



*Tynedale*  
C O U N C I L

# **Haltwhistle**

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal



**Adopted**  
**March 2009**

## **CONTENTS**

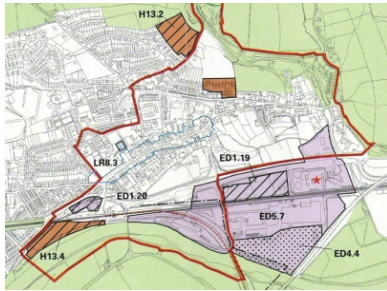
- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Planning Policy Context**
- 3.0 Summary of Special Interest**
- 4.0 Location and Setting**
- 5.0 Historic Development**
- 6.0 Character Analysis**
- 7.0 Area 1: Westgate**
- 8.0 Area 2: Castle Hill / Fair Hill**
- 9.0 Area 3: The Tyne Floodplain**
- 10.0 Area 4: Haltwhistle Burn**
- 11.0 Negative Areas**
- 12.0 Neutral Areas**
- 13.0 Recommendations**
- 14.0 Management**
- 15.0 Bibliography**

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Topography**
- Appendix 2: Listed Buildings**
- Appendix 3: Character Areas**
- Appendix 4: Proposed Haltwhistle Conservation  
Area Boundary**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

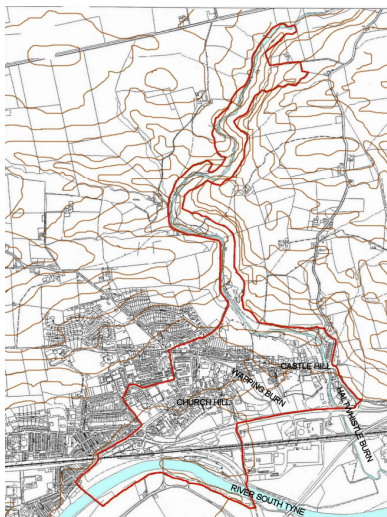
Employment sites (purple) and housing sites (brown) in the conservation area (red line) - from Local Plan



### Haltwhistle

- 1.1 The 2001 census gives the population of Haltwhistle as 3,811. A small market town, this has a modest but adequate retail core. One mile to the south of Hadrian's Wall, Haltwhistle is one of two towns in Britain that claim to mark the exact geographic centre of the country.
- 1.2 Although traditional industries and associated employment opportunities in the area have recently become somewhat diminished, there remains a low-key but increasing reliance on tourism as a source of income.

Topography of the conservation area (for a larger version of this map, see Appendix 1)



### Haltwhistle Conservation Area

- 1.3 The conservation area was designated in 1993. It extends from the railway station in the west through the core of the historic town to Haltwhistle Burn at its eastern edge. To the south it covers a short stretch of the river and to the north it narrows to incorporate a long section of Haltwhistle Burn Gorge. This reaches to the Northumberland National Park boundary.
- 1.4 The Tynedale District Local Plan (adopted April 2000) has designated the surrounding countryside (including parts of the conservation area) as an area of High Landscape Value, and part of Haltwhistle Burn is included in the landscape setting of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. The conservation area contains three employment sites and an allocated housing site.

## 2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Conservation Areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. However, these effected only limited control until 1974, when restrictions concerning demolition and the protection of trees were added.

2.2 Current government guidance concerning the historic environment includes Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), *Planning and the Historic Environment* and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16), *Archaeology and Planning* (1990). The legislation to which these notes refer is the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (“the principal Act”) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the Act”).

2.3 Section 71 (1) of the Act 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”.*

Section 72 of the Act goes on to state that through the exercise of planning:

*“ . . . special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area.”*

2.4 Following the introduction of “Best Value Performance Indicator (BV 219; *Preserving the special character of conservation areas*, ODPM, 28 February 2005)”, the

duty to regularly re-appraise conservation areas – and formulate and publish proposals for the enhancement of these – has become more urgent. In 2005 English Heritage also issued “*Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*”.

### **3.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

- 3.1 The focus of Haltwhistle is provided by its tight, linear main street, which exhibits much subtle variety of character throughout its length. Behind the street are back-land courts and an extensive network of pedestrian routes.
- 3.2 The remainder of the conservation area has a more open character. Fair Hill runs along the ridge to the north, while to the south, where the listed Alston Arches Viaduct crosses the river, the railway embankment, station buildings and old Tyne Bridge provide important features along the flat but meandering river-side.
- 3.3 Separated from the rest of the conservation area and reaching beyond the northern ridge, Haltwhistle Burn meanders along its wooded gorge. This has few buildings but many remains of significant industrial archaeology. The surrounding hills of the North Pennines form a significant backdrop to views out of the town.
- 3.4 An important feature of the conservation area is the widespread use of local stone. This is not only evident in buildings, but also in the many boundary and retaining walls, which provide a unifying feature of the area and in places define its edge. This provides a buffer between the conservation area and more recent developments lying outside the boundary.

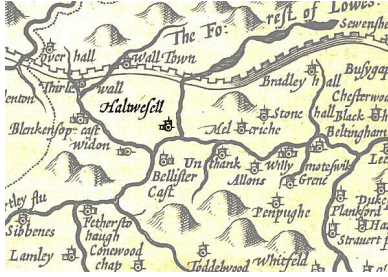
## 4.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

### Location and Context

- 4.1 Haltwhistle is located in the border county of Northumberland, one mile to the south of Hadrian's Wall. It lies 16 miles west of Hexham on the A69, the principal route between Newcastle and Carlisle. Haltwhistle has a station on the Newcastle to Carlisle railway line, while National Cycle Routes 28 and 72 also pass through it.

### General Character and Plan Form

- 4.2 The town is built on a ridge of glacial boulder clay to the north of the South Tyne River and floodplain. The plain itself overlays rocks of the Carboniferous Series including limestone, millstone grit and thin coal seams, all of which have played an important role in the economic growth of the town.
- 4.3 As noted above, the enclosed, linear main street gives way to a network of back-land courts and pedestrian routes before opening out to more exposed routes such as Fair Hill. These are much added to by the drama of various earth works and other structures associated with the railway, which include the railway embankment and Alston Arches Viaduct.
- 4.4 The most significant influence upon Haltwhistle in terms of general character and plan form, is the market place in conjunction with the early church complex (see 5.0, Historic Development, below). Both have early C13 origins and although the early church complex is not clearly discernable, these elements have done much to influence latter day Haltwhistle. This is particularly true



of the fairly intimate market place, the linear main street, and the manner in which historic burgage plots and associated development run contrary to this, resulting in close grained back-land courts and narrow pedestrian routes.

### Landscape Setting

- 4.5 The fairly dense nature of development in Haltwhistle unfolds gradually into the rural landscape that surrounds the settlement. Close by the town and in the valley bed this is largely comprised of farmland before rising to a combination of farmland and woodland. In turn, this mix is surmounted by the open moor-land of the North Pennines. The undulating landscape setting of Haltwhistle is an important element of the conservation area in terms of its setting and views into and out of this.

## 5.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 Although situated upon one of the closest approaches of Hadrian's Wall to the River Tyne, with the Roman Stanegate located close to the north, there is no



Haltwhistle in its setting: from the north, with Haltwhistle Burn, buildings along Fair Hill, the South Tyne valley beyond the town and the Pennines in the distance.





'Haltwesell' on Speed's map of 1610  
(communitiesnorthumberland.org)

evidence to suggest the existence of Haltwhistle during the Roman period.

5.2 The town is reputed to have been one of a group of Anglian or pre-Norman settlements which grew up along a route on the north side of the South Tyne valley, each site only a few miles apart. Its name *Haut Whysile* or *Hautwysel* seems to derive from the early English words for 'a high place at a meeting of rivers' and reflects its strategic site. The main road may originally have followed the line of Castle Hill / Fair Hill.

5.3 At Castle Hill the remains of earthworks can still be seen, although their date is difficult to ascertain as C20 development has obscured archaeological evidence, and both Iron Age and Norman dates have been suggested. However, the area was clearly occupied prior to the existing church being built.



Castle Hill, from the south

5.4 Holy Cross church is Haltwhistle's earliest extant building, described by Pevsner as "*a quite exceptionally complete and well preserved Early English parish church, typically North Country in proportion and details*". It is believed to date from the early C13 and is similar in style to the church at Crail, in Fife. Both were probably supervised by the Master Mason of Arbroath Abbey. However, it contains an earlier font and C7 water stoup, and while there is documentary evidence of an earlier church, its site is not known.



Church of the Holy Cross

Buildings between the churchyard  
and Market Square



Tithes Award map, 1844  
(communitiesnorthumberland.org)

5.5 The early C13 was therefore a significant period for Haltwhistle (at this time the market was also granted a license by King John). It is during this period that the market place/church complex is likely to have been first laid out. The 1844 Tithes Award map clearly shows the contrast between this section of the town, with its narrow straight street, formal layout of buildings and burgage-type plots to the north; and the manner in which this is separated by the diagonal line of Wapping Brook from the Castle Hill area, with its less formal, curved road.

5.6 This distinction is also preserved in the street names applied to the principal through-route. This is known as Castle Hill as it rises from the bridge up the knoll; Main Street as it dips to cross the Wapping Valley; and Westgate in the medieval centre. The map also shows that Fair Hill had by this period become the access to one of the town's common fields, the width of this indicating its traditional use for fairs and markets.

5.7 Between the market square and the church, the Black Bull is reputed to occupy the site of the medieval 'church ale house'. The visible fabric of both the Black Bull and the blacksmith's shop dates from the C18, but the uses of both these buildings are probably much older, and the surrounding area, with its narrow cobbled lanes, is an important survival of the early town centre.

5.8 The proximity of Haltwhistle to the border between England and Scotland has had considerable influence on the development of the town, particularly during the late medieval period. In 1306, Edward I passed through on his way to fight the Scots, and granted a charter

there. Constant feuding and raiding forced border towns such as Haltwhistle to take significant defensive measures during this period.



Musgrove Tower before demolition (photograph from [www.haltwhistle.org](http://www.haltwhistle.org), unattributed)

5.9 Musgrove Tower, an early C15 pele tower, was built to overlook the Haltwhistle Burn crossing (demolished in 1963, some of its stones are reputed to survive in the garden of the modern house on the site). Another pele tower survives as the Centre of Britain Hotel.

5.10 Haltwhistle is reputed to have more surviving bastle houses (defensible farmhouses, built following a law of 1555) than any other English town, with the remains of at least five remaining in the Main Street and Market Square area. Concentrated to the east of the market square these may be interpreted as representing the growth of the town centre in this direction during the period. The old vicarage to the south of the churchyard is also reputed to have C15 fabric.



The Centre of Britain Hotel; the bay to the right of the front door is a C15 pele tower - Main Street

5.11 In general, post-medieval domestic architecture in Haltwhistle was very basic and in the late C17 is noted by Celia Fiennes as consisting of *“wattle and daub cottages with plaistered walls and turf roofs with holes rather than chimneys”* (Storey). Early C19 descriptions of the town note that it is, *“full of uncouth but curious old houses”* (Archdeacon Singleton, quoted Pevsner p.300), and *“indifferently built”* (Parson & White’s directory, 1828), underlining its perceived low status during this period. However, its function as a local market centre continued, and cattle markets were held between Fair Hill and Westgate - in what is now the Co-op car park - until the late C20.



Remains of a C16 bastle house - Main Street

5.12 The first surviving school building in Haltwhistle dates from 1722 when a church school was founded, indicative of the town's role as a significant centre for the surrounding area. During the C18, industry in the form of woollen mills along Haltwhistle Burn created much local employment. Many of these early industries were sited in Townfoot, on the alluvial fan created where the Burn meets the South Tyne. During the Georgian period town centre expansion continued eastwards along Castle Hill, and seems to have consisted mainly of fairly small-scale dwellings.



Haltwhistle on Armstrong's map, 1769  
(communitiesnorthumberland.org)

5.13 Armstrong's map of 1769 shows the important Newcastle-Carlisle road running north of the river. This entered Haltwhistle over the Haltwhistle Burn at Townfoot and passed through the market place to exit via Westgate and the turnpike of Park Road. A further road to the South Tyne ford/ferry branched off at Woodbine Terrace. Fair Hill does not appear on Armstrong's map, as it was not a through route, and only the entrance to Aescia Road (originally Quakers Lane) is shown. The town stretches west from here to Townfoot, with the Black Bull, Market Square and church complex being clearly visible. Although a 'wood bridge' replaced the ferry for foot passengers in 1826, Haltwhistle had no road bridge over the Tyne until the construction of G G Page's iron bridge in 1875.



GG Page's iron bridge, 1875

5.14 It was with completion of the early railway line between Newcastle and Carlisle in the 1830s that Haltwhistle's industrial expansion began in earnest, and during the C19 the population grew from 453 to 2,305. Westgate was further built up at this time - along the route between the station and town - and since this period

expansion generally continued to the west, development being largely restricted by the rivers to the south and east, and the hills to the north.



Alston Arches railway viaduct, 1852

5.15 Some original railway station buildings survive. These include the stationmaster's house and ticket office, the later water tower, and the signal box. The railway ran along the flat land to the south of the town, with a branch line being created from Haltwhistle to Alston following construction of the Alston Arches viaduct in 1852.

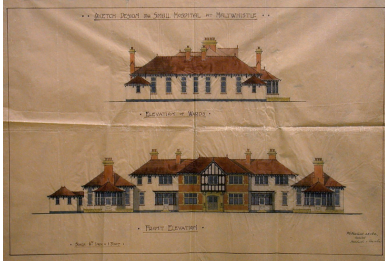


Industries at Townfoot, with line of mineral trucks on the wagon way and the viaduct in the background (Parker)

5.16 The main line served local industries along Haltwhistle Burn via a short branch line connecting to a horse-drawn wagon-way and viaduct over Castle Hill. Mines, mills, breweries, brickworks, limekilns, a quarry and gas works all grew up in response to the improved transport links. Most are now demolished, although the fireclay works with its chimney (originally the South Tyne Colliery) is currently in use as a saw-mill. Salt-glazed wall copings and other garden products produced here can still be seen locally, and form an important link with the industrial past.

5.17 A large amount of new housing was begun for the new influx of factory workers, manager and owners. Oakwell Terrace to the north-east of the town was built as miners' cottages, while the North Eastern Railway company built Railway Terrace near the station. The villas at Ashcroft and Eden's Lawn to the south were more substantial and comfortable, housing Haltwhistle's growing middle classes.

5.18 Public buildings were developed in parallel, and included a town hall, Co-Op, mechanics institute, banks, shops, hotels, several churches and a workhouse. The parish church was restored in 1870 with stained glass windows by William Morris and designs by Burne Jones, Philip Webb and Ford Madox Ford. A new church school was built in 1872 (now converted to housing), followed by a board school in 1875 (the date stone survives on a new house on the site). The hospital was designed in 1919 as an enlargement of a C18 house.



Elevation drawing of the hospital, dated 1919 (communitiesnorthumberland.org)

5.19 The railway provided the means of obtaining materials from a wider area than had previously been possible. Welsh slate roofing, brick and imported stone can be found in buildings of the time, but in general the town retained a simply detailed, vernacular character.

5.20 Traffic problems in the town centre led to various road-widening schemes during the C20, often involving the loss of buildings. Examples include the west end of Market Place and at the entrance to Lantys Lonnen. Townfoot Bridge was widened in 1925, and Tyne View Road / Avenue St Meen laid out during the late 1930s to allow through traffic to bypass the town centre. More recently, during the late 1990s, the town was bypassed completely by the construction of a loop in the A69, this running south of the river.



Entrance to Lantys Lonnen, before (above, Parker) and after (below) demolition of house next to Church Hall



5.21 New workers' housing was still being built into the C20, with Shepherd Terrace, an example of 'Tyneside flats', being constructed for miners. Early council housing could only be built if 'unsuitable' buildings were demolished. This led, for example, to the demolition of a



Black Bull Lane, before (above, Parker) and after (below) slum clearance



Toothed stone facing at end of terrace, Fair Hill

number of vernacular stone cottages at the south end of Black Bull Lane. Some houses on Fair Hill have toothed facing stonework at their corners, showing where expected future development was halted, possibly in the depression of the 1920s and 1930s.

5.22 The recent slowing of social and economic fortunes in the town has led to much stagnation, but it should also be recognised that this has preserved fabric that may otherwise have undergone inappropriate loss or intrusion.

5.23 Haltwhistle is however at a critical stage in its development and with the increasing emphasis being given to local tourism, the appreciation of its built heritage should very well help to shape the continuing survival and growth of the town during the next century.

## 6.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

6.1 Although the conservation area is large, dating from several periods and having a variety of land-uses, it can be divided into a number of distinct character sub-areas (see Appendix 3):

- 1 **Westgate** - the central core of the conservation area
- 2 **Castle Hill / Fair Hill** - to the east and north of Westgate
- 3 **The Tyne Floodplain** – underscoring the settlement from east to west
- 4 **Haltwhistle Burn** - reaching north of the settlement



## 7.0 Area 1: Westgate



High sense of enclosure, due to tightly packed buildings and bend in road - Westgate, looking west from Market Place



Larger buildings at entrance to market square

### Townscape

7.1 Much of this area is close grained, and the character of townscape derived from the juxtaposition of plain, domestic-scale buildings with larger, more ornate structures. Westgate is straight for much of its course and of a constant width, but the varied height and form



Approach to railway station is marked by spire and trees (left)... but sense of importance disappears and the road junction is a disappointment (right) - Westgate



of the buildings creates an informality and vitality that would otherwise be lacking. Bends in the road at each end of the historic core close views, allowing the street to unfold only gradually.

7.2 An important open space is found at the west end where this opens up the north side of the street to the hospital, although a basic urban formality is retained by the treatment of this space as public gardens. Such formality is lost however, at the road junction beyond.



Houses of Edens Lawn, from the churchyard

Here buildings are lower and irregularly sited and the wider roads with their amorphous layout do not provide a fitting or definitive approach to the railway station, with its assemblage of attractive Grade II listed buildings and structures. The line of Westgate, however, is continued to the west as Park Road (outside the conservation area).



Lane to the south of Westgate - Sycamore Street, looking towards the Methodist chapel



Archway, south side of Westgate - view of moors over the river



St James Lane, north side of Westgate - skyline of Fair Hill behind



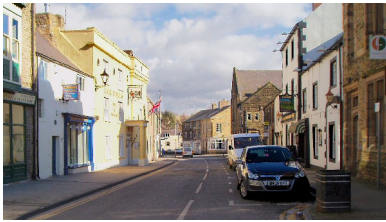
The low-key, informal space of the Market Square

7.3 The Market Place is a fairly intimate area to the south of Westgate which, although marked by larger buildings at its entrance, is not immediately recognisable as a commercial space. Its irregular shape in conjunction with the small scale of surrounding buildings, their irregular arrangement and the openings leading to the churchyard and Black Bull Lane, lend this space a wholly informal atmosphere.

7.4 Throughout the area side streets and lanes are an important feature, often opening out into compact, tight-knit, back-land residential areas that occasionally frame distant views. Another, more open, back-land area is Eden's Lawn with its interesting selection of polite 19<sup>th</sup> century villas, which command largely uninterrupted views over countryside to the south.

### Key Buildings

7.5 Many of the listed buildings in Haltwhistle are located in this area, emphasising its historic significance. Key townscape buildings tend to be larger, later buildings, such as the Church Hall, HSBC Bank at the western edge of the Market Square, and the Italianate building (also intended as a bank) at its eastern corner.



Centre of Britain and Manor House hotels, with the Church Hall looming up behind (Westgate, looking east from the Market Square)

7.6 The Centre of Britain and Manor House hotels also have a robust street presence. This is in part due to their painted facades which contrast vividly with the natural stone of the remainder of the street.

7.7 The former Town Hall is important in marking the entry to the town centre from Castle Hill, and provides a subtle change in scale and form from the smaller-scale, more organically developed area to the east.



Entrance to the area from the east, the former Town Hall with Church Hall behind

7.8 The parish church has very little presence in the townscape, and is hidden from the main street by the buildings of the Market Place. However, the gables of the Methodist and United Reformed Churches punctuate the west end of Westgate, and with the Library, provide important contrasts of scale, built form and detail with the linear blocks that form the remainder of the street.



7.9 The group of four shop fronts at the north-west end of Westgate is a surviving example of late C19 retail design. The Church Hall is very large, and tends to loom over the street (and the whole town, in views from the north), lending this building particular townscape



Haltwhistle from the north, with church hall at left

significance.

### Green Elements

7.10 The western end of Westgate opens up into the spacious, formal parkland surrounding the War Memorial and Hospital grounds, which contains many mature trees. This provides an attractive setting for the hospital building and a soft boundary to the conservation area on this edge. The symmetry of



Formal avenue of trees continues up Greencroft Avenue, beside the hospital



The hospital and war memorial, in a formal landscape setting

planting and layout recognises its function as setting for the war memorial and, as the western entrance to the town centre, provides a memorable contrast with the informality of Townfoot at the east end.

### **Built Form**



Typical street frontage buildings, north side of Market Place

7.11 Buildings are 2 or 3 storey, with pitched roofs, generally with eaves on the road frontage and gable parapets. Although terraced, the ridge and eaves lines vary considerably, and in places, their spacing is dictated by early plot boundaries.

7.12 Chimneys at gable ends underline the rhythm of development and provide an important vertical emphasis. Windows are vertical sash-and-case on upper floors, often with larger shop windows below. Archways or narrow entrances through to rear areas are common.



URC church and surrounding buildings, echoing trees opposite

7.13 Generally, the architecture of the west end of Westgate is of a large scale and has more decorative detail than encountered elsewhere within the area. A group of buildings to each side of the United Reformed Church has dormers facing the street, echoing the change in character of the Hospital grounds opposite.

7.14 Eden's Lawn is an important exception to the above. Consisting of detached or semi-detached houses, these are set in relatively spacious gardens which highlight their individual designs and celebrate their important position on the skyline overlooking the river and roads that traverse the valley.

## Materials, Colours, Textures



Sandstone, painted render, striped brickwork - Westgate, looking east.

7.15 As seen elsewhere in the town, the predominant material is local yellow-grey sandstone, laid either as ashlar or coursed rubble. However, several buildings are rendered and painted in a variety of traditional pigment colours. To the west of the Market Place brick is used, sometimes decoratively.

7.16 Roofs are generally Welsh slate, with some local flagstone remaining on older buildings. Windows and doors are timber, and windows painted white, with other joinery being painted dark red, blue or green. Rainwater goods are black painted cast iron.



Whinstone setts, with stone cart tracks – southwest corner of Market Square

7.17 The surface treatment of many lanes surrounding the churchyard has been preserved or sympathetically restored, and this contributes greatly to their character, particularly where the curves of the roadway are emphasised. The predominantly blue/grey palette of the surfacing alters at the hospital however, where reddish concrete blocks and pavements have been used.

## Details

7.18 Buildings are generally of a plain vernacular style, giving special emphasis to individual details, or to the few more decorated buildings scattered along the street. Corner treatments are often individual and memorable, sometimes truncated or embellished, with details such as decorative gutter brackets.



Corner detailing, stone gutter - Working Men's Club, Main Street

7.19 Many shops retain decorative facades, largely in various states of repair, while some good modern shop fronts have also been created, for example in the Square.

7.20 The wall separating the gardens of Eden's Lawn from the fields below has gothic style ceramic copes, possibly made locally. Some cast iron street names of character also survive.



Corner detail - shop front, Westgate



Entrance arch, Library



Ceramic wall copes, Edens Lawn



(above) Dovecote in gable end, Churchyard

(below) Cast iron street name





Groups of buildings in varying relationship with the road, boundary walls - east end of Fair Hill, looking west



Shepherd Terrace on left, views of hills - looking north from Townfoot Bridge



Curved road and retaining walls of the wagonway close the view - Castle Hill, looking west

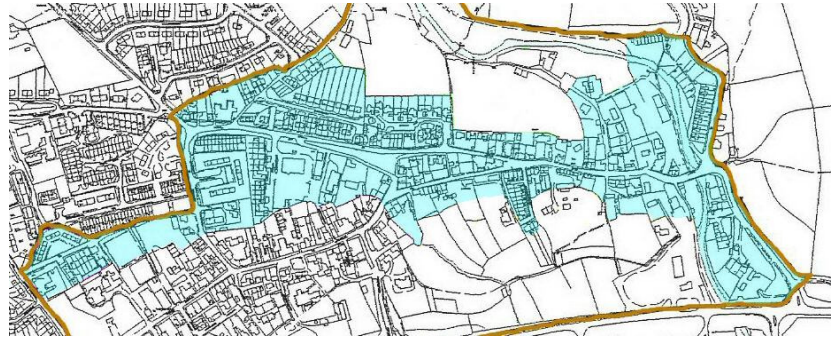


Road disappears down towards the burn, with view of hills behind - entrance to Mill Lane from Castle Hill



Buildings to the north, open views to the south and west - Fair Hill, looking west

### 8.0 Area 2: Castle Hill / Fair Hill



#### Townscape

8.1 This area is characterised by routes having many changes of direction and level, which allow a variety of contrasting spaces and diverse views to unfold, both within and beyond the area. Boundary and retaining walls also play an important part in the local character. Buildings are generally in short terraces or small groups, which vary in style and in terms of their relationship with the street-line, underlining the independent, individualistic character of the area.

8.2 To the north of Townfoot Bridge, as the road curves up the hill past Shepherd Terrace, views over Haltwhistle Burn to the north unfold, as do views over the town to the west and moorland to the south.

8.3 Townfoot Bridge, at the foot of Castle Hill, forms a notional junction between the industrial and residential areas of the town. As the road rises beyond, the abutments of the old mineral line bridge loom up on either side of the road. Together with the adjacent cottages they enclose views in both directions, creating a gateway to the town. The curves of the road are emphasised by the varying levels of house frontages and important boundary walls. The road curves at the junction with Fair Hill, before swooping down into the





Grassed banks, native trees, different levels linked by paths - west end of Fair Hill, looking east from Aescia Road



Footpath links Fair Hill and Main Street, views to moorland over the roofs



Curved wall of Townfoot Farm - Townfoot, looking south



'English Presbyterian Church 1864' rising above Fair Hill

valley of the Wapping Burn and bending again as the old Town Hall comes into sight, marking the beginning of the town centre.

- 8.4 To the north of Castle Hill the deeply cut Mill Lane leads down to Haltwhistle Burn, leaving behind the enclosed character of the main road. This quickly becomes almost suburban in character, with detached houses dotted along its length. Willia Road, at the west end of Fair Hill, is very similar.



Police houses - Aescia Road

- 8.5 Fair Hill runs along the ridge above town, its buildings silhouetted on the skyline above the road to the north, giving them special prominence. As the road rises to the west it becomes straighter and more spacious, with panoramic views southwards over the roofs of the town and to the moorland beyond the river. Physical and visual connections with the town centre are provided by strong pedestrian and traffic routes, allowing the contrast between the two sub-areas to be experienced more fully.

- 8.6 At its western end, Fair Hill loses its open but coherent nature and the space leaks away to the west, although the police houses (outside the conservation area) help define the view. Similarly, the road behind the hospital site shares the area's relaxed character, but without the strong topographical framework of Fair Hill it becomes rather disorganised and disjointed in character.



'Town Twinning Gardens...August 1996'



Vegetation in gardens softens the street - Main Street, looking towards the town centre



Asymmetric gable, Fair Hill



Stone gateposts in retaining wall - Fair Hill



Gothic gatepost and railings - Main Street

### Key Buildings

8.7 The curved wall of Townfoot Farm, leading to the bridge, gives a hint of the built-up area to come and directs the road back into the town.

8.8 The (redundant) church and school buildings do not have the same street presence or quality as those in Westgate, but nevertheless enhance its sense of identity, particularly the Primitive Methodist and English Presbyterian chapels on their imposing sites high above Fair Hill.

8.9 Walls are important to this sub-area, particularly the retaining walls connected with the wagon-way and the boundary walls at the west end, which help to unify its disparate elements.



Old industrial buildings in Townfoot

### Green Elements

8.10 The treed, grassy banks along Fair Hill emphasise its rural origins as access to the common field and the site of livestock markets. These also screen the car park and development on the market site. Trees and other vegetation in gardens and vacant plots soften and

domesticate the streetscape, differentiating the area from the town centre.

8.11 Mature native trees are also characteristic of the roads and lanes leading north from Castle Hill / Fair Hill towards Haltwhistle Burn, emphasising the transition to a more rural character. Here they also help to screen some of the more obtrusive modern developments.

**Built Form, Materials, Colours, Textures**

8.12 Buildings are generally of local stone, plain-fronted, two storey and domestic in scale, with gable end chimneys, and often sited with eaves parallel to the road. Roofs are pitched, slated (with some retaining their local flagstones), with clipped eaves and gable parapets. Windows are of a vertical format, and timber sash-and-case painted white. Towards the west end of Fair Hill more brick is evident, with coloured bands being seen at Meadow Terrace.

8.13 Some buildings on Fair Hill have an asymmetric gable, to increase the impression of height to the road frontage.

**Details**

8.14 Monolithic stone gateposts on Fair Hill retain a rural vernacular style, while architectural forms elsewhere reflect urban aspirations (e.g. cast iron railings).

8.15 Dated inscriptions on buildings and in the public realm are important in terms of adding a historical perspective to the streetscape.

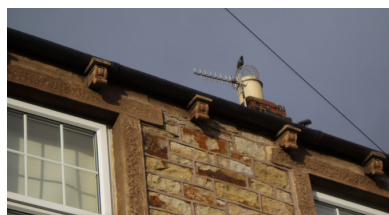
'Garden Terrace 1873'



'Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel 1864'



Terracotta rusticated quoins - Castle Hill



Terracotta corbels and window surrounds - Willia Road



Setts with cart tracks - Mill Lane

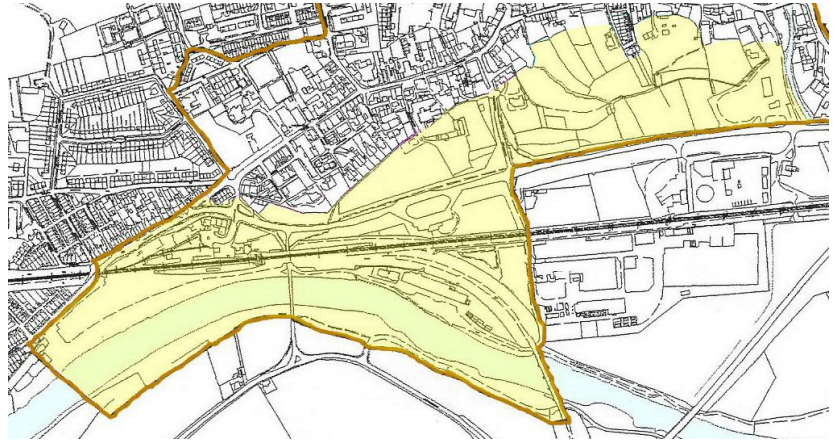
8.16 Quoins and window surrounds are often strongly expressed, while terracotta building elements are also used in places; these may have been locally produced, or brought in by railway.

8.17 Some of the lanes leading off main roads retain early surface finishes.

### 9.0 Area 3: The Tyne Floodplain



Approach to Conservation area from the east - Avenue St Meen



Signal box at railway station, from Tyne Bridge

#### Townscape

- 9.1 The part of the conservation area closest to the river Tyne is characterised by its flat, low-lying topography, which while historically unsuitable for housing, contains a variety of other land uses.
- 9.2 Modern transport routes are an unfortunately prominent feature, their openness, straight lines and constant width creating a bland contrast to the character evident throughout the remainder of the conservation area.
- 9.3 Throughout the area, dispersed buildings would appear to be sited at random, although the group at the railway



Edens Lawn, looking west across the Town Banks and St Meen Avenue, parish church to left and garage site to the right



Riverside path leading to Tyne Bridge



Pathway from Station to Eden's Lawn, looking east

station is fairly cohesive.

- 9.4 Part of the River Tyne, together with the opposite bank, is included in the conservation area, although this is not easily visible or accessible from the town itself due to the railway line and industrial developments. However, once access is gained, a riverside path provides views of the railway viaduct and Tyne Bridge.

### Key Buildings

- 9.5 The listed railway station complex at the west end of the area is highly important in historical terms, while creating an impressive introduction to the town to arriving rail travellers.
- 9.6 Although the railway viaduct and Tyne Bridge are important in views from the river, they are not easily visible from the rest of the conservation area.



Edens Lawn from the south

### Green Elements

- 9.7 Eden's Lawn, together with the rest of the 'town bank' and 'castle bank' sloping down to the river to the south of the town centre, is easily accessible by footpaths and thus provides a semi-rural contrast to the more built-up, urban spaces to the north. This area is also an important part of the setting of the historic town, with a

sharp division existing between it and the built-up area surmounting the skyline to the north.

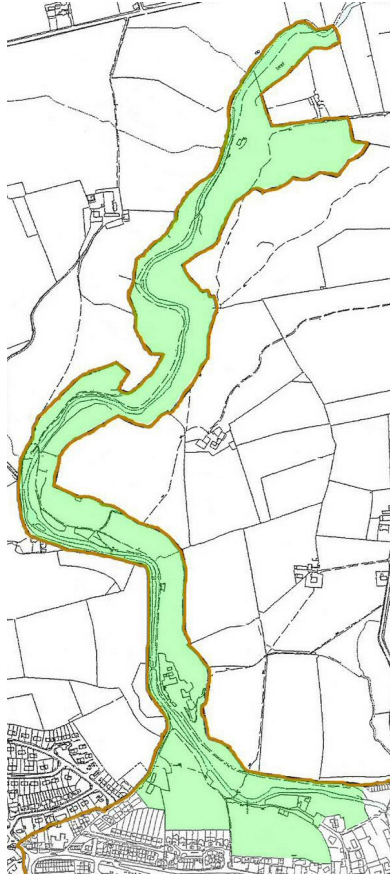
- 9.8 Public access is also available along the river bank between the railway station and Alston Arches viaduct. Although this is bounded to the north by an industrial site, the riverbank trees imply a more relaxed, rural atmosphere.

### 10.0 Area 4: Haltwhistle Burn

#### Townscape, Green spaces, Trees etc

10.1 This area is completely rural in character, with very few buildings. Vehicle access is from Willia Road, which becomes a narrow lane winding along the valley beside the burn, before eventually climbing out of the valley to the west. The remainder of the area is only accessible on foot, along the track of the old mineral line.

10.2 The valley is a narrow gorge along most of its length, with evidence of industrial activity where this occasionally flattens out. The heavily treed banks add



Housing to the south of the area



Northwest edge of the conservation area, looking south



General views of the area . . .



to the sense of enclosure, and of nature reclaiming the evidence of human intervention.

10.3 The gently sloping fields nearest the town, giving views of the rear of houses on Fair Hill to the south, are used for recreation.



## Key Buildings

10.4 The area has very few buildings, but the South Tyne Works still remains, its tall square chimney forming a landmark along the road.



Tyne Green Works: access over bridge, general views from road . . .

## 11.0 Negative Areas

### Negative Areas



Unsuitable layout, design and detailing - Fairfield



Poor quality design of house, unsuitable planting - Townfoot



Unsympathetic infill - Westgate. Good modern shopfront at left, but poor replacement windows



Poor rear extension and badly sited conservatory - Lanty's Lonnen

11.1 Some new buildings in the conservation area have had a negative effect on its character. These would include housing developments such as Mill Lane, Fairfield and other houses on Fair Hill which do not share the character of the buildings in the remainder of the conservation area. This would also apply to some development surrounding the hospital, which is of inappropriate quality for this important and sensitive site.

11.2 Development has also compromised the boundaries of the area, particularly where the edge of the settlement has historically been well-defined. The south-facing slope of Eden's Lawn and the Castle Banks are particularly vulnerable in this respect. Similarly, new housing on the valley sides to the east of Townfoot adds an unsuitably suburban feel to the area. Housing to the north of Fair Hill, while not visible from the south, is creeping over the skyline and negatively affecting the rural character of Haltwhistle Burn beyond.

11.3 Infill development in Main Street/Westgate such as the Co-Op and the (currently empty) shop on the south side with its over-large windows, heavy fascia and box dormer, have a negative influence on the streetscape. Back-land development is not always of high quality, while the rear of the Library and the Working Men's Club are examples of rear extensions which fail to live up to the high standard set by their street frontages. Smaller extensions can have a similarly negative effect where these are poorly designed or sited.



One original and three replacement doors - Shepherds Hill



Untidy backland - Shepherds Hill



Unsuitable design and siting of extension - Main Street



Uncharacteristic building - Avenue St Meen, at southern entrance to Townfoot

11.4 Although many facades and shop fronts are well designed and cared for, along the length of Westgate and Main Street some have been poorly altered or unsympathetically treated, reducing the quality of the centre of the conservation area somewhat significantly.

11.5 Throughout the area the piecemeal erosion caused by smaller works, such as the introduction of satellite dishes, box dormers or replacement windows and doors, tends to reduce the original quality of many of Haltwhistle's buildings and cumulatively, much degrades the historic character. This is particularly obvious on terraced buildings, and in the conversion of the School on Fair Hill, apparently to individually owned flats. This has resulted in a variety of replacement window styles which negate the unity of the building. Unsuitable planting such as the non-native conifers in the gardens of Ashcroft and the house opposite Townfoot Bridge have also had a negative effect on the area, as does the occasional over-use of road signs and other street furniture.



Unsightly road signs - Westgate



Remains of stone stile - entrance to BMX track



View south from the churchyard, the Old Vicarage in the foreground. The conservation area continues beyond the belt of trees to the opposite bank of the river.

11.6 Road junctions are particularly sensitive parts of the townscape. Some, such as Aescia Road/Westgate and Lanty's Lonnen/Main Street, are rather wide and featureless, reducing the tight, directional character of the main through route.

11.7 Some parts of the conservation area are of low visual quality. The land between St Meen Avenue and the river consists of an industrial area and a garage, and both have a negative effect on the conservation area. Similarly the entrance to Townfoot from St Meen Avenue is reduced in quality by the industrial unit to the west.

11.8 Poor management can also have a negative effect on the area. Examples include the rear of Shepherd Terrace, which is untidy and unsightly in views from Shield Hill, and the damaged stone stile leading to the BMX track, which is in danger of being totally lost as a local feature.



The Mart



Station Road

## 12.0 Neutral Areas

12.1 Some infill developments can be regarded as neutral, such as The Mart, which sits well in the landscape while its roof details add interest and scale. Regeneration of the railway station area has retained some of its character, although the needs of vehicles seem to have overridden those of pedestrians and the over-use of reddish concrete blocks and red paintwork is not consistent with the cooler colours found elsewhere in the conservation area.

## 13.0 Recommendations

### Listed Buildings, Buildings at Risk

13.1 Some buildings in Haltwhistle are listed (see Appendix 2). However the area has not been re-surveyed for some time.



Old Manse - Fair Hill

13.2 Some historic buildings appear to be at risk, particularly the Old Manse on Fair Hill.

### Boundaries

13.3 The Local Plan (2000) states: 'In order to ensure that Conservation Area boundaries remain appropriate and meet the objective of preserving the architectural or historic interest of the area, the Council will periodically review the boundaries of the conservation areas.'

13.4 As discussed above, the current conservation area boundary contains a number of areas with little or no architectural or historic interest, presumably in order to preserve the setting of the core from inappropriate development. However, the Local Plan also states (Policy BE18); '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 policy should give sufficient protection to a smaller and more manageable conservation area.

13.5 Consequently, a new conservation area is proposed and is shown left, and in Appendix 4.

### 13.6 Proposed exclusions include:

- i) The cattle market site, the bowling grounds and buildings to the rear of the hospital. All are of little architectural value and should be excluded.
- ii) The Tyne flood plain has little architectural or historical interest, apart from the railway station. However it is proposed to also retain the area between the town and Avenue St Meen, in order to protect the setting of the built-up area at this sensitive point.

### 13.7 Proposed additions include:



New Inn - Park Road

- a) Extension of the Conservation Area to include the New Inn at the entrance to Park Road, and its associated terrace of houses. The New Inn is an important street marker at the end of Westgate and prominent in views on the route from the railway and station, being a wholly confident building in its own right.

### 13.8 Possible future additions:

In the course of future reviews of the conservation area, the terraces to the bridge over the railway (“the Metal Bridge”) should be considered for inclusion, or even as a new conservation area in their own right. These terraces are good examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing, which add to the historic and architectural interest of Haltwhistle. However, a detailed survey of the buildings should be required before designation is considered.

## 14.0 Management

- 14.1 The following management recommendations relate to the proposed Conservation Area boundary.
- 14.2 Eden's Lawn and the remainder of the town and castle banks are vital to the setting of the south side of the conservation area, and development here should not compromise the historically well-defined edge of the settlement.
- 14.3 Development of the Church Hall should not increase its overall bulk or height.
- 14.4 Shop fronts are important in the conservation area, and targeted guidance on their design should be provided. A scheme of grant-aiding improvements could have a positive impact on the financial viability of the town as a commercial and tourist centre.
- 14.5 Consideration should be given to the introduction of Article 4 directives in the conservation area, to prevent further erosion of character by the accumulation of small alterations; this is particularly important where terraced houses are involved, and consideration could be given to publishing guidance for householders and possibly grant-aiding or otherwise positively encouraging window and door replacements which more closely match the originals, where they cannot be repaired or upgraded.
- 14.6 Encouragement should be given to improve those areas mentioned as having a negative impact on the



conservation area, particularly the industrial units on St Meen Avenue and housing on Fair Hill.

14.7 Westgate's role as the main traffic route through the town centre has compromised the historic and townscape importance of the Market Square. Traffic calming in this area, as part of re-paving the Square, would greatly enhance the area as a whole, and allow the square to reclaim some of its past importance; possibly the suggestions in the 1993 Regeneration Study could be revisited. This study also suggested methods of visually reducing the widths of roads leading from Westgate.

14.8 Street lighting could be improved in Castle Hill 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.

14.9 An audit of public realm work should be carried out to provide a baseline for future improvements.

14.10 Re-surveys of listed buildings and buildings at risk should be carried out as soon as possible.

14.11 A photographic survey of all building frontages in the conservation area should be carried out, to act as a baseline for future management.

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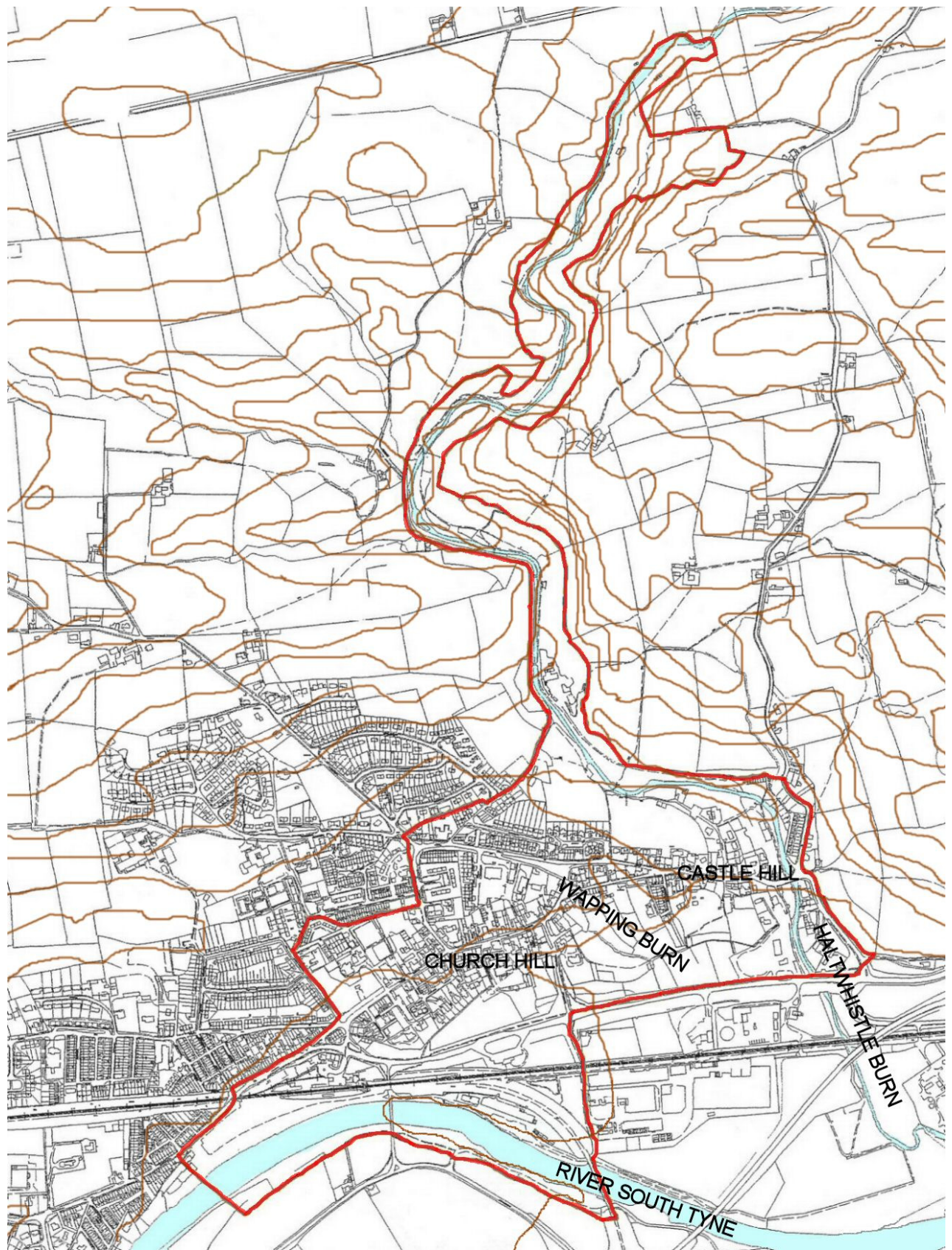
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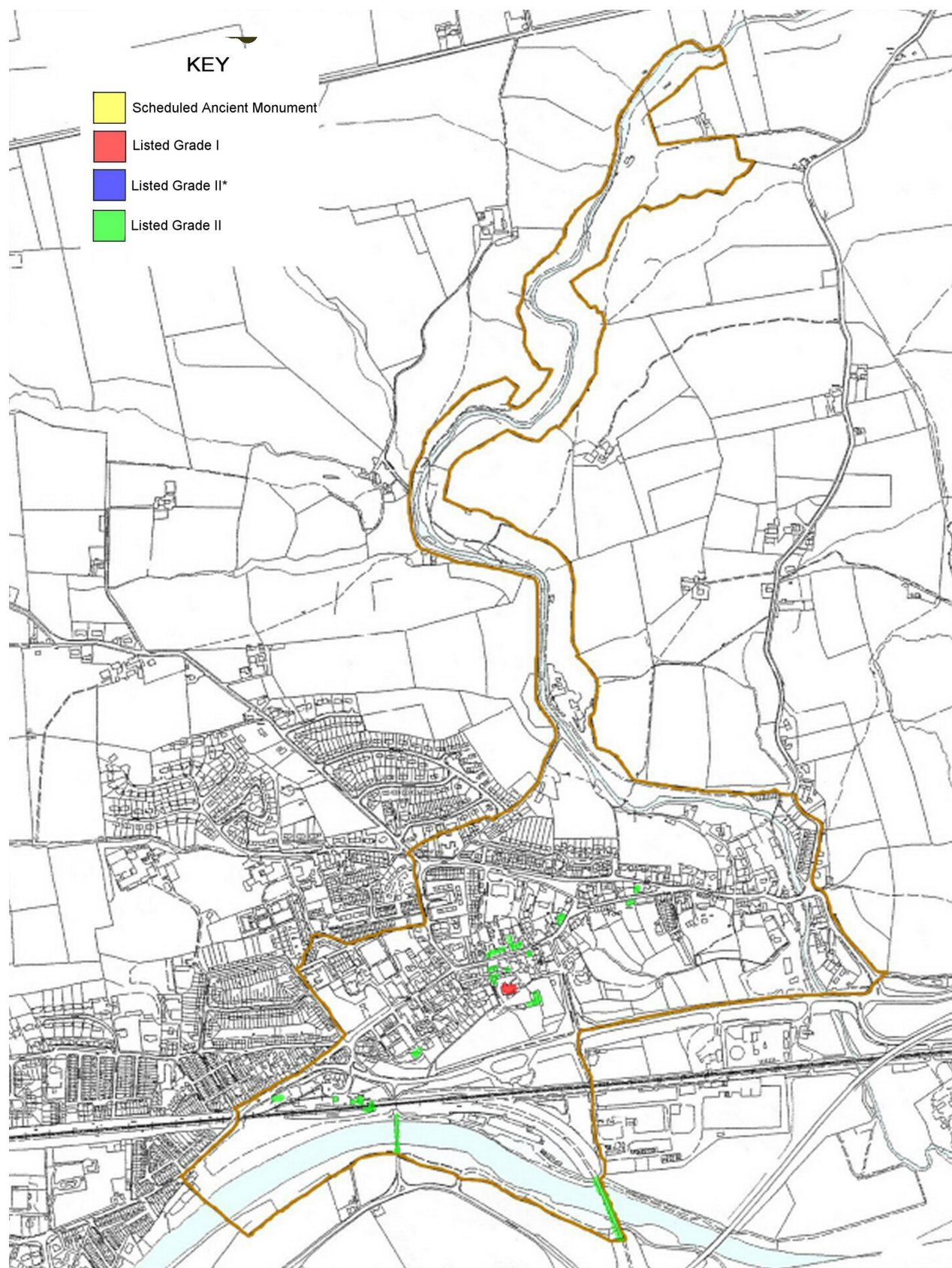
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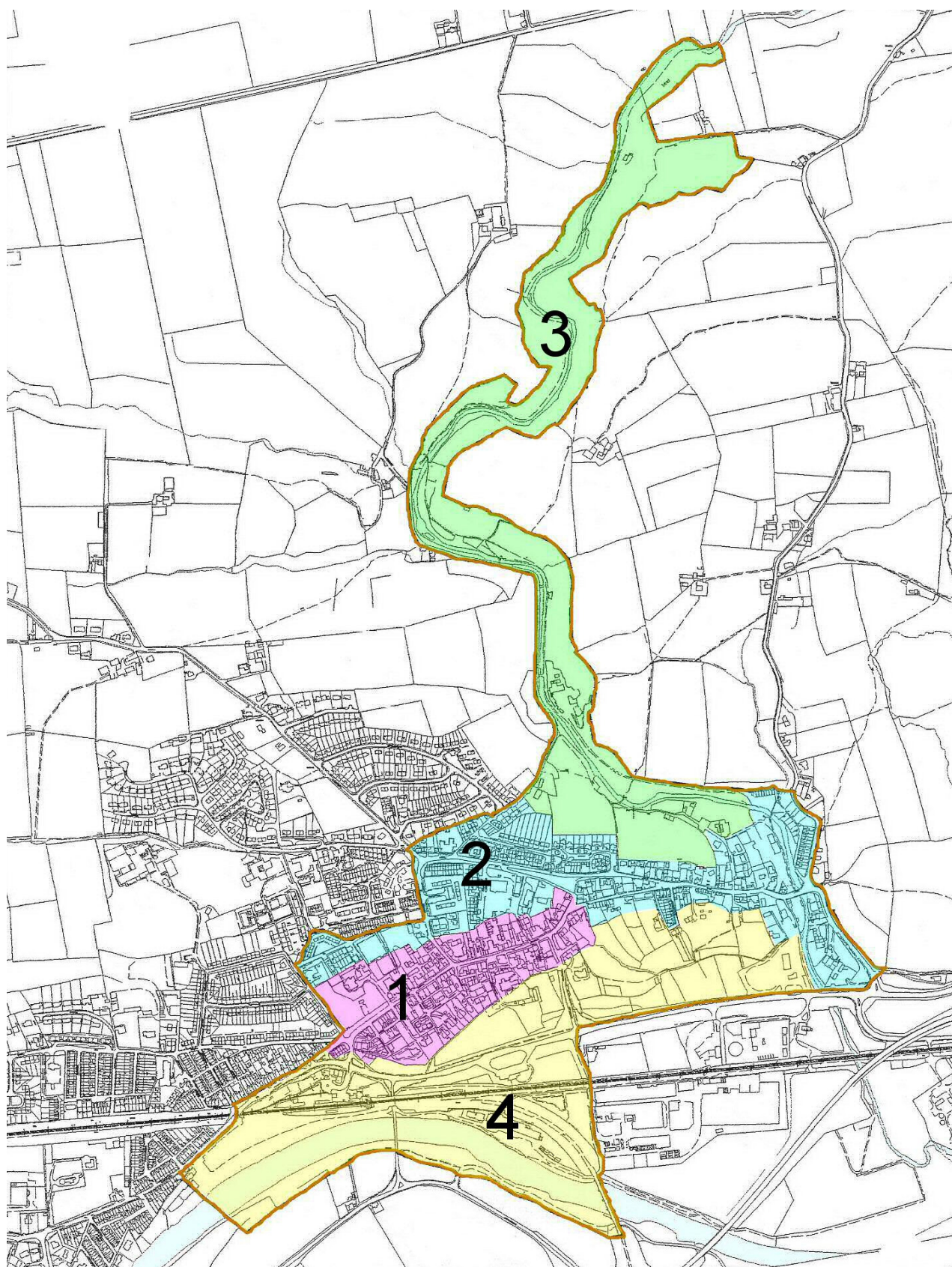
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Topography



**Listed Buildings**



**Character Areas**

