



Alnwick

Conservation Area Character Appraisal



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Preface

Section 71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that 'It shall be the duty of a Local Planning Authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.' In fulfilment of this statutory obligation Alnwick District Council commissioned Robin Kent Architecture & Conservation, on 27 October 2004, to undertake conservation area character appraisals focusing on 8 of the Council's 10 conservation areas: Alnwick, Alnmouth, Eglington, Felton, Glanton, Lesbury, Newton on the Moor and Whittingham.

Conservation areas are built-up areas with special architectural or historic character, which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. When conservation areas were first introduced in 1967, designation carried no special restrictions. In 1974, the control of certain kinds of demolition and the protection of trees was introduced. In certain cases, Article 4 Directives may be made, restricting permitted development.

The main aim of conservation areas is the preservation of buildings and the spaces between them, to suggest stability and continuity in a rapidly changing world. By preserving distinctive local character, conservation areas can improve the local economy, encourage tourism, attract grants and investment, raise property values, prevent un-neighbourly alterations and encourage traditional building trades.

These character appraisals closely follow the framework set out in the Council's brief and the consultant's proposal dated September 2004, including guidance published by English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, English Historic Towns Forum and other authorities. They include information supplied by the Council, supplemented by archival research and townscape analysis; nevertheless they are necessarily 'snapshots' of each area at a particular time and exclusion of any aspects should not be taken as implying they are of no importance. The commission included reviewing the boundaries of the conservation area, outlining other issues relating to management and making recommendations for changes.

1 Introduction



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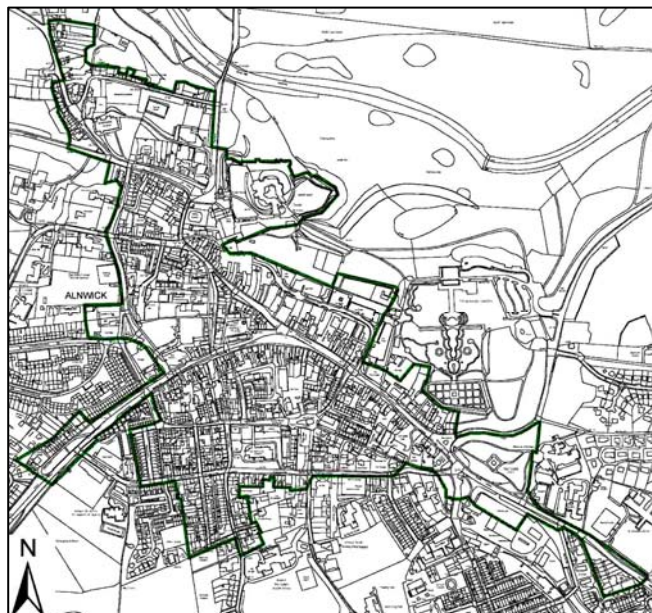
Alnwick is sited midway between Newcastle and Berwick-upon-Tweed on the original route of the A1 (now bypassed). 'Alnmouth for Alnwick' Inter-City station, on the main east coast railway line, is 6 km away.

The town is built on the gently sloping southern bank of the Aln, on gravels and sand overlying carboniferous shale and sandstone. The countryside immediately to the north is designated as an Area of High Landscape Value (RE17 T3), while the Castle grounds and Hulne Park are included in the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Good building stone has been available locally, from sandstone quarries north and south of the river at Alnwick Moor and Denwick.

The population of Alnwick is 7767 in 3467 households. The centre of the conservation area is designated as a Primary Shopping Area in the Alnwick District Wide Local Plan and a market takes place twice a week. The town contains the site of the Alnwick District Council headquarters and the area's secondary schools, but apart from this function as a local economic and administrative centre there is little industry and tourism plays a major part in the town's economy. Connected to this is the importance of Alnwick Castle and the Alnwick Garden as major tourist attractions. The Northumberland Estates is the largest landowner in the town and surrounding area.

The Conservation Area was designated in 1972. Its importance is underlined by the exceptionally large number of listed buildings within its boundaries (See Appendix 1).

Alnwick Conservation Area





C17 estate map, aligned and cropped to cover a similar area to map on previous page. Burgage plots are visible, but only frontages are shown built up. Walkergate has buildings both sides. (Norton, 1624, Baliffgate Museum)



Castle gatehouse



Bondgate Tower

2 Historical Character

Remains of Bronze Age burials have been found in the area, but no evidence of settlement until the Iron Age homesteads at Alnwick Moor Camp to the west of the town.

Alnwick may have originated as a defensible river crossing, and was probably settled in the Anglo-Saxon period, as a number of Anglian track ways appear to meet here to cross the river, the original settlement being either at the present market place or near the church.

The Castle and its surrounding land play a defining role in the town's layout, occupying the whole of its north-east quarter. Baliffgate may be on the site of the original main street leading from the castle to the church, which contains Norman foundations, and Ratten Row beyond, possibly a former parade or exercise ground.

The Norman town developed around the large triangular market place at the junction of the roads approaching the river crossing. The regular burgage plot frontages were approximately 30' wide, allowing a two-bay building to be constructed facing the street, and each plot backed on to a defensible boundary, probably a ditch and timber palisade, the course of which is still marked by the 'back road' of Hotspur Street, Green Batt, Tower Lane, Dispensary Street and Northumberland Street. The private ownership of the burgage plots meant that the original road layout of the town survives relatively unchanged, and the plot widths still play an important part in setting the scale of the streetscape, while their length prompted the development, in the 18th century, of many narrow alleys which are an important part of the town's historic character.

Defensive walls were apparently not built until 1494, and they may never have been completed; the only major remains of the fortification is Bondgate Tower. It is evident from Mayson's map that buildings were constructed outside the walls, along Bondgate Without, Clayport and Pottergate, from a fairly early date; Dovecote Lane marks the backs of the Bondgate Without development. Walkergate was built up on both sides but Canongate and Green Batt were apparently not developed until the 17th century. A few buildings survive from this period, including the ruins of St Mary's chantry house in Walkergate and the Abbey guest house in Bondgate; many more may be on mediaeval foundations.



Market Square - late C19, almost unchanged in early C21



A mayor of Canongate



Robertson Pant in Bondgate, apparently in use until fairly recently

The town's function as a market has always been an important one, with the large market place symbolically as well as physically at its centre, with temporary stalls gradually becoming replaced by permanent buildings during the 17th century. During the middle ages, the town grew in status, boosted by the patronage of both the Castle and St Mary's Abbey.

Owned by the Abbey, Canongate was the route from the Abbey to the town and Parish Church, via a ford and footbridge. Plots are shorter and the pattern of narrow lanes seen elsewhere in the town never developed here. Its separate administration persisted after the Reformation, and Canongate had its own market and 'mayor' in the early 20th century, and still maintains a recognisable individual character.

Walkergate represents a mediaeval suburb, separated from the town and castle as an important focus of medieval industries such as cloth bleaching and fulling which needed the water supply and effluent disposal provided by the river. It was originally more closely linked to the church by a path, which once joined up with Northumberland Street, closed when the churchyard was extended in the 1820's. It also has retained its historic separate character, though now much less intensively developed than in the past.

Water supply was also important to the growth of the rest of the medieval town and many roads follow the original course of streams, including Clayport, Greenwell Lane, Hotspur Street, Wagonway, Canongate and Bow Alley; the streams were not all culverted until 1827, and the parts which drew from them remain as important historic townscape features.

The 16th and 17th centuries were a period of economic decline locally. The Earls of Northumberland were no longer resident in Alnwick; the castle fell into disrepair, and little new building was carried out. Norton's 1624 survey shows only the street frontages of the burgh plots developed.

However in the mid 18th century the first Duke of Northumberland made Alnwick Castle his home, and commenced a major restoration of the Castle and parks led by Robert Adam and Capability Brown, which has been continued by subsequent dukes and their duchesses to the present day.



Mounting block, outside the Old Nags head.



St Michael's Lane - Market Street



Pottergate Tower



Mill and brewery - Dispensary Street

The rear of the Bondgate Without and Walkergate burgrave plots were purchased to form the castle's walled garden and extended its landscaped grounds, precluding the possibility of any expansion of the town to the north and east. Salvin's riding school was built over former house plots in Narrowgate, effectively extending the frontage of the Castle towards the town. Baliffgate had always been directly held by the Castle, and was traditionally the home of Estate employees; the Duchess' School building was originally a dwelling for the Duke's agent, and the house next door for his librarian. The Tenantry Column commemorating the gratitude of the Duke's tenants in 1816 greets visitors entering the town from the south, a powerful reminder of the influence of the Northumberland Estate on the town.

In the town centre the burgrave plots were progressively built up, first at the accessible ends and eventually along their length, forming the series of narrow public lanes that are so typical of the town, particularly between Green Batt and Market Street. Buildings on the street were re-fronted or entirely rebuilt. Several inns (such as the White Swan and Old Cross) survive from this period, when the town was an important staging point along the Great North Road as well as the turnpike road between Hexham and Alnmouth, improved in 1753-4, and their large scale frontages and carriage arches are important historic features.

Buildings such as the Town Hall (1731) (owned by the Freeman) and Northumberland Hall (1826) underlined the status of the town and its ducal patronage. A number of chapels, schools and other public buildings also survive from the 19th century, often in secondary uses as they became too small for the needs of the expanding town. Public buildings such as a workhouse and 'correction house' were constructed.

Road improvements included the rebuilding of Pottergate Tower further along the street in 1767, possibly using the stones of the original tower. The bridge on the Peth was washed away in 1770 and a new one constructed 30m upstream by John Adam, allowing the road to be straightened. In 1821 Canongate Bridge was also rebuilt, and the road realigned to go over the new bridge rather than the dangerous ford, in the process cutting off the site of the market cross at the bottom of the street, and destroying several burgrave plots. Clayport Tower was demolished in 1804, and throughout the 19th century there were calls to remove the last surviving medieval



'Weavers' attic' - Tobacco Heights,
Fenkle Street



Site of gasworks - Canongate



Gas bracket



Belvedere Terrace



Bondgate pre-1890: before tree-planting
and dome on corner building

gateway of Bondgate Tower to improve traffic flow until this key historic feature was protected through scheduling as an ancient monument.

A range of small industries thrived in the town, of which some built remains survive, such as the 'weavers' attics' in Bow Alley, Market Place and Fenkle Street. The remains of the town wall at Green Batt were demolished for use in road and house building, and the area used for rubbish disposal and as a cart entrance for town centre businesses. The Pinfold was moved here in 1819. Some noisy or smelly industries such as tanneries were located here, as well as in the Dispensary Street area, away from the main residential core, and the mill and brewery buildings in Dispensary Street are a reminder of this; the supermarket car park was the site of an iron foundry, with a rope walk to the north. The earliest gasworks in the town (set up to provide gas for domestic lighting) was probably sited in Green Batt, although it proved unprofitable and a public company was founded in the 1820's, with a gasworks at the corner of Canongate and Ratten Row, to provide street lighting. Early gas lamp brackets can still be seen attached to buildings in various places in the town. The gasworks was moved to a larger site on South Road in 1882.

The common land to the west, and Castle and grounds to the north and east, limited expansion of the town in these directions so development tended to take place on land to the south. Hotspur Place was laid out in the early 19th century, and building in the Howick Street area began in the 1830's, with ashlar fronts, chimneys and slate roofs being specified by the developer, and including community buildings such as the Victoria Infants School and Mechanics Institute. St Paul's Church (1846) was part of the scheme. The area expanded throughout the 19th century, and now contains a good selection of residential buildings representative of changing fashions throughout the century. Early/mid 19th century houses were built on the outskirts of the town on Clayport (Clive/Grovesnor Terrace) and South Road (Belvedere Terrace).

The coming of the main line railway in 1847 did not directly affect the town, as the Duke felt it was important to keep it well away from his estate and thus the nearest station was at Alnmouth. However a branch line was built in 1850, and construction of a further branch to Coldstream and a proposed royal visit resulted in the grand station building of 1887, made redundant in 1968



The railway station



Wagon way, setts and cobbles - Market Street

but still prominent at the edge of the conservation area, attracting visitors by its present role as a second hand book emporium. The wagon way which is a feature of Bondgate was laid to allow deliveries to the town centre from the station.

The north side of Clayport Street (where burgage plots were shorter and therefore the properties cheaper) was the centre of a cholera outbreak in 1849; the site was cleared in the 20th century to form the bus station. Other 20th century interventions include considerable redevelopment in the Howick Street area and the formation of a car-park hidden between Bondgate and the Castle grounds, obliterating the burgage plot boundaries.

The town's current status as 'England's most pleasant place to live' and one of the major tourist destinations in the north east recognises that its built heritage is generally appreciated and cared for. However, the legacy of the mediaeval burgage plot layout makes traffic flow a major problem, and the historic character, and long-term future of the conservation area may depend in part, upon how this is managed.

Summary of historical features:

- Survival of burgage plot layout, with original plot widths and wall lines, alleys and gate locations
- Separate character of Canongate and Walkergate. Road continuing to the north in Canongate, historically more buildings in Walkergate
- Planned layout of Howick Street area
- Dominance of Castle and estate lands in layout, setting and built form of town; references to Northumberland Estate in buildings and monuments
- C18 and C19 public buildings, many with Estate connections
- Evidence of former uses of buildings, eg station
- Survival of important features such as pants, lamp brackets, street surfacing, rails



Views into the conservation area

3 Architectural and Townscape Character

Setting

Set on the undulating slope of the south side of the Aln valley, the centre of Alnwick is almost invisible from the surrounding countryside. This also means that there are few distant views from the conservation area, apart from the edge of the Howick Street area to the south.

Townscape and built form

The conservation area is large, dating from several periods and with a variety of land uses, although generally visually unified by the use of the local iron-rich sandstone. It can however be divided into a number of distinct character sub-areas;

- 1 **Canongate**, including St Michael's Church and Walkergate
- 2 **Baliffgate** and the Castle
- 3 **The historic core**, mainly 18th century and 19th century redevelopment of the mediaeval town
- 4 The 19th century planned suburb of **Howick Street**, including Clive Terrace
- 5 **South Road** including Bondgate Without and the later 19th century extension of Prudhoe Street

Area 1: Canongate

Townscape

From the bridge to the north, the Wooler road enters between stone walls, curving round a field at the foot of the street to give a fine view towards the built-up area. The road winds uphill, allowing varied vistas of the buildings, the church marking the end of the street and acting as a hinge point between Canongate and the town beyond.

It has the character of an estate village, with small cottages, detached or in short terraces, stepping up the hill, set behind low walls and small front gardens, gables and dormers giving a varied and picturesque roofline.



Dormers, gables, chimneys and finials - Canongate, looking south



Houses to north, retaining wall and vegetation to south - Walkergate



Buildings continue along the road north, beyond the end of the conservation area



Church and church hall marking the upper, south, end of Canongate



Mayor's column and field railings



Open space at south end of Canongate, with Ratten Row leading off to Hulne Park



Open space at north end of Canongate- the road curving to the bridge while the original road line continues straight on to the ford site



Typical cottages

Walkergate dives down from the upper end of the street, rapidly narrowing and curving between a pair of cottages, to emerge as a long straight lane enclosed between high walls with a few houses on the north side; the walls emphasising its separation from the rest of the town and creating an air of mystery.

The original road line and buildings of Canongate continue down the hill to the north, with buildings on the east side only, past the Estate yard and kennels. Though outside the conservation area, this is an integral part of the streetscape.

Key buildings

The tower of St Michael's Church is glimpsed from the top of Canongate, but is invisible from much of the street and separated from it by its site within the higher level churchyard. The church hall, also elevated and overlooking the street, provides a reminder of the presence of the church, as well as subsidiary physical access to it.

The cottage on the corner opposite prominently marks the Walkergate junction.

Although outside the conservation area, the retaining wall to the field at the bottom of the hill contains some important reminders of Canongate's past, including a water pipe and the mayor's column at the field boundary.

The ruined Chantry house in Walkergate provides a pause, its gate offering an opportunity to see beyond the building line.

Green spaces, trees etc

The green spaces at the foot of Canongate and Ratten Row are important, underlining Canongate's separate development and identity and allowing open views over the area, towards the riverside and park.

Vegetation and mature trees in the churchyard and gardens provide links with the rural surroundings and emphasize the rural village character of the area.

Built form

Houses in Canongate are semidetached or in short terraces, simple in plan, 1 or 2 storey, with overhanging



Gabled porch

eaves, gabled wallhead dormers, bays, porches, and substantial chimneys. Windows are small, vertical format.

Walkergate has plain 2-storey cottages, with slate roofs, ridgeline chimneys, clipped eaves and no dormers, built up to the pavement.

Materials, colours

The local sandstone is used for walls and chimneys, laid as coursed random rubble. Roofs are slate or red clay plain tiles with clay ridges, windows white-painted timber sashes, some with glazing bars. Doors are white painted, boarded or panels. Other joinery, such as ornamental bargeboards or exposed eaves, is painted black.

Details

Many buildings include the Percy crescent and date of construction or commemorative inscriptions on the front elevation. Finials on dormer gables and decorative ridge tiles give lightness and fine detail to the roofline. Several houses have interesting iron railings and gates.



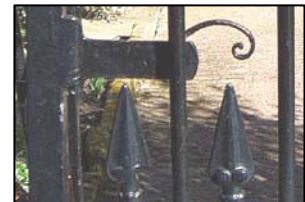
Gabled bay



Datestones



Metalwork detail



Summary of architectural/townscape character: Area 1

- Open spaces and views at entrances to area, north and south
- Canongate - detached, 1 or 2 storey buildings, with overhanging eaves, chimneys, gables, finials, wallhead dormers, porches
- Walkergate - 2 storey, built up to pavement, clipped eaves, plain roofs
- Walls local sandstone
- Roofs Welsh slate, with clay tiles in Canongate, stone chimneys, clay pots
- Windows vertical format white-painted timber sash
- Low stone boundary walls, gardens, ornamental railings
- Vegetation, trees and green spaces especially at each end of Canongate
- Datestones and Percy crescent inscriptions

Area 2: Baliffgate

Townscape



Diffuse, organic space in front of the Castle



The Castle closes the view from Baliffgate



The wide, light space in front of the Castle contrasts with the constriction and darkness of Narrowgate



Vertical emphasis, set back from the building line - Baliffgate Museum

The area is centred on the Castle, which is experienced in different ways from the various roads leading to it. From The Peth, leading in to the conservation area from the north, the Castle is viewed as a whole, the open views to the east contrasting with the walls and vegetation to the west side of the road. Baliffgate forms a processional way, focussing on the Castle gatehouse that is visible along its whole length. The tall canyon of Narrowgate forms a surprising contrast to the open space in front of the Castle, which is of similar size and proportions to the marketplace, but dominated by roads and car parking which give it a diffuse, open character.

High boundary walls are a feature of the area, where the tall facades of the Riding School and Castle Bailey contribute to a strong sense of enclosure, impinging on the streetscape of Narrowgate, Baliffgate and The Peth, and emphasising the separateness and power of the Castle.

Key buildings

Apart from the Castle, the key building in Baliffgate is the Museum, whose vertical architectural style and small front yard create an interesting interruption to the horizontal, linear nature of the remainder of the street. The Grade II* listed three-storey houses at the east end of Baliffgate emphasise the importance of the Castle.

Green spaces, trees etc

Trees line Baliffgate, showing its suburban character in contrast with the general lack of vegetation elsewhere in the town.

Built form

Buildings on Baliffgate are generally two storeys, rising to three near the Castle. They are terraced, with some houses expressed as individual units and others part of a more uniform group but with rhythm provided by chimneys. Bands and eaves lines give a horizontal emphasis. Windows are vertical format and fairly regular in size. Some doors have arched openings with fanlights, and there are several arched gateways to back yards.



Uniform terrace - Baliffgate

Materials, colours

Local buff sandstone, laid as ashlar or coursed rubble, is the main walling material. Roofs are natural slate. Windows are white-painted timber with glazing bars often 6 over 6, gutters, rainwater goods and railings are generally black. Parking areas at the edge of Baliffgate have setts, cobbles and small format stone slab paving.

Details

Some houses have steps with iron railings leading up to the front doors. Stone cornice gutters and cill courses are also a feature, with some carved stone detailing, such as door cases.



Steps and railings - Baliffgate

Summary of architectural/townscape character: Area 2

- Roads focussed on Castle
- Trees along Baliffgate
- Walls sandstone ashlar, horizontal emphasis
- Roofs natural slate, stone eaves cornice gutters, chimneys, clay pots
- Windows white-painted timber vertical 6/6 sash
- Variety of door openings, railings, stonework details
- Variety of street surfacing

Area 3: The Historic Core

Townscape



Northumberland Hall, like a liner sailing down Market Street



Narrowing road creates false perspective - Bondgate Within



Relaxed, informal lane - Paikes Street



Burgage plot boundary - Corn Exchange Lane

Much of the special character of the area stems from the form of its roads, whose unexpected triangular layout can make orientation within the town difficult and thus contribute to its interest and surprise. The slopes, undulations and curves, together with the open spaces formed at widened junctions; (such as those at Bondgate / Market Street), as well as sudden constrictions (such as in Fenkle Street), provide a changing streetscape. Historic features (such as Northumberland Hall and St Michael's Pant), which partially block the road, provide points of great interest and individuality and mean that the town is experienced as a series of discrete spaces rather than a continuum. Corners or buildings such as Bondgate Tower, Northumberland Hall, and the Council offices at the end of Fenkle Street close most views. The sudden changes of width also form false perspectives. Thus although the built form of the area is generally uniform it is experienced in varied ways, as the viewer is forced close up to buildings or able to admire them from across a wide road.

In conjunction with these generally relaxed roads and urban 'squares' are a large number of lanes or yards, their narrowness contrasting with the roads they lead off. Some are privately owned, with large wooden doors adding to the interest of the building facades or allowing glimpses of the buildings beyond, but many are publicly accessible. Their character depends to a large extent on their history. Short lanes such as Bow Alley and the entrances to the Market Square are formed from the spaces between the surrounding buildings, and are thus informal and varied in width and height. Others, such as the series between Market Street and Green Batt, represent the boundaries of burgage plots and tend to be long and slightly curved, with high walls on at least one side; many have flights of steps as they climb Clayport Bank, giving views of roofs. Together these lanes create a pedestrian network that helps to give the town an approachable and user-friendly character.

Although the town is centred on the market square, this is inward looking and hidden from view until one is very close. Its spaciousness is emphasised by the constricted openings leading into it. The variety of form and function in the surrounding buildings, combined with the lack of



Territorial Drill Hall - Fenkle Street



Open-air room - Pottergate



Typical basic buildings - Hotspur Street



Varied backland development - Bow Alley

vehicles and non-directional surfacing, gives an important informality and human scale.

Key Buildings

There are many architecturally important buildings, most of which are listed.

Tall features such as the Pottergate and Hotspur towers and the copper dome on 49-51 Bondgate Within are important urban markers, helping orientation.

Larger scale public buildings like the Northumberland Hall, give variety to the streetscape, their traditional materials and detailing maintaining links with the surrounding buildings.

Parks are important features in several public spaces, as is the market cross in the market place.

Green spaces, trees etc

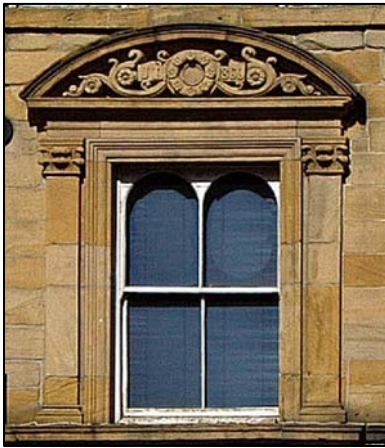
The area is predominantly urban, the largest green open space in the area being the small park in Pottergate, beside the Duke's Memorial Cottages. Away from the main thoroughfares, backed by high walls, this is a peaceful haven separated from the road by a low wall and spreading trees, giving the impression of a roof to this open-air room.

The trees and planters in Bondgate/Market Street and Baliffgate demarcate the road, making the spaces seem narrower and more human in scale; this is particularly successful in Baliffgate.

Built form

Typical buildings in the area are individual 3-5 bay units of fairly uniform width reflecting the burgage plot layout, but terraced to form a continuous street frontage.

Each unit is 2-3 storey, with many symmetrical properties with flat fronts modelled with string courses, parapets, cornices, bands, sills etc. Clipped eaves face the street and chimneys form a vital element of the roofscape. Ridge lines are uniform overall but with small variations adding interest as the buildings step up and down hill. Openings are vertical format, apart from small square second-storey windows just below the eaves in some buildings.



Carved stone - Market Street

Back land areas are more varied, and provide interesting contrasts to the more formal frontage buildings.

Materials, colours

Local buff sandstone, laid as coursed rubble or ashlar, is the main walling material, the unity of colour and scale contributing greatly to the special character of the town. Roofs are natural slate, with red clay pantiles on some older, steeper pitched roofs adding variety. Windows are white-painted timber, gutters and rainwater goods generally black.

Details

There is a rich variety of carved stone detailing throughout the area.

Decorative timber shop fronts are an important feature of the town centre, as are roof features such as domes, lanterns and gabled dormers, together with large chimney stacks. Signs and inscriptions add special historic interest.

The cobbled and setted parking areas in Bondgate, Market Street and Fenkle Street are important survivals, with their wagon tracks and horonised crossing points (ie with stones set on edge to give a non-slip surface), given added emphasis by the well-designed railed ramps. Paving has been restored elsewhere, providing texture and interest to the streets.



Shop front – Fenkle Street



Market Street

Robertsons Pant

Bondgate Within

Summary of architectural/townscape character: Area 2

- Varying widths and levels of roads and open spaces
- Series of narrow pedestrian lanes and pedestrian-only areas such as market place
- Individual, symmetrical 2-3 storey buildings, sited at pavement edge, forming a continuous street frontage
- Walls buff natural sandstone, ashlar / coursed rubble
- Roofs natural slate with clipped eaves, stone or brick chimneys, clay pots
- Windows vertical, white-painted timber sash
- Carved stone detailing
- Decorative shop-fronts
- Traditional street surfacing



Road with cobbles and shop fronts slopes across its width and dives round the corner - Fenkle Street



Straight street – continuous road frontage Lisburn Street



Grass verges and trees - Clive Terrace



Glimpse of St Paul's tower - Lisburn Street



St Paul's Church



Landmark tree - south end of Upper Howick Street

Area 3: Howick Street

Townscape

The formal, planned rectilinear grid pattern of the streets and continuous frontages contribute to the strongly enclosed, dignified urban character of the centre of this sub-area, which relaxes near the boundary with some houses being set back with small front gardens.

Some of the roads and narrow service lanes provide spectacular glimpses of the distant countryside as houses step down the hill to the north.

At the edge of the conservation area on the Rothbury road, Clive Terrace has the character of a linear village green, with grassy banks each side of the road bordered by a wall on one side and houses on the other. Its combination of spaciousness and tightly packed housing with no front gardens makes it transitional between the tightly planned town and the detached houses of the suburbs.

Key buildings

Although St Paul's church and its setting is important as a central marker in the area (see below), it is not visible from much of the area.

The entrance to the area from the west is marked by the Victoria Infants School building on Lisburn Street. Other larger-scale buildings such as the Mechanics Institute give special variety to the streets as they approach the central area of the town.

Green spaces, trees etc

With its grass and mature trees, the open space of the churchyard surrounding St Paul's is important for its contrast with the built-up nature of the Howick Street development, while being linked to it by its formal layout and surrounding walls. It also acts as a link with the less formal space of Green Batt.

Mature trees are also important at the south edge of the development, signalling the end of the conservation area and the formal road layout and providing a contrasting scale to the houses.



Three-storey buildings and architectural details add interest



Ashlar walling, sash windows with glazing bars, vehicle opening with pilasters



Corner of Green Batt & St Michael's



Detail of door case - Howick Street



Vertical emphasis and individual details to the south of the area - Percy Terrace

Built form

The basic house type in the centre of the area is continuous terraces of 2- or 3-bay houses, 2-storey, shallow pitched roofs with eaves facing the road and the front wall on or near the pavement edge. Window openings are tall and generally plain, with 6/6 timber sashes. Some doorways have arches or pilasters, and doors are panelled, with larger openings to allow vehicle access with boarded doors. Sill courses give a horizontal emphasis. In the core of the area, houses are flat-fronted, but towards the edges, terraces have bays and gables and some houses are detached and set slightly further back from the road.

Materials, colours

Walls are of warm buff sandstone, laid as squared coursed ashlar or random rubble. Roofs are natural slate, with stone cornice eaves gutters, and chimneys brick with light coloured clay pots. Windows are white-painted timber vertical sliding sash type, and doors painted dark colours.

Details

The area's character is generally restrained, but there is an interesting variety of door openings. Boot scrapers, and iron railings to front gardens are also features. There are a few character shop fronts. Towards the south of the area, houses are more individual, with a greater variety of decorative detail. Fine stone letter cutting is also a feature of the area. Some service roads retain original surfacing.



Two examples of fine letter cutting



Cart entrance and original surfacing



Framed view across town centre to north side of valley - Howick Street

Summary of architectural/townscape character: Area 3

- Formal grid of straight roads, 2-storey houses built up to pavements as symmetrical stepped terraces
- Mature trees in churchyard and to south
- Walls sandstone ashlar, horizontal emphasis
- Roofs natural slate, gabled or hipped, stone eaves cornice gutters, chimneys, clay pots
- Windows white-painted timber vertical 6/6 sash
- Variety of door openings, stonework details, lettering, railings

Area 4: South Road

Townscape

This sub-area forms the main entrance to the conservation area from the south. Although the roads tend to be straight and directional, there are many open, informal spaces where they join, particularly round the pinfold in Green Batt and near the Tenantry Column. Boundary walls are very important in delineating public and private areas.

By contrast, with the historic core, buildings are sited loosely and informally, often set back from the road behind boundary walls. However, the narrow, directional Dovecote Lane with its tightly planned terraces is a reminder of the town centre lanes.

The area is enclosed and urban towards Bondgate Tower, becoming more open towards the Tenantry Column and along Prudhoe Street.

The open space round the Pinfold is dominated by stone walls and semi-industrial buildings and the backs of houses. The curves of the Pinfold wall contrast with the angular fragmented nature of the remainder of the space.

Key Buildings

Set high above the road, the railway station is visible from much of the length of Bondgate Without, and is important in the view from the war memorial junction, its roof emphasising the directional character of the road. Its retaining walls are an important feature of Alnmouth Road.

The Tenantry Column has special importance, being elevated on a grass mound above the road junctions, surrounded by trees, and one of the few open spaces of significance to the town.

Just outside the conservation area to the south, the police station and police houses form an important enclave at the crossroads of Prudhoe Street and The Avenue.

The east end of Green Batt includes some early industrial/public buildings such as the Old Tannery in Hotspur Street and the old Poorhouse (now an industrial building), whose scale adds to the variety and informality of the surrounding area.



Open space and retaining walls - Alnmouth Road



Road becomes built up, buildings with vertical emphasis - Bondgate Without



Informal planning of space and layout of buildings - Prudhoe Street



Tenantry Column dominates road junction



Curves of Pinfold contrast with angles of buildings



Police station, police houses behind



Walls, gables, half-timbering - Prudhoe Street



Cast and wrought ironwork - Tenantry Column, Bondgate Without, Station

Green spaces, trees etc,

The small raised park surrounding the Tenantry Column, together with the high ground with grass and trees beside the Railway Station, channel the road as it curves into the town from the south and mark the transition between the town centre and suburbs.

From the Denwick road the snaking walls and woodland at the back of the Alnwick Garden signal the approach of the town, and bring the countryside into the centre of the area, where it links with the Tenantry Column park.

Built form

This is a mixed use area, with detached and terraced 2-storey houses set in gardens behind stone walls. Plan forms are slightly more varied than elsewhere in the town, with some details such as dormers and bays. Chimneys are important to the rooflines.

On Bondgate Without, some buildings are 3- or 4-storey, with a vertical emphasis and significant massing e.g. the former Hardy Factory and Playhouse.

Materials, colours

As elsewhere, buildings are mainly of local sandstone with natural slate roofs. Windows are white painted timber, vertical sliding sash.

Details

The pedestrian entrance to the railway station is celebrated by a walled, tree-lined path with the remains of two ornamental lights, giving a taste of the high Victorian station beyond. Decorative ironwork is a feature of the area generally.

There is some imaginative street surfacing, particularly at the restored cottages in Dovecot Lane. Details such as half-timbering and arched window-heads emphasise the contrast between houses in this sub-area and the town centre.

Summary of architectural/townscape character: Area 4

- Detached or terraced 2-storey buildings set back slightly from road
- Green open spaces at road junctions and edge of built-up area
- Walls buff sandstone
- Roofs gabled or hipped, natural slate or red clay tiles, stone or brick chimneys, clay pots
- Windows white-painted timber sash
- Stone boundary and retaining walls, decorative ironwork



Unstructured, open area behind Bondgate



Bus station and car park, Pottergate
Tower in the distance - Lagny Street



Brick Houses on Prudhoe Street



Television aerials on street frontage

4 Management Recommendations

In general, the Conservation Area retains much of the character and interest for which it was originally designated. However, some neutral and negative factors can be distinguished.

Neutral areas

The car park between Bondgate and the Castle wall does not share the quality of the conservation area. The backs of the burgage plots have been obliterated by the road and car park layout, and the backs of the Bondgate buildings are unattractive. It includes part of the Duchesses private garden, hidden behind the estate wall. As it is not visible from the rest of the conservation area, it can be regarded as neutral. Similarly, the large block of brick-built flats opposite the Duke's memorial Cottages is out of character, but hidden away off Pottergate.

Negative factors

The bus station together with the supermarket car park on Lagny Street have a much greater effect on the conservation area, being very large and open to the surrounding roads. They are on the site of the Clayport Street burgage plots, but the only remnants of these are a few buildings at the far east end. Building in keeping with the street could be encouraged round the edges of the area, to restore the street line and screen the car park.

Some housing schemes, such as the 1963 houses on the field in Canongate, St Paul's Garth and the development at the west end of Green Batt, are out of character with the surrounding buildings due to their materials and form - they are built of brick, some are staggered in plan, and many lack chimneys. The scale and detailing of the Iceland shop in Bondgate and Green Batt Stores are also examples of poor infill. Redevelopment in a suitable style should be encouraged.

Smaller alterations and incremental changes to existing buildings have also contributed to some erosion of the character of the conservation area. This is particularly noticeable in the Howick Street area, with its otherwise uniform character. Unsuitable replacement windows have appeared in a large number of locations on unlisted properties of historic interest, which do not relate to the original style of the property. The addition of satellite dishes and aerials to important frontages is also an issue.



Glebelands Lodge

Modern street furniture and surface treatments are unsympathetic in places.

Listed Buildings, Buildings at Risk

Many buildings in Alnwick are listed. The police station and associated housing is not listed but could be considered, as it is a complex of strong character on an important site in the conservation area.



Derelict flats and exchange

A few derelict buildings, such as Glebelands Lodge in Green Batt and no 3 Walkergate adversely affect the character of the conservation area.

The flats and Corn Exchange in Corn Exchange Lane also form an unsightly and neglected area.

Management

Street lighting could be improved in some parts of the conservation area, for example by replacing modern lamp standards with suitable fittings attached to the buildings, or more imaginative fittings in keeping with the historic character of the conservation area.



Iceland shop does not respect the scale or character of the street - Bondgate Within

With a few notable exceptions, shop fronts are generally well designed, and the Council's 'Design Guide for Shop Fronts' appears to be a useful working document.

The Council commissioned a study in 1997, to assess the introduction of Article 4 & 7 Directions in the conservation area, to prevent the erosion of the area's character by the accumulation of small alterations. This has not been studied in detail, but it is agreed that Article 4 directions would be beneficial. A photographic survey of all building frontages in the conservation area is suggested, to act as a baseline for future management. In the Howick Street area, consideration could be given to grant aiding or otherwise positively encouraging window and door replacements that closely match the originals.



Unsuitable replacement window and door, blocked door

An audit of public realm work should be carried out to provide a baseline for future improvements. This may require an audit of ownership of back alleys and possible incentives to encourage them to be kept open to the public, where possible.



Roadside walls indicate the entrance to the conservation area - Denwick Road

Street surfacing and railings have been very successfully restored in places, and this could be extended, for example to the wall of the Tenantry Column Park.

The gable at the west end of Fenkle Street is not of high quality, although in an important position between Fenkle Street and the Marketplace. Imaginative architectural treatment could be appropriate here, for example the introduction of modelling to the façade.

Summary of management recommendations:

- Possible improvements to supermarket / bus station site. A Design Concept Statement has been prepared for this site.
- Unsuitable developments to be replaced with sympathetically designed buildings when opportunity arises
- Consider townscape grant scheme for Howick Street area to encourage restoration of windows and doors that have been inappropriately replaced
- Public realm audit, improvement to street lighting, railings, further improvement of surfaces
- Article 4 directions to protect important details and finishes, particularly windows and doors, and prevent further erosion of character
- Consider buildings for listing, including the Police Station
- Photographic survey of all building frontages
- Boundary changes - exclude areas A- King Street & B- Greenwell Lane Car Park, include C- Police Station, D- Yard and Kennels, E- Walkergate & F- Walls to Denwick Lane

Boundary Changes 2006

The rationale behind the original boundaries of the conservation area has apparently not been recorded, but a few amendments were recommended when the conservation area was reassessed.

As described above (see neutral areas) the area comprising the Greenwell Road car park and part of the Castle grounds makes no positive contribution to the conservation area, and any remaining evidence of the burgage plot layout has been destroyed by the car park. The area has no architectural interest and little historical context related to the rest of the conservation area, and has therefore been removed from the conservation area.

The inclusion of the south side of Prudhoe Street acknowledges the architectural importance of the Police Station and safeguards the east end of Prudhoe Street by helping to ensure the quality of any development on gap sites in the future, as well as recognising the visual contribution of the Police station on the southern edge of the conservation area.

To the north of Canongate, the yards and kennels are a historic continuation of the road, and functionally linked to the conservation area and are therefore now included in the conservation area.

The area of Walkergate around the Chantry site is historically important and is now included to complete the north side of Walkergate.

The north side of Denwick has been added, as the stone retaining wall and planting on the bank to the south of the Alnwick Garden is important in marking the entrance to the conservation area and establishing a soft green entrance to the harder urban character of the main part of the conservation area.

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Glossary

Public Realm Audit Streetscape Surveys

A focal point of conservation area designation is the careful maintenance and use of public space. This incorporates assessment of signage use, surface materials, street furniture, parking and traffic management issues. A public realm audit/streetscape survey considers the suitability of these elements against the character of the area and the practicality of their position and location and provides an opportunity to define and enhance the conservation area environment.

Article 4 Directions

The aim of an Article 4(2) Direction is to encourage the retention of high quality architectural features on buildings and to preserve and enhance the conservation area of which they are part. 'Like for like' repairs and reinstatement of architectural features will be encouraged, along with the removal of previously unsympathetic changes to buildings.

In order to keep control over development in Conservation Areas and very occasionally outside Conservation Areas, the Council is able to make an 'Article 4 Direction', the effect of which is to take away 'permitted development' rights, meaning that Planning Permission will be required.

Where there is not a Direction, owners of houses within a conservation area have rights to undertake considerable alterations to their property without the need for planning permission (Permitted Development Rights). Where these rights are unchecked they can undermine and erode the 'special interest' of a conservation area, allowing changes to the windows and doors, additions such as porches and general lack of attention to detail.

Design Information and Guidelines

Alnwick District Council has undertaken a study of the district to identify the principal characteristics of the built environment. This has provided the basis of three documents that aim to provide recommendations for new development and design guidelines for alterations to existing buildings.

The following publications are available from the Alnwick District Council -

- **Guide to historic windows**
- **Colour Schemes**
- **Conversion of Rural Buildings**

A.O.N.B – Design Guide

Northumberland County Council together with Alnwick and Berwick District Council's, have a responsibility to protect and enhance the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To achieve this aim, a series of 'Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guides' have been produced. These guides focus not only on the character of traditional local buildings and their repair and maintenance but incorporate a strategy for quality housing design that benefits both the rural community and environment.

Alnwick District Council - Historic Buildings Grant scheme.

The main purpose of Historic Buildings Grants scheme is to ensure the continued survival of important historic fabric, and to enhance and preserve the appearance of listed buildings or buildings of architectural importance.