at the junction of Front Street and Church Lane. Vacant, derelict and at risk.
- The Dun Cow and the Black Bull PHs on Front Street East: their bulk and variety provide landmark qualities amongst the uniformity of terraces on the south side of Front Street East.
- Fleming’s Dental Surgery, Front Street East: a restored late Victorian building with a V.R post box in its wall; important in postal history because Bedlington was the destination of the very first penny black stamp in 1840.



Some of the key unlisted buildings: former police station & Courthouse, former Laird’s House, former Primitive Methodist Church, former School



6.10 There will be many others and guidance is included on page 75 to determine which unlisted buildings make a positive contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Form, Height and Scale



6.11 The dominant built form in the conservation area is the two storey domestic scale building with a dual-pitched roof. Some have a third storey in the attic and a few are fully three storeys with a pitched roof.

Most are simple rectangular boxes, taller than they are wide, generating a very straightforward appearance. Most are two bays wide and usually asymmetrical, some are three and symmetrical (usually the former farmhouses, townhouses or pubs). Many have shorter, narrower rear offshots. Most buildings are in a series of short formal terraces which step down the topography, but many, particularly around Market Place, are individual buildings which happen to be built up against one another, creating informal conjoined rows with slight variations in height and scale which are attractively inconsistent. These



Offshots step down into rear yards

simple limits on basic design create a scene defined by plain terraced shapes with modest variety in actual height and scale. The enclosure the terraces provide is crucial to the appearance of most parts of the area.



A variety of straightforward, mostly two-storey pitched roof buildings create uniformity despite variations in scale and grouping



6.12 In amongst these domestic-scale buildings, and mostly on the south side, are buildings with more landmark qualities and more distinctive forms. These tend to be religious and municipal buildings including the churches and chapels, the former Police Station & Courthouse, and the



Gable ends are often prominent features



More individualistic buildings with a variety of distinctive forms line the south side at the west end



Council Offices. The pubs (and some others such as the community centre and petrol filling station) tend to fall between these two built themes – i.e. they having domestic features but also slightly enlarged scale and more lively forms to emphasise their presence in the street. In amongst these on the south side are more domestic-scale buildings, but here they are not in terraces and include instead several historic detached properties with squatter proportions than their landmark neighbours (e.g. Windsor House). On the south side, the impact of all of this is a series of individualistic buildings which, together with the more generous layout described above, create an attractively jumbled scene.

6.13 The survival of some single storey buildings is an important reminder of the area’s modest rural origins, such as the former smithy on Vulcan Place, Nos.52-54 Front Street West, and various outhouses in rear yards.



Single storey buildings are important historic survivals

6.14 Several buildings from the late twentieth century have successfully responded to the basic form, height and scale characteristics of the area, including the front range of Market Place’s supermarket and adjoining shops, and the Co-op Funeral Service.



Several late twentieth buildings have successfully interpreted the basic form, height and scale of the area

Features, Detailing and Materials

6.15 The area's architecture relies on a handful of recurring features and detailing, treated in slightly different ways throughout, as influenced by the development history of the area and the use of each building. The features are:

- masonry
- doorways
- windows
- shopfronts
- roofs, including ridges, eaves, verges and rainwater goods
- dormer windows and rooflights
- chimneys

6.16 Many of these details have been altered over time, and the most negative alterations are discussed from page 61. Control over harmful changes to these elements will be important to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area in the future.

Masonry



Smart front elevations often have rubble side and rear elevations



6.17 By far the most common walling material in the conservation area is local yellow Carboniferous sandstone. Early and much of the later stone would have been quarried locally, there being two small quarries on the south side of Front Street in the late nineteenth century. Stone on front elevations is mostly in

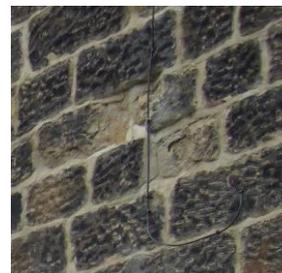
squared blocks with rough surfaces, often with a pecked finish, and laid in regular courses. It is generally the case that the later the building, the more square and crisp the blocks, but very smooth dressed ashlar are rarely found. Side returns and rear elevations, where presentation was historically less important, are usually random rubble stone.

6.18 Dressings in older buildings are minimal but, where present, are often more smoothly finished. Treatments to openings often just comprise stone sills and lintels, but there are some shallow window surrounds, sill bands or other modest decoration. A few are relatively

highly decorated for the area, including The Grapes PH's keyed openings, moulded plinth and rusticated quoins and, of course, St Cuthbert's Church's tracery windows and shaped tower buttresses.



Random rubble stone; similar stones with minimal coursing; coursed squarer stonework





The Grapes PH has some of the best stonework in the area, whilst the early brick of Barclay's Bank is prominent at Market Place



6.20 Pointing (the way mortar is finished off between the stones) varies – in walls with squarer stones it is not key to the appearance of the wall but, between more rounded stones, it can be quite visually prominent, particularly where re-pointing has been poorly executed by smearing it across the stones' face or raising it into 'ribbons', both of which are discredited in conservation and technical terms. Most stone is left unfinished and has gained the rich patina of age, creating an attractive, mature, weathered appearance. Unpainted and untreated stone should remain so (and should also remain uncleaned) to ensure this historic patina is protected.

6.21 Although natural sandstone has been specified in some modern schemes, not all of it has been appropriately dressed or laid: some is mechanically cut leaving lifeless elevations with no texture; some has artificial texturing which looks too regular to truly reflect random blocks; some uses squared blocks in irregular interlocking patterns rather than in uneven coursing. Masonry used at the 1960s Council Offices is natural but includes a green stone cladding alien to the area. Masonry in the self-consciously pastiche late twentieth century terraces at the south east end of Front Street is well chosen.

6.22 Brick is less common, most often used in later nineteenth and twentieth century buildings and alterations, but still contributes to the area's warm, well-matured visual appearance. It is seen in several prominent buildings (e.g. Barclay's Bank, a smart Georgian former townhouse, the Blue Bell Inn and Trinity Church). The former Police Station & Courthouse makes particular play of brick decoration, whilst No.9 Market Place is known to have a decorative brick elevation beneath its render, hinted at by its surviving polychromatic brick chimneys. Elsewhere, brick is often seen in side and rear elevations where there is stone at the front, in later offshots to stone buildings, and in one or two buildings which may have been re-fronted (e.g.

Nos.19 Market Place).

6.23 The bricks vary. Older ones are small, hand-made and have a rough texture and mottled appearance; later ones tend to be larger and smoother. Most are mottled purple-brown or red-brown in late Georgian and Victorian buildings, with smoother, brighter red



Although generally well-chosen, some modern stonework can be too flat (top: machine cut) or laid in a 'forced random' way



Earlier mottled purple-brown bricks; later red-brown bricks

bricks in later Victorian, Edwardian and twentieth century buildings. Several mid to late twentieth century buildings and additions use uniformly toned buff bricks which attempt to mimic aged sandstone but which, without its texture and liveliness, leave visually flat and bland elevations. In contrast, earlier mottled bricks have attractively stained and weathered with warm, uneven tones. Most brick is laid in English garden wall bond (usually 5 rows of stretchers to 1 of headers) or, in later buildings, in less visually interesting stretcher bond. Most historic brick buildings also use local sandstone for detailing and decoration. Brick colour in the recent Lion Garage is well chosen.



Buff brick cannot match the rich patinated character of aged natural



6.24 Render, where it is found, is often a modern expediency and is rarely used in a historically accurate way (e.g. Nos.70-80 Front Street West). Earlier random rubble stone buildings may well have been covered in a variety of rough or smooth renders, lime-rich to allow the building to 'breathe'. Such finishes do not survive, exposed stone being the preferred aesthetic since the mid-nineteenth century. So where render is used today, it tends to be modern cement-based (thick, hard and smooth) or pebbledash, both of which iron-out the visible texture of masonry beneath and result in a much flatter, bulkier character to walls and mouldings. Render can therefore create a bland scene of chunky overcoats shrouding historic character beneath, mostly notably at No.9 Market Place, its modernised frontage disguising historic character. Render should be avoided but, where it is used, it should be painted in muted, flat, earthy tones – pastels, bright and bold colours tend not to



Render and masonry paint 'flatten out' historic appearance, harm unity and detract from the authentic appearance of the street

marry well with bare sandstone, and very light whitish tones stand out to the detriment of the group (although the White House should remain that colour as it is part of its history). Picking out architectural detailing in boldly contrasting colours is also rarely historically accurate. Masonry paint over bare stone and brick has a similar effect, flattening out texture and removing the visual patina of time. Often used in a misguided effort to 'smarten up', masonry paint almost inevitably ends up looking shabby over time rather

than attractively seasoned. As with render, issues of colour also apply here. Masonry paint should be avoided.

Doorways



6.25 Most traditional doorways are set back in a deep reveal but many of the early ones have no decoration, just a stone lintel and step. Nineteenth century terraces have decorative doorways, similar to those at the windows, with raised or stepped stone mouldings and often a stone hood or canopy on brackets, some in the terraces with a shallow segmental arch. Hoods are fewer in number than they once were. Many of the landmark buildings have much stronger emphasis to doorways with grand Classical stone hoods or cases, one or two with high quality, richly moulded stone porches. Examples include The Grapes PH (converted to a window), Bedlington Social Club, the Blue Bell Inn, and the Masonic Lodge on Hartford Road. Doorways such as these are key to understanding the once prosperous nature of the area and the high quality architecture it produced, spending money where passers-by and visitors would see it best. The

recent Co-operative Funeral Service building has responded to the concept of feature doorways well. A large boxy shopfront porch added to the front of Nos.72-74a East End Front Street is an intrusive addition; modest canopies and Classically-inspired surrounds to the modern south east end terraces are neat.



A variety of simple and more ornate doorways with replacement doors in timber and plastic which are harmful to historic integrity and appearance

6.26 Of the doors themselves, some original ones survive mostly panelled (e.g. No.24 East End Front Street, a particularly attractive feature in a decorative stone doorway), but with some earlier, plainer ones being plank doors. Many doors have, however, been replaced with modern reproduction styles in stained hardwood or plastic, many with glazing, and which do not reflect the authentic architectural history of the area. Original doorways tend to incorporate an overlight above the door rather than glass in the door itself.

6.27 As well as domestic doors there are several commercial openings in the area, particularly in the terraces to gain rear access. These tend to be rounded or square-topped carriage arches with quoins, most with historic plank timber gates, some with

replacement metal ones. Pedestrian rear and side gates are simple ledged and braced plank features.



Top left: carriage doorway. Bottom left: back yard gate. Above: landmark buildings make particular play of doorways

Windows

6.28 Window openings are strongly vertical, one of the defining features of the area’s architectural character. Where openings have been widened, this characteristic is

destroyed, harming the visual appearance of the area. They are mostly used singly but in later buildings and those with more landmark qualities

are in pairs or groups, still however, strongly subdivided vertically. Like doorways, some are

emphasised but many are plain with only stone lintels and sills. Several of the later nineteenth century terraces have variations on a common window (and door) treatment

comprising a fully raised surround either with quoins or emphasis at top and bottom, a distinctive feature to these buildings. Window openings in the landmark buildings are often more pronounced and ornate, such as those in the former Police Station & Court, the Market Tavern PH, and the churches and chapels, defining their public or commercial use.



Window openings are strongly vertical and generally evenly spaced across elevations. Many have replacement windows



Variations on this type of window surround are distinctive of the late-nineteenth century terraces





6.29 Bay windows are not a common feature of the area's modest architecture but they can be found on some of the later and landmark buildings. They are often a late Victorian or Edwardian feature, seen for example in the Sun Inn, the former Police Station & Courthouse, the Edwardian building at the core of the



Left: landmark buildings make special play of large decorative windows. Above: bay windows are rare

former Elliot's Garage, the early nineteenth century addition to No.1 Front Street West, and also at the Top Club (the former Laird's House) where large distinctive stone bays were added, probably in the early twentieth century. Timber bays are also a characteristic introduced into the modern south east end terraces.



Above: Original or early windows are rare in the area and should be protected and maintained. Right: window (and door) reveals are important to appearance in oblique views along streets



6.30 Of the windows themselves, relatively few historic now survive, making those which do all the more important to the architectural character of the area. Some historic ones are early replacements, still in themselves of significance. Traditionally, all windows would be set back from the face of the building in a reveal, adding life and character to elevations – this is harmed where modern windows are pulled forward to be flusher with the building's face. The area's simple

architecture would have been carried through to its windows. Original windows would be double-hung vertical sliding timber sashes with glazing bars and these have influenced all the later windows in the area – as Victorians produced larger panes of glass, glazing bars were used less but, by the Edwardian period and later, glazing bars were reintroduced as decorative features, usually only in the top sash, which was often smaller than the bottom sash. Early to mid twentieth century buildings began to use side and top-hung casements instead of sliding sashes, still with smaller toplights sometimes containing leaded, painted or textured glass. The many styles and materials of late twentieth century replacement windows, particularly those in PVCu, have harmed the character of the area and of individual buildings.

Shopfronts

6.31 Shopfronts are a key element of the experience of the conservation area, it being a traditional town centre with the legacy of a prosperous period of trading. Shop, pub and bank fronts are found throughout the area but the highest concentrations are in Market Place, Vulcan Place and the ends of Front Street West and East End Front Street



Left top: a virtually intact shopfront at No.70 East End Front Street. Left bottom: a good quality mid-twentieth century shopfront at No.7 Market Place. Right top and middle: good shopfronts with alterations and loss. Right bottom: a variety of shopfronts along East End Front Street.



adjoining them. Many are modern commercial shopfronts from the late twentieth century but a good stock of traditional nineteenth century traditional shopfronts, or elements from them, survive too. Most of the shops have been converted from buildings built as houses, and this is very evident in some of the shop window openings which survive. The best shop fronts are those designed in harmony with the rest of the building, often with an integral side door to upstairs accommodation.



This disused shopfront was removed when the building was converted to residential use

6.32 There are essentially two types of shopfront in Bedlington: the traditional timber (or stone) feature along Classical lines which tend to be as wide as the building, and the hole-in-the-wall type which is essentially an enlarged window opening. The first type have been significantly modernised over the years whilst, in the second type, dealing with signage and shopfront security can be visually damaging.

6.33 Bedlington has several of the first type, the traditional timber shopfront comprising tall shop windows above masonry or timber stall-risers, framed by pilasters and carved brackets, and topped with an entablature of architrave, fascia (containing signage and often relatively narrow) and cornice on top. Most are simply detailed with few highly-detailed flourishes; carved brackets on some are evidence of former attention to detail. Only one survives virtually intact – that at No.70 East

End Front Street – but several others are substantially in one piece including Nos.92-102

East End Front Street, No.15 Market Place and No.1 Brown's Buildings. There are many others with surviving component parts but which have been incrementally modernised, perhaps with new windows, fascia or stallriser. Although modified, the stone bank front at the former Gibson family buildings at Nos.36-38 East End Front Street is rare and particularly special, demonstrating high quality for the time.



Above and right top: hole-in-the-wall type shopfronts have been converted from original domestic windows. Right bottom: modern interpretations of these

No.4 Market Place has a high quality mid-twentieth century shopfront also incorporating stone.



6.34 The key characteristic of the second type, of which there are many in Bedlington, is a lack of pilasters and entablature which means the shopfront is essentially only a window above a masonry stallriser.

Examples include Nos.50 and 54-60 (even) Front Street West, modern interpretations of these at neighbouring Nos.62-64. There are several others on East End Front Street, including most of Nos.60-64. Some, however, use applied pilasters and fascia to give the impression of a more complete joinery feature,

such as at No.1 Brown's Buildings on Ridge Terrace and Nos. 22-32 Front Street West.



Pilasters applied at Ridge Terrace and Front Street West

6.35 Hole-in-the-wall shopfronts are the result of pressure for change to retail use, and it is the change back and forth over the decades between retail and non-retail uses which creates problems with Bedlington's ground floor elevations. For example, several nineteenth century timber shopfronts have been removed and replaced with recreated hole-in-the-wall

types; this probably happened at Nos.100-102 East End Front Street, now an office-based use. The principle of this is unfortunate because, where good shopfronts exist, they should be protected even if the use behind them changes, not only to protect its

positive contribution to the street scene but also to avoid poorly matched replacement masonry and domestic windows which leave prominent visual scarring. The opposite is also true – if a good domestic masonry ground floor exists, then it is preferable for any retail use behind to trade from those domestic windows and doors, avoiding the irreversible removal of historic masonry and the insertion of a modern shopfront.

6.35 Many shopfronts have been altered and modernised, particularly by deepening the fascia to increase signage, widening windows and removing timber subdivision, lowering or removing stallrisers, or replacing traditional materials with metal, plastic and concrete. Such works distort the proportions of stallriser, window and fascia, disjoint the shopfront from the rest of the building above, and often use weak joinery or detailing



Modernised shopfronts can be very visually intrusive, as can externally housed roller shutters

that cannot match the quality of the original. Many are also in poor repair. Over-sized signage often in plastic and external shutter boxes, whether 'concealed' by additional timber fascias or not, detract from traditionally designed shopfronts. These are a pervasive feature of both types of shopfront in Bedlington and would benefit from comprehensive enhancement involving reducing the impact of signage and incorporating shutter box behind fascias. Such work, along with replacement traditional shopfronts where lost, could dramatically improve the appearance of the conservation area.

6.36 Most of the pubs have domestic window and door openings, although the Blue Bell Inn has the remains of a stone 'shopfront' into which domestic windows have been inserted.



The bank front is a powerful addition. The pub's 'shopfront' has been infilled with domestic windows

The HSBC bank at No.82 Front Street West is a good example of how banks often have more powerful shopfronts than their retail neighbours, here a heavy stone feature added to a comparatively modest nineteenth century house.

6.37 More guidance and policy on shopfronts in

Bedlington (and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea) can be found in the *Shopfront Design Guide* published by the Council in 2007.

Roofs and Rainwater Goods



The topography makes the area's roofscape quite visually prominent. Gable ends are typical but hips are also used in later buildings



6.38 Because of the changes in level in the area, roofs can be quite prominent in views. Many remain unaltered, apart from a change in materials, and the generally simple dual pitched shape is a key part of the area's architectural character. Slight variations in form and pitch add variety to groupings, whilst a change in pitch on offshot roofs adds variety to form at the rear. Blank gable ends are a key characteristic but hipped returns are found on some later domestic-scale and landmark buildings where they are used as a polite feature to turn a corner (e.g. Northumberland Arms PH) or as part of a particular style (e.g. Bedlington Social Club's hipped roof with swept eaves). The two chapels on the south side at the west end have transverse pitched roofs leaving the gable end dominant on the street. The flat roofs of the Council Offices group are starkly out of place in the area and are their biggest negative characteristic.

6.39 Two natural roofing materials are traditional to the area, natural Welsh slate and single lap clay pantiles. Clay pantiles are the earlier indigenous covering (and so are important, for example, to the single storey building on Vulcan Place), whilst slate followed with the arrival of the railways from the mid-nineteenth century. The visual contrast between the two is high, creating a spirited roofscape, particularly at Market Place where earlier buildings are prominent. Pantiles should generally be avoided on buildings after the mid nineteenth century unless their architectural style dictates.



Variety in roof form and natural coverings creates a lively roofscape at Market Place

6.40 Original Welsh slate is rough-looking with slightly uneven edges and subtle variations in shade and tone – often with blue or purple hints – which help define the richness and texture of the area’s character. It produces a

visually recessive yet deeply textured appearance when compared to single lap clay pantiles. These are a natural, traditionally hand-made product with quite wide variations in colour from deep brown-orange, through warm terracottas, to brighter salmon shades. Variations are often from tile to tile as well as from roof to roof. Variety in tone, and the tiles’ pronounced s-shape produce a vibrant, lively roofscape with a rich, warm texture. Clay pantile roofs are more conspicuous than slate ones, even though time and weather leave a distinct patina of mossy tinges, duller tones, and greater visual texture across slopes. The common feature of using slates for the bottom two or three ‘easing’ courses on a pantile roof does not seem to be found in this



Welsh slate and clay pantile, Front St West and Market Pl. Left: slate patterning



conservation area. As well as these two roof coverings, there are one or two cases of red clay plain tiles (flat and much smaller than pantiles) and green Westmorland slates correctly laid in diminishing courses. One or two slate roofs have patterns to enliven slopes (e.g. Trinity Church).

6.41 Ridges are mainly red or grey clay half-pipes, blue-black angles clay tiles, or stone ridges. Others have roll-top clay tiles (e.g. the former School, some missing) or



Above: red clay ridge tiles. Left: punched ridge crests on landmark buildings

decorative punched tiles (e.g. Trinity Church, and The Dun Cow PH). The former Presbyterian Chapel also has a damaged clay pinnacle). Valleys and flashings are traditionally lead lined but modern synthetic replacements or cement have encroached in many places.

6.42 Eaves are generally one of three types. The simplest are flat timber boards with a minimal or no overhang, whilst many of the later nineteenth century terraces have simple or more decorative stone corbels, particularly on East End Front Street. Thirdly, many of the landmark buildings have more decorative moulded stone or brick cornices (e.g. The Grapes PH, the former Police

Station & Courthouse) or decorative timber eaves with a much deeper overhang (e.g. The Sun Inn, Market Tavern PH).

6.43 Verges are mostly plain. The earliest ones have large distinctive triangular stone verge blocks, e.g. Nos.1 Front Street West (a feature which is found across Northumberland), whilst those with overhanging eaves tending to have simple timber bargeboards to verges. A few others have flat stone watertabling with kneeler blocks (most flat, some moulded; the former Presbyterian Chapel has dramatic verge pinnacles), which sometimes, though not always, protrude above the roof plane to divide individual roofs in a group or terrace.

6.44 Rainwater goods are not prominent features of the architectural design and many have been modernised. Most gutters are attached to eaves boards or corbels, a few (e.g. The Grapes PH) are concealed behind the moulded eaves. The main characteristic of rainwater goods is that most would have been cast iron (with some in timber), but most are now modern replacements, some in metal, many in plastic. This harms the architectural integrity of the building and degrades the overall quality and character of the area with man-made materials which easily fade or break. Most should be black although some could be part of a building colour scheme.

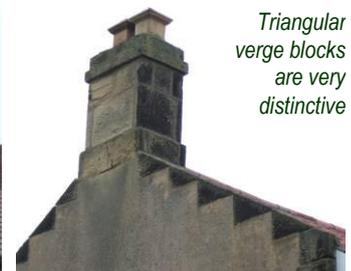
6.45 Some new roofs echo the simple themes of the area's roofs well (including the Co-operative Funeral Service), but replacement roof coverings on older buildings, using man-made or imported materials, have had a pervasive negative effect.



Above: plain eaves with gutter on spikes. Below: stone corbel eaves support gutters



Below: smart moulded cornices or dentilled eaves on landmark buildings are rarer



Triangular verge blocks are very distinctive



Above left: watertabling with kneeler blocks are also common. Above right: the roof of the former Presbyterian chapel is one of the liveliest in the area

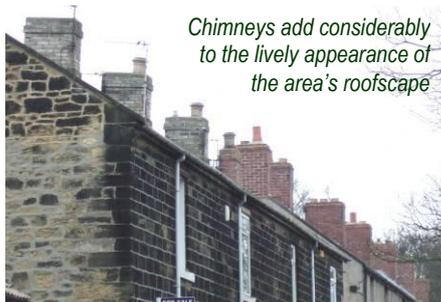
Dormer Windows, Rooflights

6.46 Attic space with daylight was generally not part of the original design of most of the area's buildings, most being designed with – and still having – 'clean' roofscapes, particularly to the front. Consequently, dormers are not a common feature but several late Victorian and Edwardian roofs do take on more energy with various gables and peaks to enliven them, notably the former School, the Market Tavern PH, Nos.2-4 Vulcan Place, the Sun Inn, and the former Police Station & Courthouse. A few dormers have been added, some relatively modest such as the Dunn Cow PH's early twentieth century additions, others more intrusive, such as those added to Nos.22-24 East End Front Street and the side of Bedlington Social Club (its front dormer is likely original). The low number of added dormers is significant and so new dormers should be avoided unless very carefully designed, modest in scale, well proportioned, positioned and detailed, and preferably on rear roof slopes.



Victorian buildings designed with dormers have enlivened the roofscape in one or two places, but latter added dormers are intrusive unless very carefully

6.47 Similarly, rooflights are not a traditional feature of the area's architecture, but a few early metal rooflights or 'glass slates' – small frameless panes of glass in the roof – are likely to be present, perhaps on rear roof slopes. These should be protected. Front slopes and other prominently visible ones, should be kept free of modern rooflights. If introduced on rear or 'internal' slopes, they should be 'conservation-style' with low-profile frames, small, few in number, and positioned in relation to windows below.

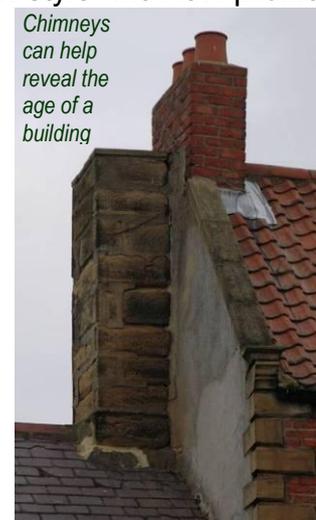


Chimneys add considerably to the lively appearance of the area's roofscape

Chimneys

6.48 Chimneys are a recurrent traditional feature in the area, enlivening the roofscape considerably and adding to the authentic traditional built scene. However, many have been removed or shortened which blunts the liveliness of the roofscape and does

nothing for the integrity of the historic building. Others have been poorly rendered, over-pointed, or rebuilt in modern brick to smaller proportions, which also harms their contribution.



Chimneys can help reveal the age of a building

6.49 Many surviving ones have sizeable proportions, most in brick with moulded tops; some were evidently once stone but have been rebuilt in brick with a stone plinth left in place. Particularly prominent and decorative chimneys include those at the former Presbyterian Chapel, the Top Club (former Laird's House), the Masonic Lodge, Bedlington Social Club, No.9 Market Place, and The Dun Cow PH. More typical

chimneys are smaller, plainer and stretch across the ridge. Most have round pots. Surviving stone chimneys are particularly important to character and should be protected. All chimneys benefit from good maintenance, even if redundant, to avoid pressure for shortening or removal, and allowing them to be re-used in the future.

6.50 Chimneys have not been included in the design of many late twentieth century buildings, their roof slopes less lively as a result. New development to traditional designs would always benefit from incorporation of chimneys.

6.51 Large ridge-top cowl vents are a feature of one or two Victorian and Edwardian roofs, increasingly rare features important to understanding age and use, and enlivening roofscape (e.g. Bedlington Social Club, Masonic Lodge). Modern roof vent tiles are often used in replacement roof coverings, a poor detail which goes against the uncluttered nature of roofs in the area.

Contribution of Spaces

6.52 The main spaces in the conservation area are the streets, by far the most prominent being Front Street and Market Place. As well as these are the adjoining ends of around eight side streets (the principal ones being Vulcan Place and Church Lane), plus several pedestrian alleys which also lead into Front Street and Market Place, mostly on the north side. There are two prominent open spaces in the area – one intended and one not – the churchyard and the gap site on Market Place. The rest of the area's open space mainly comprises private gardens, forecourts and yards.



Roofscape is harmed where chimneys are capped, shortened, removed or not included in the first place



Ridge-top cowl vents





Front Street W's open green public realm is a prized asset, but is eroded at the large roundabout and by parking



Front Street

6.53 Front Street West is wide with a highway roughly down its centre at a lower level than the buildings on either side. Grass and paved banks separate the road and the enclosing rows of buildings which, if it were



E End Front St's street trees, bank and split level road are crucial to character, as are trees and walls at the former vicarage

not for their elevated position, might appear out of proportion to the width of the road and its banks. The rich greenness on both sides of the street, with copious street trees, adds considerably to the conservation area's appearance, and is a big part of Bedlington's local distinctiveness.

6.54 Front Street East is narrower but the elevated grassy banks with trees continue along the south side, considerably enhanced by prominent, richly historic, tall



garden walls and mature trees at the churchyard and former vicarage. At the far eastern end, the grassy banks and street trees create a welcoming and distinctive gateway to the conservation area from the south east.



Top: some kerbs, channels and a few areas of pavement are historic but most is modern concrete. Recent enhancements use man-made block paviments. Far left: recent street furniture is distinctive (including the Bedlington Terrier logo) but is over-used in places. Below: the Trotter Memorial Fountain and the War Memorial, both listed Grade II, are key public realm features in the area

6.55 Unfortunately, because of the traffic, most of these spaces are quite heavily engineered to manage vehicle/pedestrian conflict. It seems that every surface has been allocated a purpose, planned, bordered, laid out, and often separated by rails or bollards, particularly in Front Street West. This accommodation of traffic in the main spaces of the conservation area has been taken to an extreme with the provision of a huge roundabout at the West End (and adjoining dual carriageway outside the boundary on Glebe Road) with forced changes in level hemming in historic buildings at the western edge of the area. Such an approach to historic places belongs firmly in an uncomfortably recent past, and should be modified in the future to bring back a more pedestrian-friendly environment which better respects the setting and coherence of the historic development and the buildings which front it.



6.56 Overall, the result of this engineering throughout Front Street is the lack of tranquil or restful spaces, but there does remain a strong green character to both parts of Front Street, and a mild historic flavour to the changes in levels and routes through the grass.

One of the most pleasant parts is the large green bank around the Celtic cross War Memorial. Enclosed by low trip rails in short historic stone piers, this neat space is an attractive focal point in the town and has been recently refurbished with new surfaces around the memorial. Seasonal flower beds enhance the scene.

Market Place and Gap Site



6.57 In the past, this market space was informally enclosed to the north by a short terrace set back from the remaining building line heading north westwards, but



has always remained open to the main street to the south. This gives it a strong sense of arrival but, unfortunately, this overall scene was eroded during the late twentieth century by the removal of a number of buildings to the north, by the intensity of traffic on the street, by an over-fussy modern floorscape scheme, and



Above: the listed Market Cross, known as the 'nail', anchors the Market Place. Right: it has mixed late twentieth century layout and materials recently enhanced with new street furniture and information board

by the lack of active uses of the space for markets and the like. All of this tends to denigrate the unity and significance of Market Place as an historic space, although the presence of the Market Cross (listed Grade II) adds considerable period integrity to the space, even if it is somewhat disconnected from the current floorscape treatment.





The gap site was created following mid twentieth century demolition and has left a large hole in the development pattern of the Market Place . The accidental plot has become blank scrub grass. Its redevelopment could enhance the conservation area and bring social and economic regeneration

6.58 The gap site at the back of Market Place has been an enduring problem of the late twentieth century, leaving the space ‘unfinished’ and incoherent as an urban place. Views ‘leak’ out towards the blandness of Schalksmuhle Road and, in the absence of well-designed and planned development coming forward, the meagre amenity of the blank scrub grass have unfortunately begun to find appreciation in its own right. This misguided ‘adoption’ of an accidental open space does demonstrate a desire for useable open space in the town, but must not be allowed to prevent economically or socially productive re-development of the space which, with the right conservation-led layout and design (which could

include open space), would vastly enhance Market Place and Bedlington town centre as a whole.

Side Streets and Alleys

6.59 Some of the side streets have as much character as Front Street, whilst the alleys tend to have been modernised. Vulcan Place contains the converted single-storey smithy as an important gateway point to the area, and affords excellent views of the church, its elevated yard and junction with Church Lane. Traffic on Vulcan Place is dominant here. Church Lane itself is also rich in character, with a historically evocative tapering as it adjoins Front Street where it is defined by tall historic retaining walls on both sides, and railings, pillars and a fascinating little flight of steps on the south side from the road to the churchyard gateway (poorly altered in modern materials). The narrow width of this and

Bell's Place, lined with a return range of smart stone buildings off East End Front Street, are important reminders of the road network's early rural origins.



6.60 The alleys off the north side of Front Street are mostly less characterful, in modern materials with poor lighting and little incentive for use – the views down them out of the area are uninspiring, mostly towards dull surface car-parking. Some, however, are enlivened by

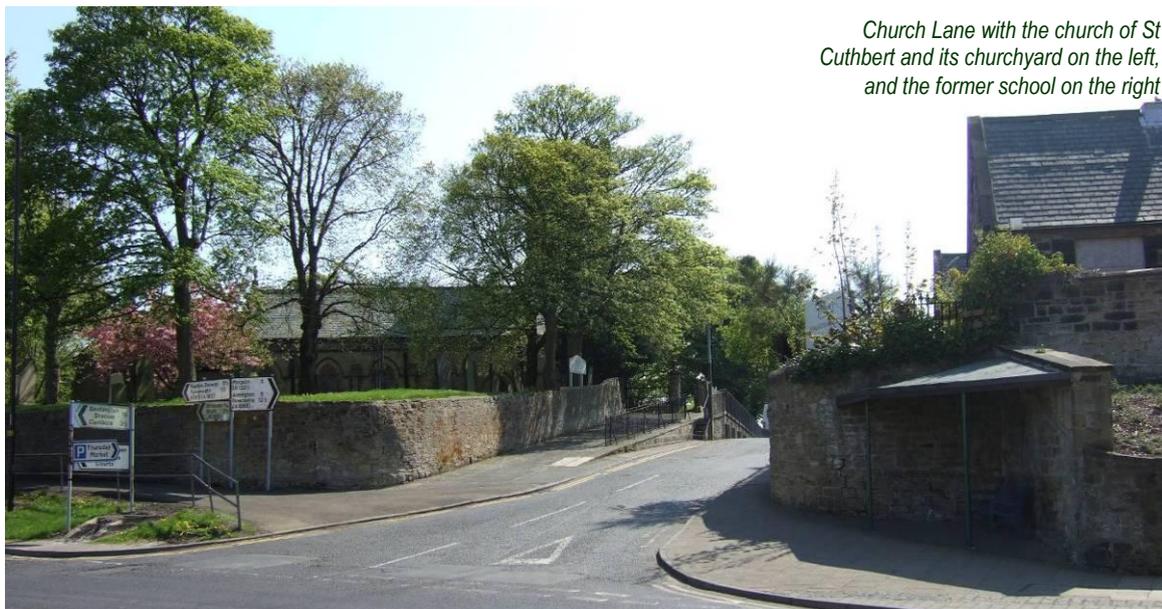
Walls lining alleys on the north side of Front Street have characterful historic masonry, but floorscapes are modern and dull. Not all the alleys are inviting routes even though they lead to useful car-parks

characterful rubble stone side elevations of adjoining buildings,

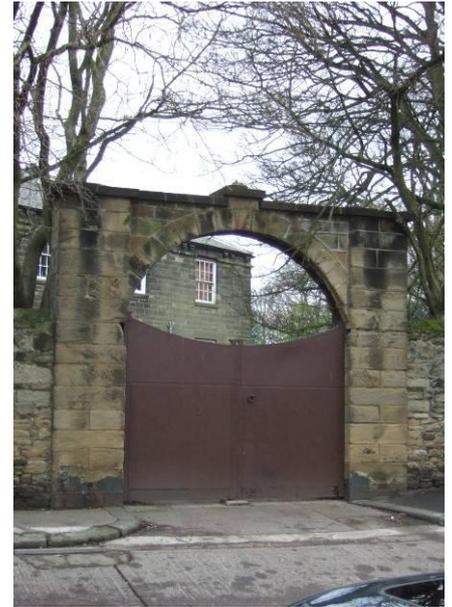
usually in need of some conservative repair and re-pointing. The use and character of these routes should be improved so that access to Front Street and its shops can benefit from greater footfall from the north.

Churchyard

6.61 St Cuthbert's Church yard is an attractive and historically informative site in its own right and, through its copious maturing trees, offers heavy green relief and



Church Lane with the church of St Cuthbert and its churchyard on the left, and the former school on the right



The churchyard is a rich, green, secluded space raised up from the rest of the conservation area. It is surrounded by tall sandstone boundary walls with steps and gates, and many important trees. The adjoining former vicarage (bottom left) has equally important groups of trees.

articulation to the street spaces below near the centre of the town. Its elevation creates a secluded, enclosed grassy area surrounded by rich historic boundary and retaining walls, railings and gateways in timber and stone. Its standing sandstone gravestone are copious; many are elaborate and nine are listed Grade II.

6.62 The space links firmly with the rich, mature and large

garden of the former vicarage to the south east, the two spaces combining to provide the largest, lowest density plot in the conservation area, and, in this, an important reminder of the age, history and former status and prosperity of the town. Trees in the former vicarage garden are many and dense, and are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see page 71). They are a prominent feature on the horizon from the south (see page 15).

Private Gardens, Yards and Forecourts



6.63 On the south side, as the layout is not to back of pavement, several private front gardens and their trees and planting add much to the character of the street, particularly around the War Memorial gardens and at the west end of Front Street. However, seen together with the various stretches of open space on the south side of Front Street West, the combined effect is somewhat incoherent, with a clutter of walls, fences and other treatments, despite the greenness of the gardens. Historic stone boundary walls, though, are important surviving features here to be protected and enhanced, including their distinctive triangular copings.



Left: historic boundary walls are important on the south side. Below: some forecourts on the south side are incoherent and cluttered



6.64 Other open forecourt spaces here add positively to the general set-back openness of the south side of the street, but offer little in detail to the scene.

The petrol filling station's forecourt is cramped whilst, at the other end of this stretch, forecourts to the former Elliot's Garage and neighbouring social club are blank tarmac which could do so much more to enhance the green, tree-lined south side of the street at this focal point opposite Market Place. The adjoining Sun Inn PH has important green banks adjoining the War Memorial gardens. The collection of yards and gardens at the far west end on the south side, including Trinity Church, has evolved over time, some retaining historic boundary walls (modified for road widening) and planting, whilst others have been eroded to



blank forecourts which could be significantly enhanced by historic surfaces and more planting.

6.65 By comparison with the south side, the north side of Front Street is almost entirely to the back-of-pavement, but the central stretch on Front Street West did historically comprise a series of tiny front gardens, and a few survive here to varying degrees. Outside what is now the Top Club, post office and adjoining shop are enclosed former gardens which have unfortunately lost any greenness to them but retain important historic stone boundary walls with copings. Further down is a single small garden – still green and mature – at the last surviving residential house on this part of the street, surviving in amongst the shops. This is welcome visual relief and a good historic reminder of the previous residential use of most of the properties on Front Street. Other such gardens have been lost to featureless forecourts, essentially now read as part of the pavement and eroding with them any sense of historic development pattern.



A few surviving small gardens on the north side of the street illustrate development pattern. One is still green.

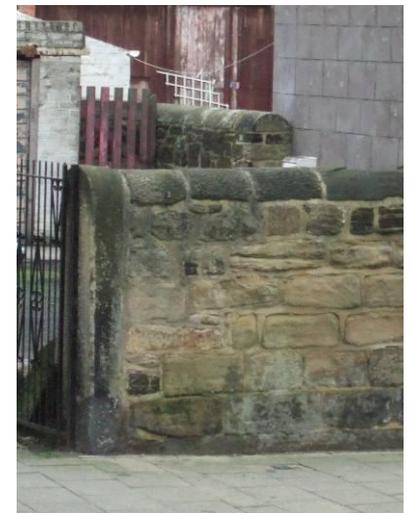


Above: important derelict outbuilding at Nos.40-40b Front Street

6.66 Other private gardens are less prominent and tend to be back gardens or yards, notably the large back yards on the north side of the street, many of which are largely unattractive (NB. see from page 57 for discussion of

Above: most rear yards less prominent but illustrate historic development pattern and layout, and fragments of old walls

the former vicarage garden next to the churchyard). However, most are evidence of the historic development pattern and some will contain important historic reminders of former uses and layout, such as outhouses and other incidental buildings. The large, decrepit outbuilding behind Nos.40-40b Front Street West is just such an important survivor. Many also have historic rubble stone boundary walls, or fragments thereof, which are crucial to understanding the



history of the place and in defining historic character to the rear of properties, particularly against the blandness of most development to the north. Their protection is important.

Loss, Intrusion and Damage

6.67 The most significant losses to the conservation area took place before it was designated, mainly replacement of the Old Hall and its gardens, large-scale extensions to buildings at the Market Place, and changes to the setting of the town which have significantly encroached on its edges.

Other than this, the biggest loss is the general erosion of historic character from incremental development and modernisation of buildings and spaces, discussed below. This means that poor appearance of historic buildings is a notable problem, often disguising other historic and architectural qualities they may have – rather than an extensive loss of historic buildings there has been an erosion of individual features and materials, harming buildings' appearance rather than their overall integrity. There are, therefore, many buildings which do, or could, make a positive contribution to the area, despite first impressions.

Neutral Parts

6.68 Neutral parts are those which have a balance of positive and negative characteristics which neither detract strongly nor make a great contribution.

Some of the late twentieth century housing has these characteristics, such as on Vulcan Place and infill development behind Front Street East. Although with no special local architectural or historic interest, much of it is not prominent and does little to detract from the scene. Some of it does, however, increase density behind frontage buildings which goes against the historic development pattern. Some recent individual buildings are only neutral to the area, such as the former Maxifreeze and the adjoining residential block which, despite their natural materials, are weak modern designs with little historic reference in form and detail. Conversely, the buildings at the recent petrol filling station are relatively well designed for the area but are heavily shrouded by signage, forecourt canopy and cars for sale.



Above: Large ugly extensions blight some rears. Below: Erosion of character has left some historic buildings with a poor appearance despite their overall positive contribution



Some buildings, notably some late twentieth century housing at either end of the area, is neutral, having a balance of good and bad characteristics



Negative Parts

6.69 There are too many negative parts to the conservation area, but most could be enhanced to rescue their contribution. They include the Market Place gap site and the West End roundabout and associated infrastructure discussed above, but also individual buildings including:

- the vast, bulky modern supermarket extensions to the rear of Market Place which have destroyed the integrity of the development pattern at the heart of the conservation area, and left out-of-scale intrusive cliff-like elevations to the north,
- the Council offices (despite its natural materials), made worse by the forest of antennae on the roof,
- the adjoining Job Centre (Longridge House), both insensitive and prominent,
- the late twentieth century appearance of the former Elliot’s Garage site, which is out-of-place through its materials and built form, though not necessarily as a result of its siting and height (there is a decent Edwardian building at its core).

6.70 However, most harm to the conservation area has come from disfiguring change to detail and materials of the historic buildings over time. The frontage of the former Turk’s Head PH in Market Place exemplifies this. Here a once handsome late Victorian frontage of decorative brickwork surmounted by three distinctive wallhead dormers has been reduced to a bland rendered façade with heavy modern canopy, all of no architectural merit. A poorly sited public CCTV installation attached to the first floor detracts further.



Negative parts include: the Market Place gap site, huge supermarket extensions behind the Market Place frontage, the Council Offices and adjoining Longridge House, the former Elliott’s Garage site and, bottom left, the large roundabout at the west end



Incremental Change

6.71 Gradual modernisation has seen several incremental changes to architectural features, detailing and materials, under two main themes:

- loss and replacement of original architectural details
- inappropriate designs, materials and methods for repairs, alterations and new work

6.72 Much of this has involved lower quality work, synthetic materials, and ill-informed or now-discredited approaches. As the architecture is simple, the palette of natural materials limited, and basic architectural features relatively modest, some changes can become particularly prominent. Harm can easily result from loss or alteration of those features, materials or design intent, and, in one or two locations, there is sufficient accumulation of change to have seriously weakened character and appearance (e.g. parts of Market Place and north side Front Street West). Some changes took place before the conservation area was designated, but most will have taken place in the last few decades, having been given consent in less conservation-minded times, or – more likely – the result of permitted development rights, i.e. works which do not require planning permission.



No.9 Market Place, the former Turk's Head PH and most recently part of a supermarket – a significant loss of character, but almost entirely restorable

6.73 It will be important to try to curtail the most harmful damage and loss. It would also be important to find opportunities for reversing over time harmful changes to the architectural and historic qualities which give the area its distinctive character. Both would be more easily achieved with detailed guidance and incentives, such as grant aid. Monitoring these and other changes should take place to ensure accumulated change over time does not further weaken or erode the area's special local architectural and historic interest.

Loss and Replacement of Original Architectural Details

6.74 Some original architectural features which helped define the special interest of the area have been lost incrementally over time. For example:

- Several enlarged or repositioned window, door and shopfront openings, which result in a loss of historic fabric, and which distort the architecture of the building, harming the basic consistency of these architectural features across the area.
- Notable loss of original front doors, which have been replaced with a variety of modern timber doors in mock reproduction or modern styles, which can have an insubstantial appearance compared to traditional solid panelled features, or replaced in PVCu (with a similar negative effect to PVCu windows, see below).

- Widespread loss of original windows, replaced with either modern timber casements or with PVCu casements. The effect which fenestration has on a building's character and appearance should not be underestimated. Even slight changes to details (such as glazing bar profile or width) can dramatically alter the character and appearance of a building. This can be true if one in a set of windows is changed or if it is repeated across a whole façade. The visual effect of modern materials and inaccurate designs is invariably jarring against a well-aged building in natural traditional materials. The success of PVCu windows which attempt to copy the design and proportions of traditional windows, depends on the width and profile of the frames. It is generally the case that PVCu frames are thicker and more angular than timber ones, and can not accurately incorporate details such as mouldings, horns, beading and stained glass. PVCu 'glazing bars' are often false strips superimposed onto glazing which have a flat, flimsy appearance. Neither does PVCu take on the patina of time like timber. The result will almost always harm character and appearance. The same is true of 'fake' sash windows (top-hung casements) which rarely reflect the particular style of the building. These and other modern window styles, including small top opening lights and those with horizontal proportions, often have clumsy, chunky proportions and are often placed flush with the face of the building, rather than being set back into an appropriate reveal, thus losing depth and shadow to the building's architecture.
- Many lost or altered historic shopfronts which have 'flattened' their appearance and added deep fascias (many in plastic), which are intrusive features detracting from architectural character and often visually dislocating the shopfront from the rest of the building above and from its neighbours.
- Widespread loss of chimneys which have been removed, capped or dropped in height, harming the contribution they make to the prominent roofscape of the area.
- Widespread replacement of rainwater goods (including gutters and downcomers) with plastic which, in one or two places, might have involved the removal of decorative hoppers or brackets.

Altered window openings and replacement windows and doors, some in timber, many in PVCu



Inappropriate Designs, Methods and Materials

6.75 There have been many cases of repairs, alterations and new work which have used designs, methods or materials which are inappropriate to the area's special local architectural and historic interest. Most of these are changes which have not required planning permission, although some will have received consent. These include:

- Several added and enlarged offshots with widths, heights, forms, materials and detailing that do not reflect the main building and which harm the historic integrity of the built scene, and can erode the three-dimensional relationship between building, plot and street.
- Many cases of cement render, pebbledash or paint to main elevations, which conceals the historic stonework that defines the character of the area's buildings, and which can make individual buildings stand out visually to the detriment of a group (as well as possibly harming the fabric of the building in the long term).
- Masonry repairs and alterations which use modern brick instead of stone or which use stone poorly matched in colour, size, texture or bond, leaving visual scarring on elevations.
- Poorly finished, badly matched or cement-heavy pointing which can significantly alter the appearance of stone buildings by making the pointing more visually prominent, as well as harming the fabric of the building in the long term.



Weak detailing, clumsy design and poor use of materials harms the character of mature historic buildings



- Many cases of painted sandstone detailing, particularly door and window surrounds, which destroys the rich historic patina of time that characterises mature unpainted sandstone, and which, depending on the use of colour, can make individual buildings stand out visually to the detriment of a group.



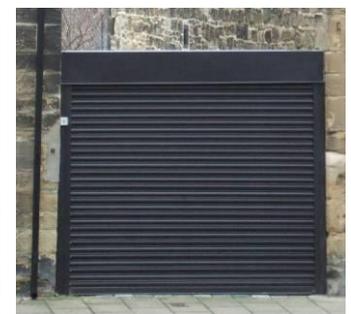
- Many cases of replacing natural slate with artificial slate (which are usually thinner with a flat, shiny appearance at odds with the rich texture of natural Welsh slate), of replacing historic

clay pantiles with modern pantiles (which are often less visually textured and brighter in colour than historic ones) or replacing either slate or pantiles with concrete tiles (which are almost always wholly different in shape, size, texture, pattern and colour as well as often being heavier and so causing the roof structure to sag in the long term).

- One or two added dormer windows in wide, boxy designs with flat roofs often placed eccentrically on the roof slope interrupting the simplicity of the area's roof forms.
- Several added Velux-style rooflights on front and other prominent roof slopes which are larger and greater in number than traditional small metal rooflights, and which are often placed eccentrically on the roof slope with no reference to the fenestration below, and which sit proud of the roof plain interrupting the simplicity of the roofscape.



- Several satellite dishes added in arbitrary positions on principal elevations rather than attempting to site them more discreetly away from prominent view.



Manmade roof covering; obtrusive plastic fascia signs and altered shopfronts; loss of chimneys; masonry paint, render and pebbledash; felt-clad box dormer; use of a metal roller shutter instead of more appropriate timber gates

Condition & Vacancy



6.76 The general condition of the public realm in the conservation area is good, but the condition of many of the buildings is an on-going cause for concern, where investment and repairs have not kept pace with demand. Several buildings can be classed as being ‘at risk’, including the former Infants School of 1874 at the top of Church Lane. It is vacant, in an advanced state of decay and struggling to find an acceptable development solution. It makes a positive contribution to the conservation area through its historical connection and in its modest village architecture. Various extensions to the rear and its playground could provide some flexibility in redevelopment which would see a prominent site enhanced at the heart of the conservation area. The nearby vacant and decaying former Elliot’s garage is the subject of current redevelopment proposals. It makes a less intrinsically positive contribution, but the layout, siting, height and massing of redevelopment here would be important to protecting its impact on Market Place, and on the low density arc of open space which defines the south side of Front Street throughout the conservation area, of which the garage’s forecourt is an integral (though currently unattractive) part.



The significant former school on Church Lane is in a bad state of repair and is long-term vacant. Others in poor repair and/or vacant include the former gas showroom, East End Front Street, and an outhouse behind Nos.40-40b Front Street West



Other Pressures for Change



The volume of traffic on Front Street and Vulcan Place can be quite heavy

6.77 Because Front Street is both a transport route as well as a destination, quite heavy through-traffic is a perennial issue

for the character of the conservation area. The basic historic layout and character of the town was developed at a time when traffic volumes were usually extremely low except at market times. It is clearly not possible to return to these conditions but attempts to improve the traffic/pedestrian balance in the street spaces will have the added benefit of

restoring something of the historic feel of the old town. This must, however, be achieved without negative impact on the definitive green open spaces and with minimal street furniture, signs and road markings.

6.78 There are pressures for increased backland development on north side of Front Street. This should be avoided where historic plot layouts and development pattern would be eroded or harmed, but may be acceptable where this has already been lost to twentieth century 'tidying'.

6.79 There are also pressures for conversion of retail premises to residential. As many of the terraced nineteenth century buildings in the area began as housing, this is not intrinsically a problem for the historic character area. However, two issues are important to control in such cases. Firstly the loss of retail and commercial premises will erode the economic capacity of the town, and so conversion of ground floor premises to residential in the heart of the conservation area around Market Place and those parts of Front Street West, East End Front Street and Vulcan Place leading off it should be avoided. Further along Front Street, at either end, such conversions may be acceptable from the point of view of the conservation area but the second point to consider is the loss of historic shopfront fabric and character. Conversion of retail premises to residential should not be permitted if it will involve the removal of historic timber or stone shopfronts which make a positive contribution to the area. If only modern shopfronts would be lost, then replacement masonry and windows would have to be very high quality, accurately detailed and with well-chosen materials to avoid permanent visual scarring. Where positive historic shopfronts do survive, residential use can be accommodated within the building with the use of appropriately designed privacy features behind the shopfront itself.

6.80 Signs of economic stagnation in the conservation area are widespread with minimal or no investment in fabric, repairs and appearance of retail and commercial premises in recent decades. Recent increased investment to raise the quality of the floorscape and public realm is welcome; corresponding enhancements to private property is likely to depend upon sufficient incentive from the public sector. Although past attempts to secure improvement through schemes of public grant aid have not been particularly well supported, deeper and more wide-ranging attempts at a focussed grant scheme could bring considerable benefits, as even small investments in improving the appearance of the conservation area can pay big dividends in economic confidence and performance. The economic capacity for change in the town may not be huge but more needs to be done to develop what there is.

7 Management

7.1 Change is an inevitable component of most conservation areas; the challenge is to manage change in ways which maintain and, if possible, strengthen an area's special qualities. The character of conservation areas is rarely static and is susceptible to incremental, as well as dramatic, change. Some areas are in a state of relative economic decline, and suffer from lack of investment. More often, the qualities that make conservation areas appealing also help to encourage over-investment and pressure for development in them.

7.2 Positive management is essential if such pressure for change, which tends to alter the very character that made the areas attractive in the first place, is to be limited.

7.3 Proactively managing Bedlington Conservation Area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance into the future. In accordance with English Heritage guidance, the Council has prepared a draft Conservation Area Management Strategy (CAMS) for Bedlington.



7.5 Management topics addressed in the CAMS include the following⁶:

- boundary review
- permitted development rights
- enforcement and monitoring change
- local list
- site specific design guidance or development briefs
- thematic policy guidance (e.g. on shopfronts, advertisements)
- enhancement opportunities
- trees, green spaces and public realm
- archaeology
- regeneration issues
- decision making and community consultation
- available resources

⁶ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, April 2006

Boundary Review

7.6 The conservation area was designated in 1971 and the boundary has not been reviewed since. National guidance suggests boundaries should be reviewed at regular intervals, in particular where there is pressure for change and where original designation took place many years ago. A review of the boundary is overdue.

Regeneration

7.7 The significance and needs of the conservation area make it ideal for a comprehensive partnership-led restoration initiative based on capital grant aid and public realm improvements. A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) has been successfully established for Bedlington. The THI is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Northumberland County Council with funding of £1,984,000. The THI will run until 2013 and will support conservation-led regeneration in the conservation area 2013 and will support conservation-led regeneration in Bedlington Conservation Area by distributing funding for building conservation projects, Market Place public realm improvement and community involvement activities. THI guidance requires an adopted conservation area management strategy to include measures to protect the public investment for at least 10 years. The strategy should include a commitment to use planning policies, design standards and, where necessary, statutory powers. It should also consider education, training and involvement.

Site Specific Design or Development Briefs

7.8 Site specific briefs should be prepared for the Market Place gap site, and other sites where proactive planning and conservation action is needed to bring forward suitable development. Briefs should clearly set out the characteristics of the conservation area to which new development should respond, and define the constraints created by the spatial and character traits of the site and area. Briefs would best be prepared in conjunction with a wider regeneration initiative for the area.

Thematic Policy Guidance

7.9 In parallel with this character appraisal and the draft CAMS, the Council has prepared a Shopfront Design Guide as a proactive way of managing future change on this key characteristic of the area. This incorporates existing local guidance on commercial advertisements and the design of shopfront security measures. The aim of the guide is to encourage a particular approach to works to individual buildings which preserves and enhances the overall character of the area. The guide also applies to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area.

8 Further Information & Guidance

Other Designations

8.1 The following heritage designations are found within the conservation area (Fig 4). For information on what these designations mean, go to www.english-heritage.org.uk.

17	Listed Building entries
1	Tree Preservation Order

8.2 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks & Gardens, Historic Battlefields, or entries in the national Buildings At Risk Register. The Council has neither a Local List nor a local Buildings At Risk Register.

Listed Buildings

8.3 Entries on the 'Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' cover the whole building (including the interior), may cover more than one building, and may also include other buildings, walls and structures in the building's curtilage. Contact the County Council for more advice.

No.	Name (by street)	Grade	GV
<i>Bedlington (South Side)</i>			
9/54	Gate piers and adjacent walls with railings to Ch St C	II	GV
<i>Church Lane</i>			
9/53	Church of St Cuthbert	II*	GV
9/55	Pair of headstones 1m east of Church of St Cuthbert	II	GV
9/56	Potts & Wilson tombs 4m south of chancel of Ch St C	II	GV
9/57	Willson headstone 2m south of chancel of Ch St C	II	GV
9/58	Hedley headstone 14m south of chancel of Ch St C	II	GV
9/59	Nicholson headstone 17m south of chancel of Ch St C	II	GV
9/60	Spearman headstone 5m south of tower of Ch St C	II	GV
9/61	Collingwood & Scott headstones 15m SW of Ch St C	II	GV
9/62	Southern headstone 13m N of vestry door of Ch St C	II	GV
<i>Front Street East</i>			
9/65	The Old Vicarage	II	GV
9/86	Wall, gateway and gates to north of Old Vicarage, with attached gateway and gate to church	II	GV
<i>Front Street West</i>			
9/67	The King's Arms [now The Grapes PH]	II	
9/68	Trotter Memorial Fountain	II	
	Bedlington War Memorial	II	
<i>Market Place</i>			
8/70	The Cross	II	
9/69	Barclay's Bank	II	

Tree Preservation Orders

8.4 TPOs are made on trees which make a significant contribution to their surroundings, whether in a conservation area or not. The tree's visual, historic and amenity contributions are taken into consideration. Consent is needed for works to trees covered by a TPO. Contact the County Council for more advice.

Order	Location	Trees	Species
1986	Former Vicarage, Bedlington	17 individual trees; 1 area of trees; 4 groups of trees	Various including ash, beech, cherry, copper beech, hawthorn, holly, laburnum, lime, oak, poplar, silver birch, Swedish whitebeam and sycamore

County Historic Environment Record Entries

8.5 The following entries from the Northumberland Historic Environment Record (HER) are within, or partly within, the conservation area boundary. The HER is accessed on-line via a joint project with Co Durham at www.keystothepast.info.

No.	Site name	Period
N11751	The Cross	post-med
N11755	Bedlington Old Hall [demolished 1959]	post-med
N11757	The King's Arms [now The Grapes PH]	post-med
N11758	Barclay's Bank, Market Place	post-med
N11764	Church of St Cuthbert	early m, m, post-med
N11792	Smithy	post-med
N11812	Gate piers and adjacent walls with railings to Ch St C	post-med
N11813	Pair of headstones 1m east of Church of St Cuthbert	post-med
N11814	Potts & Wilson tombs 4m south of chancel of Ch St C	post-med
N11815	Willson headstone 2m south of chancel of Ch St C	post-med
N11816	Hedley headstone 14m south of chancel of Ch St C	post-med
N11817	Nicholson headstone 17m south of chancel of Ch St	post-med
N11818	Spearman headstone 5m south of tower of Ch St C	post-med
N11819	Collingwood & Scott headstones 15m SW of Ch St C	post-med
N11820	Southern headstone 13m N of vestry door of Ch St C	post-med
N11823	The Old Vicarage	post-med
N11824	Wall, gateway and gates to north of Old Vicarage, with attached gateway and gate to church	post-med
N11825	Trotter Memorial Fountain	post-med
N11837	Well	post-med
N11838	Well	post-med
N11849	Bishop's Hall [exact site unknown]	medieval
N11851	Bedlington War Memorial	post-med

N13863	Medieval ditches or gullies, Front Street East	medieval
N14899	Medieval ditches in Bedlington	medieval

Notes: 'No.' = HER number. 'Period' = broad archaeological periods, not architectural periods. 'm', 'med' = medieval. 'Ch St C' = Church of St Cuthbert

Local Plan Policies

8.6 The following are relevant policies from the Wansbeck Local Plan, adopted in July 2007. Other policies will also be relevant. See page 9.

Conservation Areas	
GP17	<i>Conservation Area designations in the District will be kept under review. Only areas which are judged to be of special architectural or historic interest and whose character and appearance it is considered desirable to preserve or enhance will be designated, or continue to be designated, as Conservation Areas. Character appraisals and management plans will be prepared for those areas where they do not already exist and they will be kept up-to-date.</i>
GP18	<i>The special architectural or historic interest of the District's Conservation Areas will be preserved and enhanced. Special regard will be paid to the impact of proposed development on the special architectural or historic interest of a Conservation Area and its setting. Development within, or otherwise affecting, a Conservation Area must be in sympathy with the character and appearance of the Area. Development likely to have an adverse impact will not be permitted. Demolition of a building, feature or structure which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless there is conclusive evidence that it is beyond reasonable economic repair.</i>
GP19	<i>If it appears to the authority that permitted development is having, or is likely to have, an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, the authority will bring the development under planning control by seeking to make an Article 4 direction.</i>
	Town Centre Uses
RTC8	<i>The conversion to flats of vacant or underused upper floors above shops and other commercial premises in the District's town centres will be encouraged where satisfactory living accommodation can be created. Development at ground floor level which would result in the loss of existing independent access to upper floors capable of being used as residential accommodation will not be permitted.</i>
	Shopfronts
RTC9	<i>Planning applications for new or replacement shop fronts will be permitted if the design of the shop front relates well in terms of architectural style, scale, proportions, materials and colour to both the building of which it forms part and the surrounding streetscene.</i>

	Town Centre development opportunities
RTC10	<p><i>Within the District's town centres, the following Town Centre Opportunity Sites are designated and shown on the Proposals Map:</i></p> <p><i>RTC10(a) Portland Park, Ashington</i></p> <p><i>RTC10(b) Lintonville Road, Ashington</i></p> <p><i>RTC10(c) Market Place, Bedlington</i></p> <p><i>RTC10(d) Station Street, Bedlington Station</i></p> <p><i>Development of the designated opportunity sites will be permitted if the following requirements are met:</i></p> <p><i>a) the character and attractiveness of the town centre will be enhanced by the development; and</i></p> <p><i>b) development will take place in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner; and</i></p> <p><i>c) the development is designed to integrate well with the rest of the town centre; and</i></p> <p><i>d) in the case of the Portland Park site, the need for a replacement sports facility will be assessed under the terms of Policy REC3 of the plan.</i></p>
	Outdoor Advertisements
RTC11	<p><i>Consent will be granted for the display of outdoor signs and advertisements provided that:</i></p> <p><i>a) the character or appearance of the building or area will not be adversely affected; and</i></p> <p><i>b) public safety will not be compromised.</i></p>
	Cultural and tourism opportunities
REC12	<p><i>Development which improves tourism and cultural interest in the District will be encouraged and supported.</i></p> <p><i>Focus for the improvement of tourist attractions and facilities will be:</i></p> <p><i>a) the continued development of the Woodhorn project (see Proposals Map); and</i></p> <p><i>b) the improvement of existing recreational assets including the country parks and coast; and</i></p> <p><i>c) public realm improvements in towns such as Ashington, Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea.</i></p>

The Implications Of Conservation Area Status

8.7 The local planning authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing character and appearance of conservation areas in exercising their planning powers. In particular, the local authority has extra controls over the following in conservation areas:

- demolition
- minor developments

- the protection of trees

Demolition

8.8 Outside conservation areas, buildings which are not statutorily listed can be demolished without approval under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Within conservation areas, the demolition of unlisted buildings requires conservation area consent. Applications for consent to totally or substantially demolish any building within a conservation area must be made to Northumberland County Council or, on appeal or call-in, to the Secretary of State. Generally, there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Minor Developments

8.9 Within a conservation area, legislation⁷ states that there are certain cases where permission must be obtained before making alterations which would normally be permitted elsewhere. This is to ensure that any alterations do not detract from the area's character and appearance. The changes include certain types of exterior painting and cladding, roof alterations including inserting dormer windows, and putting up satellite dishes which are visible from the street. The size of extensions to dwelling houses which can be erected without consent is also restricted to 50m³.

8.10 Under Article 4 of the same legislation, there can be further measures to restrict other kinds of alteration which are normally allowed under so-called 'permitted development rights'. Called Article 4 Directions, these measures effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance over time. Development is not precluded, but selected alterations would require planning permission and special attention would be paid to the potential effect of proposals when permission was sought. The local authority has to give good reason for making these restrictions, and must take account of public views before doing so. To many owners, any tighter restrictions or additional costs, such as for special building materials, are more than outweighed by the attraction of living or running a business in such an area. There are two types of Article 4 Direction, 4(1) or 4(2).

Trees

8.11 Trees make an important contribution to the character of the local environment. Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area, whether or not it is covered by a tree preservation order, has to give notice to the local planning authority. The authority can then consider the contribution the tree makes to the character of the area and if necessary make a tree preservation order to protect it.

⁷ Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

Unlisted Buildings In A Conservation Area

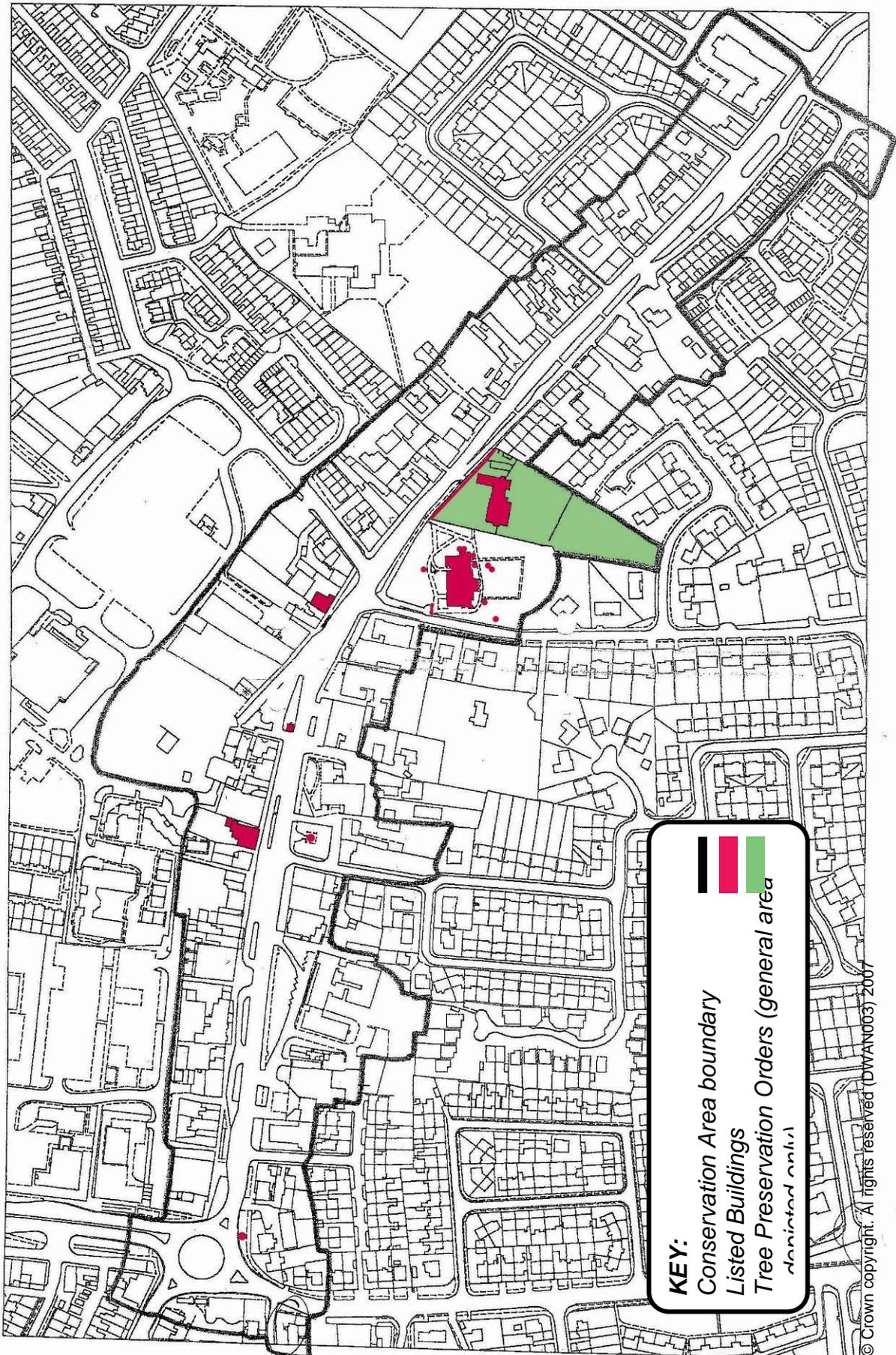
8.12 When considering the contribution made by unlisted buildings to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, the following questions might be asked⁸:

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials, or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

8.13 The former Wansbeck District Council believed any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.

⁸ Taken from *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, April 2006

Fig 3: Other Designations



NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of the Management Strategy which accompanies this Appraisal has produced a revised proposed boundary – see Appendix A.

Appendix A

Character Appraisal of Proposed Additions to Boundary

As part of the Management Strategy which this Character Appraisal accompanies, a review of the existing boundary of Bedlington Conservation Area has been completed. Several parts of the town are proposed for inclusion in the revised boundary, and this appendix provides the appraisal of character of those parts. The boundary proposed in the Management Strategy is shown in Fig 4.

Three Additions for Completeness

Three small additions are proposed for completeness:

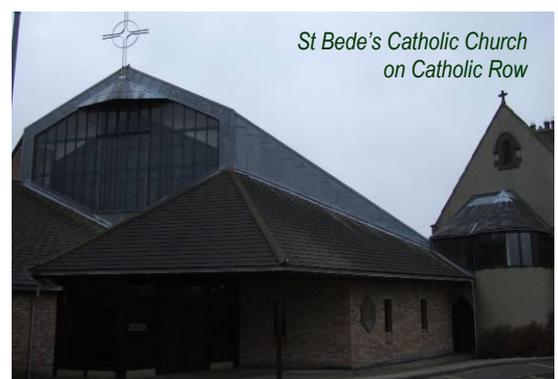
- Nos.1-3 **Brown's Buildings** on Ridge Terrace is a single-build rubble stone historic terrace with added nineteenth and twentieth century shopfronts and, in this respect, is identical in basic characteristics to much of the north side of Front Street West and East End Front Street. It is a characterful old block at a gateway site, and the blank rubble stone elevation of that part currently excluded is prominent on arrival. The entire plot pattern has been in place since the earliest available map of 1847. The entire block should be included.
- The **car-park** to the rear of the Council Offices has no merit in terms of its appearance, but it is the site of former grounds and associated backland development of the demolished Bedlington Old Hall, one of the earliest and most significant buildings in the settlement. It has therefore has significant spatial characteristics and archaeological potential as a result. A small stretch at the south end is currently excluded and so the boundary should be revised to include the entirety of the Council Offices car-park.
- The extra-long historic plot shape at what is now known as **Perrystone Mews** is unusual but is part of the historic development pattern of the area. The shape is shown on the 1st Edition OS Map of 1860 and is still intact on the ground, and so the conservation area boundary should include it in its entirety.



Strong elevation of Brown's Buildings on arrival from the west

Catholic Row

As discussed in 4.25 above, a church and school were first built in 1864 in a side street location, a common approach for the faith at the time. The group was extended in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and by the last decades of the twentieth century, an imaginative new church, St Bede's, had been created, combining the old and the new. The



St Bede's Catholic Church on Catholic Row

group complements well the various other places of worship in the town and architecturally, it is a very interesting if secluded group. Although altered, the historic buildings there have similar characteristics to many other historic landmark buildings in the area (e.g. the former Primitive Methodist Church)



Above: Catholic Row showing at the back the historic catholic church and school buildings (also right), plus in the foreground the back ranges of the Freemason's Lodge (already in the boundary)

including animated roofs and decorative stone windows and doorways. Together with the striking modern addition, St Bede's is a lively, dramatic composition with good intrinsic merits. The new church is also one of five quite prominent buildings viewed on approach to the town from the south, the other four – including two churches – already in the conservation area.

Nos.1-4 Church Lane



This row of four early twentieth century detached houses forms an important gateway to the conservation area at Church Lane as well as being key to the setting of the Grade II* listed parish church and the neighbouring Old School. Historically, they are some of the first suburban development in Bedlington, a process which continued into the late twentieth century with many acres of land around the town being



Nos.1-4 Church Lane are a strong gateway to the town, and key to the setting of the Church and Old School. They are also characterful early twentieth century houses in their own right.



put over to housing. No.4 faces south, an indication of the once long open views at this point which were also enjoyed by other properties on the south side of the town, including the Old Hall itself. Land rises notably here as it reaches the ridge along which the south side of Bedlington runs and, coupled with a slight bend in Church Lane after No.4, this short stretch of development at the north end is firmly part of the town centre in spatial terms. In views from Vulcan Place the row closes views above the churchyard and the Old School. Individually, they are characterful early twentieth century houses with solid, individualistic forms, traditional materials and many original features. They are enhanced by a mature green setting, several trees, some stone boundary walls, and a green roadside verge echoing the open greenness of Front Street.

Spring View



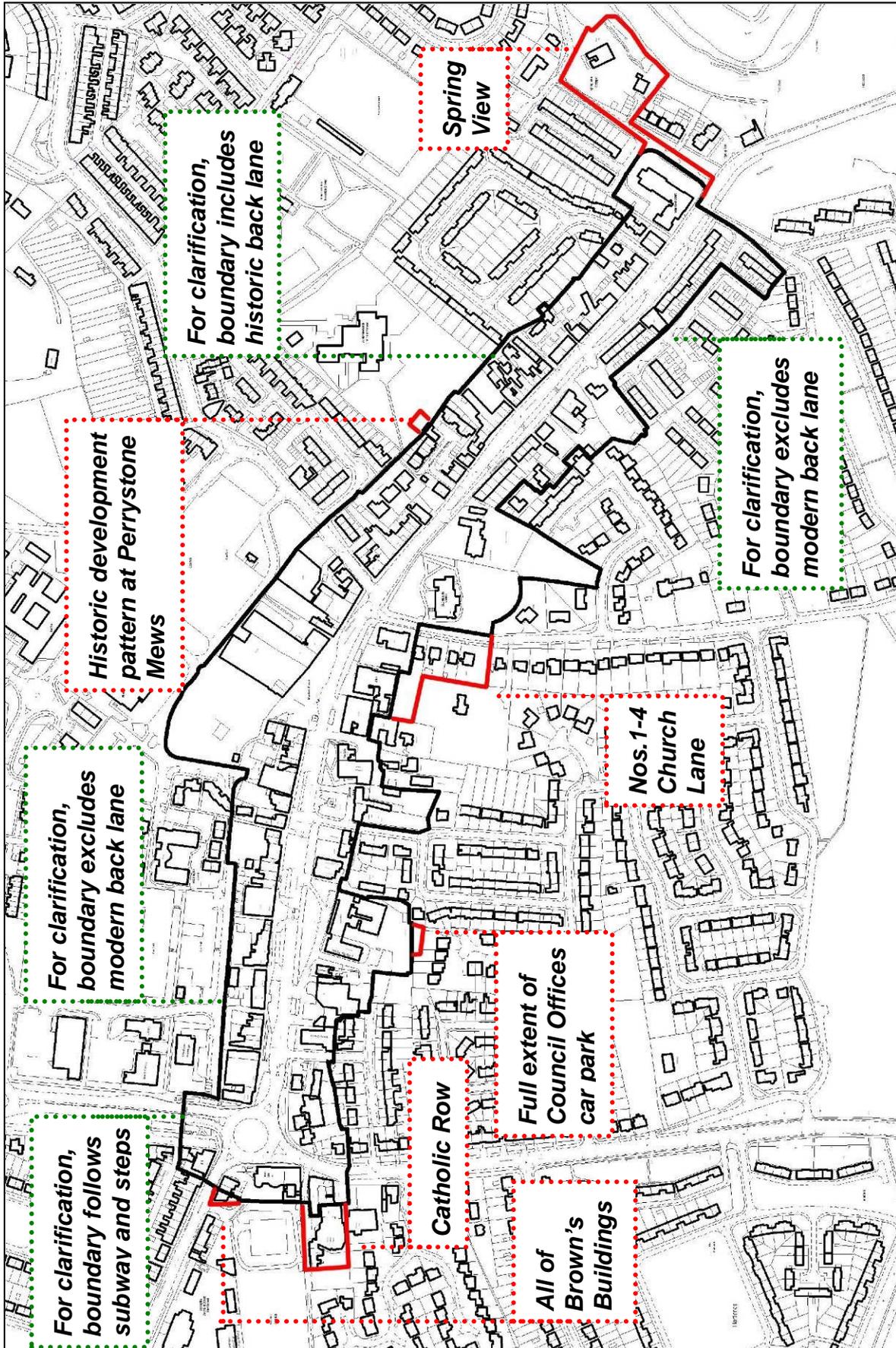
Spring View

At the east end, Spring View, a large late Georgian detached house built for the principal agent of Bedlington Iron Works, is an important reminder of the positive impact the works had on the town's nineteenth century wealth. The house and grounds, one of only a handful high quality nineteenth century villas linked to the town, are substantially intact and are listed Grade II. But they also worthy of conservation area status not least because they are now one of the few surviving historical links back to the industries that made Bedlington great. The house took a

prime site, taking advantage of views and privacy southwards over the dene. This means its rear faces the street, but the rich, mature sandstone presence of the house, walls and outbuildings, plus the copious trees, still present a characterful pocket, marking the eastern extremity of the town's nineteenth century development.



Fig 4: Proposed Boundary Modifications & Clarification of Existing Boundary (extract from CAMS)



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