Tynedale
COUNCIL

GREAT WHITTINGTON
Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Adopted February 2009

CONTENTS

Town Farm, Great Whittington

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Great Whittington Conservation Area

Great Whittington is located on the fell uplands between the River Tyne and Errington Burn. It is positioned on the C341 some six kilometres due north of Corbridge and 2.5 kilometres to the east of Matfen (Map 1). The nearby Hadrian's Wall and Dere Street provide historic context. The village is located within Whittington Parish and Chollerton and Whittington Ward. Its centre is at National Grid reference NZ 005709.

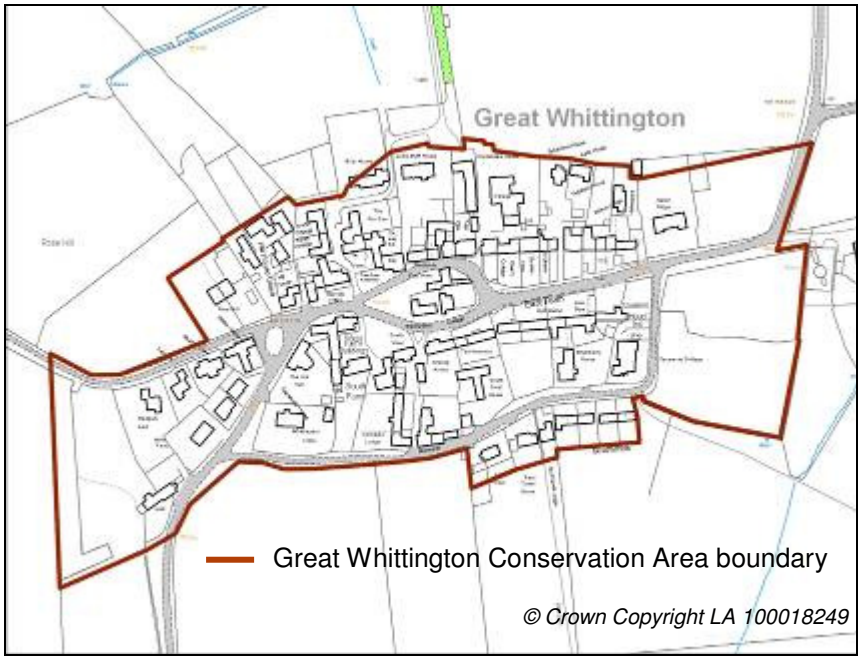
Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.[1] They are designated by the local planning authority using local criteria.

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 and street furniture. Character can also draw on more abstract notions such as sounds, local environmental conditions and historical changes. These things combine to create a distinctive sense of place worthy of protection.

Map 1: Location of Great Whittington

Great Whittington Conservation Area was designated in October 1992 in response to the clear historic and architectural significance of the village with buildings that can be traced back to at least the seventeenth century with lost, earlier, medieval roots (Map 2).

[1] Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s69



Map 2: Great Whittington Conservation Area

The nearby Roman Wall and Dere Street add depth to the settlement's historic envelope and, in the past, provided a ready source of building material in past times. The collection of eight listed buildings (all grade II) in the conservation area is testimony to its heritage importance (Appendix 2).

1.2 Planning Context

Conservation area designation remains the principal means by which local authorities can apply conservation policies to a particular area. The Council has a duty when exercising its planning powers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. This includes when determining planning applications. It also has a duty, from time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for its preservation and enhancement, and consult local people on them.

The protection and preservation of historic environments are now extensively recognised for the contribution that they make to the country's cultural and historic heritage, its economic well-being and quality of life. Public support for conservation – both in the built and natural environments – is also well established. National and regional government guidance reflects this. It is not the purpose of conservation areas to prevent change but to manage change in such a way as to maintain and, if possible, strengthen the area's special qualities. Current legislation is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This places a duty on the Council to declare as conservation areas those parts of their area that they consider to be of special architectural or historic

interest. It also imposes on the Council a duty to review past designations from time to time. Conservation area status also means that there are stricter controls on changes that can be made to buildings and land, including the need to secure consent to demolish most buildings, strengthening controls over some minor forms of development and the automatic protection of all trees in conservation areas. Government guidance is set out in PPG 15.[2]

Tynedale Council has adopted a number of policies that are directed towards preserving and enhancing the character of the conservation area. Detailed in Appendix 1, they cover new development, alterations, demolition and protecting the setting of the conservation area. The extreme west end of the conservation area is located within the landscape setting of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

Following the introduction of 'Best Value Performance Indicator (BV219: Preserving the special character of conservation areas, ODPM, 28th February 2005)', the duty to regularly reappraise conservation areas – and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these – has become more urgent.

1.3 Great Whittington Conservation Area Character Appraisal

This appraisal is the first step in a dynamic process, the aim of which is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The document defines and records the factors that make the conservation area special, thereby providing a baseline for decisions about the area's future. It also identifies features and problems that the detract from the special quality and suggests, by means of outline management and enhancement proposals, the ways in which this special interest can be safeguarded and improved. The appraisal also provides the opportunity to review the boundaries of the conservation area and, where appropriate, propose amendments.

The survey and appraisal were carried out during May 2008 following the methodology suggested by English Heritage. To ensure that a complete picture is built up about the value and character of the area, the Council will consult with people who live, work and visit the area to secure their views, including what they like or dislike about the area, and their ideas about how the area could be preserved or enhanced.

[2] Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

The next stage in the process will be to prepare a detailed Management Plan for the conservation area. This will be undertaken once the appraisal has been through the consultation exercise and approved by the Council.

This document is not exhaustive. Omissions should not necessarily be regarded as having no interest or making no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The appraisal will be updated about every five years in order that it can take account of changes in the area.

Further information

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This document can be downloaded from:

http://www.tynedale.gov.uk/residents/docushow.asp?serviceid=73

2 STATEMENT OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Great Whittington Conservation Area embraces the entire historic village. Its origins are at least medieval, with documents dating from the late thirteenth century recording its size and alluding to its agricultural significance. The name of the village has Danish roots, probably Hwitaington or Hwitantone, pushing its history back to pre-Conquest England. Although the surviving buildings almost entirely date from the pacification of the borders and the agricultural revolution, there are intriguing lines, bumps and hollows in the fields at the eastern end of the conservation area that could mark part of the site of a lost village. The early layout of the village, with houses and farms ringing the rectangular green, can still be seen in spite of changes to this traditional pattern, principally through the colonisation of the central open area in the nineteenth century.

The settlement climbs up from the east over rolling undulations, creating jagged silhouettes and strong but indented building lines, reflecting the incremental development of the village and the gradual expansion of farmsteads. There is an interesting and attractive mix of building types creating a highly distinctive character. The substantial eighteenth and early nineteenth century farm ranges provide visual anchor points and proclaim the agricultural origins of the settlement. Nineteenth century period houses introduce grace and style and Victorian terraced housing, with long gardens, adds an almost urban feel to the village. Buildings such as the quaint former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and the old school add variety of form and appearance that adds to the vitality of the conservation area. Local sandstone and slate roofs predominate, with chimney stacks and pots creating traditional skylines.

Twentieth century development includes both farm conversions and new build. These are generally found in locations that do not adversely affect the significance of the historic core of the settlement.

The topography of the village, together with the extensive presence of green space, trees and shrubs, makes a critical contribution to its character. Views are contained and channelled through gaps formed by buildings, mounds, twisted roads and blocks of planting in a way that makes it impossible to see all of the village from any one viewpoint. This creates a matrix of spaces displaying a variety of shape and form that have their own character, but which interlock to form the unique development pattern of Great Whittington. Verges, hedges, gardens, unmade tracks and glimpses through

narrow gaps of farm buildings and countryside add to the rural ambience and charm of the village.

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Prehistory and Roman occupation

The fells to the north of the Tyne valley would have been inhabited in prehistory. They would have provided rich hunting ground, agricultural fertility, defensive topography and a supply of fresh water, all of which would have attracted nomads and settlers. There is evidence of prehistoric settlement in and around Great Whittington through the presence of the Iron Age camp on nearby Grindstone Law, and the Bronze Age burial tumulus that sits to the south side of the enclosure. Both sites are scheduled ancient monuments. There have been a few random and scattered prehistoric finds in the area, such as worked flints and pottery, with the ornamental axe head found on Whittington Fell being the most substantial relic. It is possible that the Cobb's, or the Devil's, Causeway, a Roman road that ran from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Dere Street (the A68), to the north of Great Whittington was superimposed over an ancient British track.

Hadrian's Wall was built between 120AD and 130AD to defend the northern frontier of the Roman Empire. Halton Chesters Roman fort (Onnun) attached to the wall located two kilometres to the south of the village, is the nearest Roman settlement. The fort survives as a turf platform, defended by a massive ditch. Aerial photographs show, in cropmarks, a number of buildings and roads as well as parts of the fort's walls. Interestingly, Iron Age cord rig, a series of narrow ridges less than a metre apart and formed as the result of cultivation, was discovered beneath the Roman features, illustrating prehistoric activity. It is thought that the fort and its settlement was abandoned in the fifth century, following the re-ordering of the Empire and the retreat from Britain. There is no evidence for the re-occupation of the fort during the subsequent pre-Conquest period, although it is probable that the decaying structures were used as a ready source of worked material for new buildings. There are no significant remains from this time elsewhere in the area. The most significant reference to this period is through accounts of the mid-sixth century Battle of Heavenfield that took place some seven kilometres to the west of Great Whittington, where Oswald defeated the Welsh armies of Cadwallon. Following the battle, Bede claimed that Christianity was restored to Northumbria.

3.2 Medieval Period to the mid-nineteenth century

It is probable that Great Whittington emerged as a recognisable settlement during the immediate post-Conquest period. The arable land, spring water and good communications provided a range of attractive advantages that would have encouraged cultivation and settlement. A number of villages were developed in the vicinity of Great Whittington during this period. The early Saxon era was dominated by the presence of farms that, in later centuries, after the 'Middle Saxon Shuffle', loosely grouped together to enable peasants to combine forces to perform some tasks through common effort. Most were replaced after the Conquest by more organised settlements, partly as a consequence of the Norman Harrying of the North, where widespread massacre and destruction led to extensive village reconstruction. Many of these new villages were themselves abandoned or substantially redeveloped as a consequence of changing economic circumstances, particularly the conversion of labour intensive ploughed land to sheep pasture, and depopulation through the ravages of plagues. Little Whittington, Clarewood and East Matfen completely disappeared. Great Whittington survived, with records showing that, in 1287, the village comprised 180 acres of arable demesne, that is, land in private ownership, 4 acres of meadow demesne, 5 bondage holdings and 3 cottages.[3] A survey in 1299 included a brewhouse and two watermills.[4] It is uncertain whether this early medieval village was comprehensively replaced by a later medieval settlement. Earthworks at the eastern end of Great Whittington suggest that some form of extensive rebuild is a possibility. An inspection of the fields surrounding the village reveals evidence of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing, the clearest example being the area of grassland immediately to the north of Aspen Ridge and Holmecroft, enriching evidence of the early history of the settlement.

Possible outlines of lost medieval buildings east of Southlands

Ridge and furrow plough marks north of Aspen Ridge

[3] History of Northumberland : Northumberland County History Committee 1914

[4] ibid

The village has obviously changed since the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries but it has retained sufficient remnants of its medieval layout to give some continuity over the last eight centuries. This is evident through an examination of the development pattern that Great Whittington echoes the common approach taken to village planning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the main street containing a rectangular green overlooked by ribbon style tofts, building and garden plots, with lanes running along the back of the landholdings. The main street, the green (without the nineteenth century 'island' development) and the lane running along the southern edge of the settlement provide a planned layout that resonates with this period. Although buildings do not survive from this time, it is possible that some extant properties are either rebuilds of earlier structures which are now hidden from view beneath later masonry, or incorporate historic fabric from lost buildings.

The border wars and reiving raids that only ceased following the union of the crowns in 1603 would have caused periodic mayhem, and the probable destruction of buildings. The cessation of violence coincided with the Agricultural Revolution, which intensified during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, driven by the need to provide food for the nation's rapidly increasing population. The Revolution introduction new farming techniques such as crop rotation, the clearance of woodland to create new farmland, and the cultivation of fodder crops to release pasture to grow food. New ways of improving soil quality were discovered, such as adding lime to fields. This, in turn, gave rise to the construction of lime kilns, such as the Grade II listed early nineteenth century corbelled structure to the west of Shellbraes Farm. New machines, including seed drills and threshing machines, were invented to speed up work and increase efficiency. This meant that many farmers became wealthy, enabling them to build new houses, barns and byres. East Farm, Town Farm and South Farm/West Farm incorporate typical mixed and specialised buildings dating from the Agricultural Revolution. The presence of the nearby eighteenth century watermill on the River Pont and eighteenth century windmill illustrates the importance of cereal farming in the area.

By the mid to late eighteenth century, the core layout of Great Whittington had become established, with Greenwood's map of 1828 (Map 3) confirming the survival of the late medieval layout, ie the main street overlooking the green, and a lane running behind and linking the tofts.

Map 3: Greenwood's Map 1828

Little is known of the social and economic life of the village during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries other than the presence of mills and farms. It is known that the geology of the surrounding area yielded income and created employment, as demonstrated through the close proximity of a number of stone quarries and Clarewood Colliery. Interestingly, feudal trappings continued to have a presence in the village into the nineteenth century, with McKenzie commenting that 'a remarkable custom derived from the feudal system is still observed at this place. The freeholders are obliged to find seven mowers and fourteen reapers to Halton Castle for one day in every year when called upon. It is called bond darge. The labourers secure no wages but are plentifully supplied with victuals and drink'.[5]

3.3 Mid-nineteenth century onwards

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic change to the shape of and appearance of the village, with the development of the built island in the Green. The 1863 Ordnance Survey (Map 4) shows this reconfiguration. The blacksmiths was the first to appear, followed by the construction of a number of buildings including the Bay Horse Inn, which was redeveloped as the Temperance Hotel in the second half of the nineteenth century. East View, a house, was built beside the Hotel in the 1880s. The village school was established in the early/mid nineteenth century to the north of the village and thrived (Map 5) until its closure in the 1960s, when it became the village hall.

Other changes during the second half of the nineteenth century include the expansion of the farms, with the addition of byres, sheds and cottages and the gradual enclosure of parts of the green to form gardens (Maps 4 and 5).

[5] History of Northumberland : McKenzie 1825

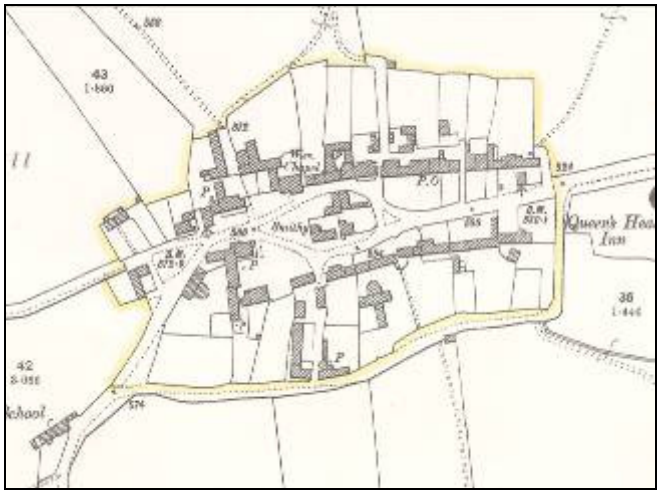
The early decades of the twentieth century proved to be a period of stability with only minor alterations taking place. They were substantially restricted to the periphery of the village, thereby having little impact on its layout and appearance.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen an intensification of development in Great Whittington, with the construction of houses along the northern, southern and western edges of the village, stretching the extent of the built envelope. The new developments have added an additional layer to the settlement in a way that substantially retains the integrity of the historic core, its layout and the sense of physical cohesiveness that defines, in part, the character of the village.

Other changes have included the expansion of Scott Brothers works, with the construction of a garage/workshop and the conversion of farm buildings, including byres and gingans, to dwellings.

The new housing and farm conversions have changed Great Whittington from being an agricultural settlement to a commuter village. This has been driven, in part, by the undoubted aesthetic quality of the built environment and its attractive rural setting.

Map 5: First Edition Ordnance Survey 1863



Map 6: Second Edition Ordnance Survey 1896

4 CONTEXT

4.1 *Geology and building materials*

4.1.1 Geology

Great Whittington is situated over Carboniferous Limestone that is penetrated by thin coal seams. The Carboniferous Limestone is overlain by the Millstone Grit Series which consists of a sequence of limestones, shales and sandstones and the 'Millstone Grit' itself, the source of the name of the nearby Grindstone Law, thick coarse-grained sandstones, siltstones and mudstones. These rocks were deposited in the late Carboniferous (approximately 300 million years ago) in a coastal environment where large river deltas were building out into the shallow marine waters. The rock is covered by a mantle of boulder clay deposited during the last Ice Age, giving rise to heavily textured clay soils with traces of the lightly textured alluvial soils that are associated with sand and gravel deposits.

4.1.2 Building Materials

Clay

Brick is the most common material using clay. Bricks are largely restricted the construction of the pair of semi-detached houses at the east end of Southlands where cream bricks are used, the mid-nineteenth century redbrick Holmcroft, and in the construction of chimney stacks and manufacture of chimney pots and ridge tiles.

Stone

Local pale yellow and buff carboniferous sandstone, occasionally tinted grey with age, is the predominant building material used in the conservation area. Welsh slate is almost universally used on roofs. Some of the more recent buildings gleam with newly cut yellow and buff facing stone. Rough, rock finished, squared, rubble and tooled stone are used throughout the village, with carved masonry employed sparingly to provide decorative features, and ashlar used to provide window/door surrounds and quoins. Stone is laid in a variety of ways, including square coursed, rubble coursed or as random rubble. This reflects the style, function and age of buildings. There is little direct evidence of re-used Roman stone other than in the construction of the two workers cottages for East Farm and the farmhouse, which were built in the seventeenth/eighteenth centuries. Stone is used in the construction of boundary walls and gateposts.

Paths, drives and lanes are commonly surfaced in crushed stone to give a pleasantly textured and light appearance, probably reflecting the look of the earliest metalled surfaces in the village.

Timber

Timber is used in the manufacture of window frames, doors, gates and barging. It is invariably painted. Generally, the original joinery that survives appears to be well maintained. However, there are now many replacements in uPVC, a material that diminishes the historic character of the village. Some timber fascias supporting rainwater goods have been added to historic buildings, detracting from their appearance. Although common features on modern buildings, they introduce a detail that is alien to the conservation area and should be avoided. The survival of historic timberwork is vital for the heritage wellbeing of the conservation area.

Metal

The most common use of metal is through the fabrication of rainwater goods. They are invariably cast iron, and tend to be plain and utilitarian, and spiked onto walls. Metal is used for other functional purposes, such as the historic pumps on the Green. Good examples of period metal railings can be seen outside Tynedale Lodge and East View. The modern use of metal includes garage doors and profiled roofs. Metal sheds have been erected behind Scott Brothers as part of the expanded industrial complex. They are tucked away from public view. Some farm outbuildings also have metal roofs.

Paint and render

Virtually all timber and metalwork is painted. Paint protects and decorates. Although metalwork was painted a variety of colours, including green, dark blue, red and chocolate brown during the nineteenth century, black is now regarded as the appropriate colour for historic cast and wrought iron. This approach applies throughout Great Wittington. In the nineteenth century, external woodwork was painted a variety of colours ranging from purple brown to off-white. Brilliant white, the most common colour in the village, is a post WWII invention. Creams and off-white would be more appropriate.

Cement renders are applied sparingly and, although they affect the appearance of individual buildings, do not impact upon the general character of the area.

Other materials

Modern materials are used sparingly. However, their use can be visually jarring, detracting from the appearance of the area in general. Plastic is used to replace rainwater goods. uPVC windows

have been extensively introduced throughout the area. These often have clumsy, chunky proportions and are usually 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. Roads are generally surfaced in asphalt, although lanes and drives are often surfaced in rolled or pounded rock or gravel.

4.2 Topography and Setting

The village lies on the southern flank of the large knoll of Grindstone Law, which sits between Errington Burn and the Tyne valley. The settlement sits on the gently rising slopes that skirt the knoll in a slight depression formed by the emerging valley at the headwater of the River Pont and its fan of feeder streams. The highest point of the conservation area is approximately 177 metres (west end) and the lowest approximately 158 metres (east end) above sea level.

The wider setting of the conservation area is largely determined by topography and dominated by rural landscapes. Todridge Fell and Grindstone Law rise over the northern horizon, the long southern horizon being formed by the rippling upper edge of the Tyne valley that marks the line of the Roman Wall. Other neighbouring historic villages and hamlets are scattered over the fell side. Some, such as Little Whittington, Clarewood and Little Grottington, have disappeared, whereas others, most notably Matfen, continue to thrive.

The extremely attractive landscape setting to the village is an essential part of its character in terms of both historic field patterns and aesthetics.

4.3 Views out of the Area

Views to the north and south are expansive and patterned by fields, boundary walls, hedges and clumps of trees. This type of landscape sweeps around all sides of the village. To the north, they are contained by the rising ground of Todridge Fell and Grindstone Law, whereas to the south and south west, attractive views sweep across the dished hollow formed by the River Pont, decorated by the surviving tower of the eighteenth century Whittington windmill.

Views to the east and west twist out of the village as the road bends towards Matfen and Rose Bower/Beukley respectively. They are contained and truncated by high hedges and boundary walls, distinctive features that bind the village into its rural hinterland.

View to the north towards Grindstone Law

View to the east towards Matfen

Views to the south and the rim of the Tyne valley

Views to the west towards Rose Bower

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Development pattern and layout

Medieval development pattern

Little is known about the shape of Great Whittington in the Middle Ages. However, a hint of its composition in the thirteenth century is referred to in early surveys (section 3.2 above) with cottages, mills and a brewhouse being present. Armstrong's map of 1769 only shows four blocks of properties astride the road and is of little use in understanding development history. However, Greenwood's map of 1828 adds clarity through the illustration of a layout that reflects a typical mid/late medieval village pattern (Map 3). This comprises properties fronting the main street overlooking a linear green with a lane running along the back of gardens or tofts. This arrangement can still be seen today, albeit with some variations that complicate the simpler, original, pattern.

Post Medieval development pattern

The village evolved through the gradual replacement of earlier buildings by larger and probably more substantial properties. The seventeenth/eighteenth century Agricultural Revolution saw a change to the appearance of Great Whittington with the construction of large farm complexes that reflected the rising wealth of farmers and changes in technology that demanded different types of buildings. Town Farm, South Farm/West Farm and East Farm originate from this period but almost certainly in locations that conform to the general shape of the medieval village, albeit stretching the limits of the built envelope with the construction of larger and more complex groups of buildings.

The 1863 Ordnance Survey (Map 4) shows that the late medieval layout pattern had largely survived into the nineteenth century, when a major change took place with the colonisation of the centre of the green by the blacksmiths and later buildings. This fragmented the green and created a series of smaller spaces, and deflected and foreshortened views. Other changes were modest in comparison and less obvious, including the extension of buildings and the incremental replacement of houses with new dwellings. This created a village dominated by eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings and styles overlaying the earlier settlement pattern.

Other buildings added in the mid-nineteenth century included the Temperance Hotel, in the centre of the green beside the blacksmiths, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Both have been converted to houses, but retain their essential architectural

character, adding variety and some elegance to the streetscene. The 1898 Ordnance Survey (Map 5) shows some more minor changes, including built development that links the Queen's Head with East Farm to create a virtually unbroken building line from the east end of the village as far as Kirsopp House and the construction of Hill House on the northern side to extend the village towards the mid-nineteenth century cottages, Rose Cottage and Rose Hill, on the western edge of the built envelope. Built in 1851, this pair of dwellings was originally a single residence.

The former Temperance Hotel

The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

East Farm joins the Queen's Head

Hill House

The twentieth century has seen striking alterations to the shape of the village, including: the expansion of Scott Brothers engineering works with new fabrication/storage areas behind Woodbine House; the conversion of farm buildings into dwellings, and; new housing development. The new housing includes: the semi detached and detached properties ranged along the southern edge of Southlands Lane; the group of houses between stable house and the former school (which was originally detached from the village envelope), and; the large detached houses that have been built along the northern edge of the village in the gardens and yards of earlier buildings. Fortunately, the latter are substantially screened from public view.

Conversion of farm buildings

New housing at the west end of the village

5.2 Layout, grain and density

The layout of the historic core of the conservation area is characterised by terraces of properties of varying length and mass dating from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century almost certainly spread over the sites of older buildings. The terraces are now made-up of houses and former farms, the only exceptions being the Queen's Head public house and Scott Brothers' workshops and offices. Gaps lead to former farmyards and both old and new buildings and occasionally offer glimpses of the rural hinterland from the main street. These backland spaces vary in size and shape with some being long and thin following lanes and tracks and others more regularly formed. Some of the properties facing the main street have front gardens contained by a combination of boundary walls and hedges, probably once part of the village green in earlier centuries. The development of former back gardens and fold yards as infill sites has increased density.

Most twentieth century housing tends to be detached and consequently differs from the predominant historic house type and layout arrangement.

5.3 Land use

Great Wittington is predominantly residential (Use Classification C3). There are no shops and one public house/hotel (Use Classification A4). Business is limited to Scott Brothers steel fabricators and motor engineers (sui generis) and farming. Tynedale District Local Plan has not allocated sites for economic development in Great Whittington, recognising that the village is well placed to benefit from employment opportunities provided in Hexham. The Village Hall located in the former school provides community focus.

5.4 Views within the area

The main views within the village are channelled along the main street as it rises up the slope to be terminated by South Farm/West

Farm Buildings straddling the western end of the Green. The reverse view flows down the hill where it opens out across the front gardens of the houses opposite East Farm and the Queen's Head. The rise and fall of roofs, variety of building scale and design together with pockets of mature landscaping on the green and in gardens creates visual interest and reveals an incremental development process. This historic view has changed with the insertion of the island of buildings on the Green that narrows the width of the open space and fashions a series of compressed and more intimate views along the northern side. Views along lanes and tracks that lead off the main street tend to be truncated by twists and turns and the insertion of buildings with tantalising glimpses of countryside being seen now and again.

Looking west up the hill

Looking east down the hill

Green edge formed by gardens on the north side of the main street

Houses wedged behind the island

Views of the village's rural hinterland glimpsed through gaps

6 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

6.1 Townscape and building form

The surviving late medieval layout of the Green with the island of development is the historic focus of the village. Buildings stagger down the slope of the hill to create undulating silhouettes of two storey houses, cottages and farm buildings. Lengths of relatively regular stepped roofs contrast with jumbled roofscapes where rhythm is replaced by endearingly haphazard mixtures of scale, pitch and height.

Rhythmic silhouette on the north side of the main street

Less regular rise and fall of roofs on the south side

The south side of the main street includes the remains of two farm complexes, East Farm and South Farm/West Farm, which provide both historic and visual anchor points. Although substantially

converted to residential use, their mass and layout combine to exert a significant presence in the street. East Farm was extended in the late nineteenth century to become physically attached to the Queen's Head. The extension includes a cart shed built at right angles to the road to create a semi-enclosed yard. The original farm house is dated 1699 with its principal elevation facing south over a secluded garden. The back of the property fronts onto the main street with a catslide roof adding visual interest. This is enhanced by changes in level which involved cutting into the bank thereby accentuating the slope and introducing modelling. The Farm and its attached cottage are high quality buildings which bring a sense of considerable age to the street. The re-use of Roman stones adds to this sense of antiquity.

Principal elevation (south side) of East Farm

Changes in level and catslide roof, north side, East Farm

South Farm/West Farm is located at the western end of the village green where it wraps around to form a containing edge. It probably dates from the seventeenth century to make it a contemporary of East Farm. Parts of the complex are tucked behind the farmhouse to create an informal layout that has clearly evolved and grown over a period of time. This creates visual interest, not least through the presence of catslide roofs over extensions that introduce variety of scale and mass. The Green flows into the space contained by West Farm. Maturing trees fill this area to substantially block views of the buildings in the summer.

South Farmhouse

West farm buildings

The properties between the two farms comprise both houses and ancillary farm buildings. Kirsopp House, probably built in the eighteenth century, with its flat roofed projecting central bay is the most noteworthy. Standing in a commanding position overlooking

the island, it has been extended and linked to adjoining properties losing some of its original design symmetry. South Croft House, a former farm building that has lost its gin gan (Maps 1 and 4), is located behind Kirsopp House reinforcing the early agricultural roots of the village.

Kirsopp House

Town Farm

The south side of the main street is anchored at its western end by Town Farm which, together with South Farm/West Farm, forms a strong and striking entrance into the historic core of the village. Town Farm expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century to create a complex arrangement of buildings that became attached to the 1835 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The ancillary buildings included barns, byres, a granary, gingan, cottages and cartsheds. All of them are converted to residential use. The farmhouse is a fine and robust building with a simple but elegant symmetry. The attractive late nineteenth century Hill House located immediately to the west of the farmhouse adds to the quality of this end of the village and together with the construction of Stable House and the cottages (1851) stretched the built envelope towards the school. The extensive mass of the new housing built over the land to the north of Hill House dominates the historic building and diminishes its setting.

Stable House

1851 cottages

The modestly designed chapel to the east of Town Farm with its twin lancet windows and pedimented front adds to the architectural quality of the village and illustrates the strong Methodist tradition that flourished throughout rural Northumberland. It was converted to a house in 1988.

Until the nineteenth century, houses and their antecedents to the east of the chapel (Northside) faced the green. They are now

shielded from the larger space by the built island to form a street that eventually curves around the front of East View and the Temperance to rejoin the green. The houses are mostly nineteenth century. A small courtyard accessed by an arched opening halfway along Northside reveals an intimate built space that is of high value. It is clear from the appearance of the houses that they were constructed on an individual basis over a period of time replacing earlier buildings as they fell into disrepair, became unfashionable or improved economic circumstances led to demand for superior accommodation.

The courtyard

Incremental development of houses

The houses facing the green to the east of Northside stagger down the hill producing a stepped silhouette topped by chimney stacks and pots. They have a rhythm that contrasts with the more haphazard rooflines of the agricultural buildings. Woodbine House at the top of the incline is probably the oldest property in the village dating from the mid seventeenth century. There may be parts of other buildings that incorporate older fabric, but Woodbine House largely survives as a single historic build with its thick random rubble walls echoing earlier bastle house construction techniques. The steeply pitched roof suggests that it was once thatched. It is now part of Scott Brothers steel fabrication and garage business that occupies a substantial area of backland. The operational buildings can just be glimpsed from the front street and consequently do not impact upon the appearance of the historic core.

Woodbine House

Scott Brother's off the main street

The remainder of the buildings that run down the slope are individual builds of different sizes and quality. They have different design characteristics, some humble and some quite grand, but all

extremely attractive. Highfield House is particularly imposing with its imposing double fronted façade whereas its neighbouring cottage is relatively modest. It is important to note that both make equally important contributions to the architectural mix and character of the village. The front gardens of the houses were probably cut out of the green (section 3.3 and Maps 4 & 5). The gardens are now part of the established development pattern of the village and although contained by walls and hedges, preserve a sense of green space. Unfortunately, parts of some gardens have been converted to vehicle hard standings, one with a garage, which are invasive and unpleasant.

Highfield House

Hard standings and garage, north side

The east end of the village had a firm edge formed by the Queen's Head and Hill Cottage. However a new property, Aspen Ridge, has loosened the limits of the historic built envelope diluting and compromising its visual impact.

The Queen's Head

Hill Cottage

The rim of the village has changed during the twentieth century with the infill of gardens and yards with new housing, the construction of houses along the its southern edge and the development of land at the west end of the settlement that now links the former school and schoolhouse with the village. Virtually all back gardens have been developed. Those which haven't, such as East Farmhouse, offer a view of the traditional, pre-twentieth century, arrangement of buildings to space and as such have high value and should be protected. The development along the southern edge includes two pairs of mid-twentieth century buff coloured brick built semi-detached houses (Southlands) together with later stone faced detached properties. They introduce a new built layer between the

village and its historic rural setting. This weakens that traditional relationship. Fortunately, this ribbon of development is truncated before it reaches Stonecroft and Tynedale Lodge that frame important views over the surrounding countryside.

Southlands and Southlands Lodge

Stonecroft

Many of the modern buildings tend to be large, detached and regular using contemporary building techniques that can lack the subtlety and characteristics of the older properties. They do not reflect the traditional built form of the village where properties are generally linked to form terraces with narrow lanes leading to backlands and gardens. This long-established approach is a major constituent of the distinctive built character of Great Whittington.

6.2 Key buildings

Key buildings provide historic anchor points, visual focus, aesthetic quality and influential examples of local building type.

All of the buildings that range along both sides of the Green are important as a group because they combine to give a particular character to the containment of the central space that is unique to the village. However, some buildings bring additional quality because of position, design and age. They include **Woodbine House** because of its age and traditional appearance, and **Kirsopp House** because of its design and location. **South Farm/West Farm, East Farm and Town Farm** describe the agricultural origins of the village through their design and layout even though some of the conversions of ancillary buildings to residential use diminish their original appearance. They also mark an important period in British economic and social history – the Agricultural Revolution. The continued presence of the farms in terms of mass, layout and general appearance is vital to defining the historic character of the village.

The **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** is discretely designed and positioned. Its design role is not one of visual domination but of

elegantly blending into the village townscape where it gently adds to its architectural quality and diversity.

Some key buildings reflect different aspects of historic village life. The farms have been mentioned above. The **School and School House** and provide an insight into village life when it could sustain institutions and amenities that were dedicated to supporting the community and the **Queen's Head** survives and flourishes as the village pub. The former **blacksmith's** and the **Temperance Hotel** are important by virtue of their original function, design, and position. They mark the time when the large village green was, in effect, abandoned and subdivided into smaller spaces.

The former school and schoolhouse

Blacksmith's Cottage

6.3 Green elements

Green spaces make a vital contribution to the character of the village. The Green is of both historic and visual significance. Originally a single space fronted by houses and farms it was probably grazed by cattle and sheep giving it the appearance of rough pasture. A narrow road, probably crushed stone, would have threaded its way through. The well marked on the 1856 Ordnance Survey (Map 4) was a significant community amenity and probably a point of social contact on the Green. This was replaced by the end of the nineteenth century by two pumps spread along the length of the space (Map 5). The subdivision of the green together with the development of private gardens and the engineering and widening of roads has reduced its visual and functional impact to create a series of smaller green spaces that decorate the layout of the buildings. This role has been reinforced by tree planting to add to the ornamental character of the spaces. They make a vital contribution to the outstanding quality of Great Whittington and are clearly respected and valued by the local community.

Gardens provide green space between and around buildings. Hedges reinforce the contribution that gardens make to the visual

environment and mature trees provide grace, shape and maturity that enrich the character of the area.

Grass verges soften the impact of roads and metalled lanes and make a key contribution to retaining the rural charm of the village.

The Green at the east end of the village

Gardens and hedges

Grass verges

6.4 Details

Details are woven throughout the character area making decisive contributions to its distinctive character and sense of place. They include masonry, doorways, roofs, windows and rainwater goods.

Masonry

Most of the buildings in the conservation area are built in buff coloured local carboniferous sandstone. The earliest buildings, including Woodbine House, East Farm and East Farm cottage are constructed in random rubble where walls are constructed in stones that are irregularly shaped and of different sizes laid in random patterns. Some random rubble properties, such as South Farmhouse, were built with dressed stone quoins and surrounds to improve their appearance and elevate their status.

Later houses adopted a more formal approach using roughly squared stone in courses, such as Tulip Villa and Hill View. Tynedale Lodge on the southern edge of the village incorporates rock faced stone laid in precise beds, a typical High Victorian style.

Random rubble, Town Farm

Rock faced courses, Tynedale Lodge

Doorways

Original door openings largely survive. The traditional doors would have been plain timber planked or panelled depending upon age and refinement. Good examples of both types can be found throughout the village. Generally newer doors do not compare favourably with their earlier counterparts. Some timber doors survive on operational and converted farm buildings to add to their character. Up-and-over metal garage doors do not fit comfortably into the village adding a modern feature that dilutes its special and distinctive character.

Panelled door

Outbuilding door

Windows

Windows are an important tool in understanding the age of buildings and make a vital contribution to their visual character. Window openings can change over time, both in terms of position and size. The presence of redundant stone lintels and cills set into walls illustrates a depth of history that spans centuries. A number of original windows survive including late eighteenth/early nineteenth century sixteen pane and mid/late nineteenth century four and two pane sliding sash windows. The latter are most common with some replacing earlier multi-paned windows in the mid-nineteenth century following the introduction of Improved Cylinder Sheet glass which

meant that large sheets of good quality cheap glass could be used for larger panes.

Unfortunately the conversion of some farm buildings, such as byres and granaries, has led to the loss of traditional farm windows including timber slat vented openings with upper lights. Their replacement by domestic windows compromises the building's agricultural origins and historic character. This can be mitigated through good design.

Traditional timber sliding sash windows in the village

Many windows have been replaced with uPVC units which have a negative impact upon the appearance of individual properties and the townscape in terms of dimension, shape, profile and colour. The latter is particularly important in that it introduces the uniform presence of polar white, not used until the mid-twentieth century, in place of traditional colour ranges.

Roofs and roof furniture

Most roofs in Great Whittington are dual pitch with flat gables. There are some minor variations including hipped gables, such as the East View and number 1 Northside, and catslide roofs that slope down from principal pitches. The latter can be seen on the farm complexes, particularly where extensions have been added. Virtually all of the buildings in the village are now covered by slated roofs. Those built before the nineteenth century and the arrival of Welsh slate in the region would have been thatched or covered in thin stone flags or pantiles. As mentioned earlier (Section 5.1), the steep roof pitch and coped gables of Woodbine House suggests that it was once thatched and stone flags can be seen covering the eastern pitch of Town Farm Cottage. Corrugated iron and profiled steel is used on some industrial and farm buildings where they do not look out of place in this industrial/agricultural context.

Stone slates, Town Farm Cottage

Corrugated steel roof on outbuilding

The overwhelming impression is one where rooflines are uncluttered and uninterrupted by dormers. This adds to the quality of the area and should be protected. A number of rooflights have been inserted. It is important that they are positioned discretely and use designs and sizes that are appropriate to the historic appearance of individual buildings and the overall character of the area.

Chimney stacks and pots help to create interesting and attractive silhouettes. They include decorative stone stacks as well as lighter brick structures and a limited variety of mainly nineteenth century clay pot designs.

Rainwater goods.

Traditional rainwater goods, including gutters and downpipes, would have been simple and originally made out of wood or lead. These were gradually replaced in cast iron with the gutters supported on spikes driven into the wall. Examples of this type can be found throughout the village. Cast iron is in turn being substituted by plastic, sometimes mounted on timber fascias, to the detriment of the character of the area.

Pumps

The village has two surviving nineteenth centiry water pumps. They are located in front of the former Temperance Hotel and Town Farm Cottage. Manufactured in cast iron they both decorate the village and document the method of drawing water before the introduction of mains supply. Their presence would have been vital for the health of residents and the wellbeing of the farms.

Cast iron gutters spiked to the wall

Village pumps

Boundary walls

Boundary walls are dominant and crucial elements in the built form of the conservation area. They are of historic and visual importance threading their way through and around the village alongside roads and lanes.

Field boundary walls

Nineteenth century garden wall and railings

They include field and garden boundaries, some with original metal railings, together with retaining walls such as those along both sides of the Green.

6.5 Neutral and negative features

Neutral features are those which have a balance of positive and negative characteristics. Neutral features in the conservation area include most of the new housing which introduces more residents and house types into the village. However, they tend to be built in former gardens and yards which alter the historic relationship of buildings to space and the shape of historic landholdings.

Negative features

Negative features are those which detract from the overall character and appearance of the place. There are several negative aspects.

- The size and position of some of the new houses dominate and compromise the setting of historic buildings.
- As mentioned in section 6.4 above, original timber joinery is occasionally being replaced by synthetic materials. The success of uPVC windows which attempt to copy the design and proportions of traditional windows depends on the width and profile of the frames. uPVC frames are usually thicker and more

angular than timber ones and can not accurately incorporate details such as mouldings, horns and beading. uPVC 'glazing bars' are often false strips superimposed onto glazing which have a flat, flimsy appearance. uPVC does not take on the patina of time in the same way as timber. The result almost always harms the appearance of the conservation area.

- Overhead cables and their support columns.
- There have been some incremental changes that have gradually damaged the historic integrity and attractiveness of buildings and thereby diminished the character of the conservation area. They include the loss and replacement of original architectural details together with inappropriate designs, materials and methods for repairs, alterations and new works.

7 PUBLIC REALM

Public realm is the space between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets and open spaces.

The quality of the public realm throughout the conservation area is generally satisfactory. The main road is asphalt. Its visual impact is mitigated by green verges and green space. Some paths and lanes, such as along the southern edge of the village, are formed in crushed stone and whin chips. They create an informal and attractive appearance that reflects its historic and rural character.

There is no street lighting in the village.

Crushed stone lane with grass verges

8 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Boundary review

The Council has a duty to review the boundaries of conservation areas from time to time and to determine whether or not they should be amended. Tynedale District Local Plan addresses issues relating to proposals affecting the setting of a conservation area. Policy BE18 states:

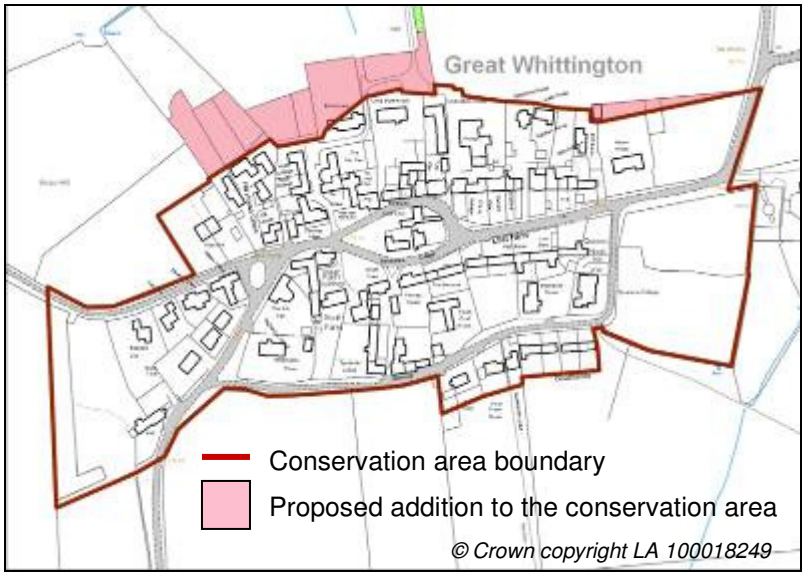
Outside a conservation area, development will be permitted if it would not harm the character, setting or views into or out of the conservation area.

This means the boundary does not have to be changed to protect it from inappropriate changes to its setting. The boundary effectively contains the whole village.

The review offers the opportunity to rationalise the boundary to take account of changes that have taken place since the conservation area's designation and follow, if relevant, property boundaries. Consequently it is proposed that the boundary is amended as follows (Map 7):

1. To include land to the north of:
    - Aspen Ridge and its adjoining field
    - Clydesdale House
    - Longstaff House
    - Briar House
    - North Cottage
    - Highfield Close

to reflect new land/property boundaries and protect the northern edge of the conservation area.



Map 7: Great Whittington Conservation Area Proposed boundary changes

8.2 Buildings at risk

There are no buildings in the conservation area included on the English Heritage Building at Risk Register. There are no other buildings that can be described as being at risk.

8.3 Listed buildings

There are a number of listed buildings in the conservation area (Appendix 2). The listing of buildings of architectural or historic interest is carried out by English Heritage on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Additions to the list can only be suggested.

The listed buildings include good examples of period architecture and buildings of historic interest. There are other buildings that encapsulate the heritage distinctiveness of the village that could be worthy of consideration for inclusion on the list. They include:

- Kirsopp House
- Highfield House
- The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

It is recommended that they should be researched to discover whether they are worthy of listing.

8.4 Future protection and enhancement opportunities

A number of opportunities exist to protect, enhance the appearance and reinforce the heritage significance of the conservation area. They include:

- An audit of traditional materials used throughout the conservation area should be undertaken in order to devise a palette that ensures that the village's distinctive historic character can be reinforced.
- Ensure that all future highway work, including maintenance works, will preserve and enhance the character of the area. This includes retaining the informal character of unmade lanes and paths.
- Ensure that the routes of public footpaths that lead from and into the village can be followed. Timber waymarking posts in the village are clear and attractive but frequently point to indistinct or obscured paths.
- Preserve and protect the green spaces, including highway verges.

- Promote the undergrounding of overhead cables.
- Encourage through the planning process the reinstatement of missing architectural features and the replacement of unsuitable materials and details with historically appropriate alternatives. This includes windows and doors.
- Ensure that traditional architectural features that define the historic character of the village are included in the design of new buildings and the adaption of existing buildings such as the provision of chimney stacks and pots together with the exclusion of features that are alien to the historic character of the village such as timber fascias. Special attention should be given to the adaption and conversion of farm buildings in order that they retain their agricultural character.
- Resist the introduction of timber fences in lieu of hedges.
- Resist the painting and rendering of stone and brickwork.

8.5 Future Management

Conservation status does not mean that the area should remain preserved as a museum piece but that it should be managed in a way that responds to its heritage significance, ensuring that changes enhance its special character. Good design, careful maintenance and sensitive handling of public space will allow the area to live and develop but in a way that responds to the conservation of its special character. A Conservation Area Management Plan will be prepared following the adoption of this Character Appraisal. The Management Plan will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- To establish and define the significance of the conservation area as a whole and of the individual elements found within it such as architectural, historical, residential, commercial, ecclesiastic, landscape and social components.
- To assess and define the threats and opportunities within the area and how these impact on the significance of individual elements and of the conservation area as a whole.
- To provide policy guidance to ensure that the significance of the conservation area will be maintained whilst changes occur rather than being lost or damaged and that opportunities for enhancement are maximised.

English Heritage recommends that the following topics should be considered in the preparation of the Management Plan:[6]

- Article 4(2) directions
- Enforcement and monitoring change
- Buildings at risk
- Site specific design guidance or development briefs and thematic policy guidance
- Specific enhancement opportunities
- Trees and green spaces
- Urban design and public realm
- Regeneration issues
- Decision making and community consultation
- Available resources

The overall purpose of this Character Appraisal is to provide a benchmark for assessing the impact of development proposals on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The management plan will be based on the characteristics identified in the character assessment and provides policy guidance for their preservation and enhancement.

[6] Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage 2006

9 APPENDIX 1

Relevant Council Policies

Tynedale Council has a raft of policies that are designed to protect and enhance the historic environment. The Council is moving towards the completion of its Local Development Framework (LDF). This is the folder of local development documents that outlines how planning will be managed in the future. It will gradually replace the adopted Tynedale District Local Plan. The LDF consists of several documents and plans that form a framework for planning future development in Tynedale, including where new housing, employment and community facilities will be located and for safeguarding the environment of the District. Three important documents have already been adopted including the Core Strategy. The Local Plan is slowly being superseded by the LDF documents but elements of it will remain as "saved" while further new documents are produced.

The key relevant parts of the LDF Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policies that impact upon the conservation area are as follows:

a. The LDF Core Strategy:

Core Strategy BE1 includes:

To conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the quality and integrity of Tynedale's built environment and its historic features including archaeology giving particular protection to listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas.

b. Saved policies from Tynedale District Local Plan

BE19 - Demolition of Listed Buildings

The total or substantial demolition of a listed building will not be permitted.

BE18 - Development affecting the character and setting of a Conservation Area

Outside a conservation area, development will be permitted if it would not harm the character setting or views into or out of the conservation area.

BE20 - Demolition of structures in the curtilage of a listed building

Listed building consent for the demolition of structures within the curtilage of a listed building will be permitted where:

- the structure to be demolished does not make a significant contribution to the character of the Listed Building or its setting,
- any redevelopment proposals meet the requirement of Policy BE22; and

- the structure is not listed in its own right or mentioned in the list description

BE21 - Alteration and extension to listed buildings

Proposals for the alteration or extension of listed buildings will be granted consent where:

- the essential character of the building is retained and its features of special interest remain intact and unimpaired,
- the works proposed make use of traditional and/or sympathetic building materials and techniques which match or are in keeping with those found on the Listed Building,
- the architectural details (e.g. doors, gutters, windows) match or are in keeping with the Listed Building; and
- the proposal meets the requirement of General Development Policy GD2.

All applications for such development must be accompanied by detailed drawings of both the existing structure and the proposed development

BE22 - The setting of listed buildings

Proposals for development which would adversely affect the essential character or setting of a Listed Building will not be permitted.

Proposals for development within the setting of a listed building will only be appropriate where the following criteria are met:

- the detailed design is in keeping with the listed building in terms of scale, height, massing and alignment; and
- the works proposed make use of traditional or sympathetic building materials and techniques which are in keeping with those found on the listed building

BE23 - Change of use of listed buildings

The change of use of a listed building in order to restore or maintain its viable use will be permitted provided the proposal accords with Policy BE21

BE27 - Regional and locally important archaeological sites and settings

Development which would be detrimental to regionally or locally important archaeological sites or their settings will not be permitted unless the proposed development is considered to be of overriding regional importance and no alternative site is available

BE28 - Archaeological Assessment

Where it is not clear how important an archaeological site is, or where the impact of a development proposal on an existing archaeological site is uncertain, the developer will be required to provide further information in the form of an archaeological

assessment and, where such an assessment indicates that important archaeological remains may be affected, a full archaeological evaluation.

BE29 - Development and preservation

Where sites or monuments of archaeological importance would be affected by development, their preservation in situ is preferred. Where the site is not considered to be of sufficient importance to merit preservation in situ and development is subsequently permitted, planning permission will be subject to an archaeological condition, or a Planning Obligation will be sought, which will require the excavation and recording of the remains prior to or during the development. In such instances, publication of the findings will also be required.

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDINGS

The following listed buildings are located within the conservation area.

Property	Grade
Town Farmhouse and attached cottage	II
Woodbine House	II
The Old Blacksmiths	II
South Farmhouse	II
The Temperance	II
East Farmhouse	II
East Farm Cottage	II
Byres attached to east of East Farmhouse	II

APPENDIX 3: REFERENCES

- Ordnance Survey Maps (various years)
- Greenwood's Plan 1828
- John Hodgson : History of Northumberland 1897
- McKenzie : History of Northumberland 1828
- Keys to the Past website : *http/www.keystothepast.info*
- Images of England website : *http/www.imagesofengland.org.uk*
- The Buildings of England, Northumberland : Nikolaus Pevsner & Ian Richmond : 2001 edition