Morpeth Town Council

Morpeth Conservation Area
Character Appraisal

Final report
Prepared by LUC
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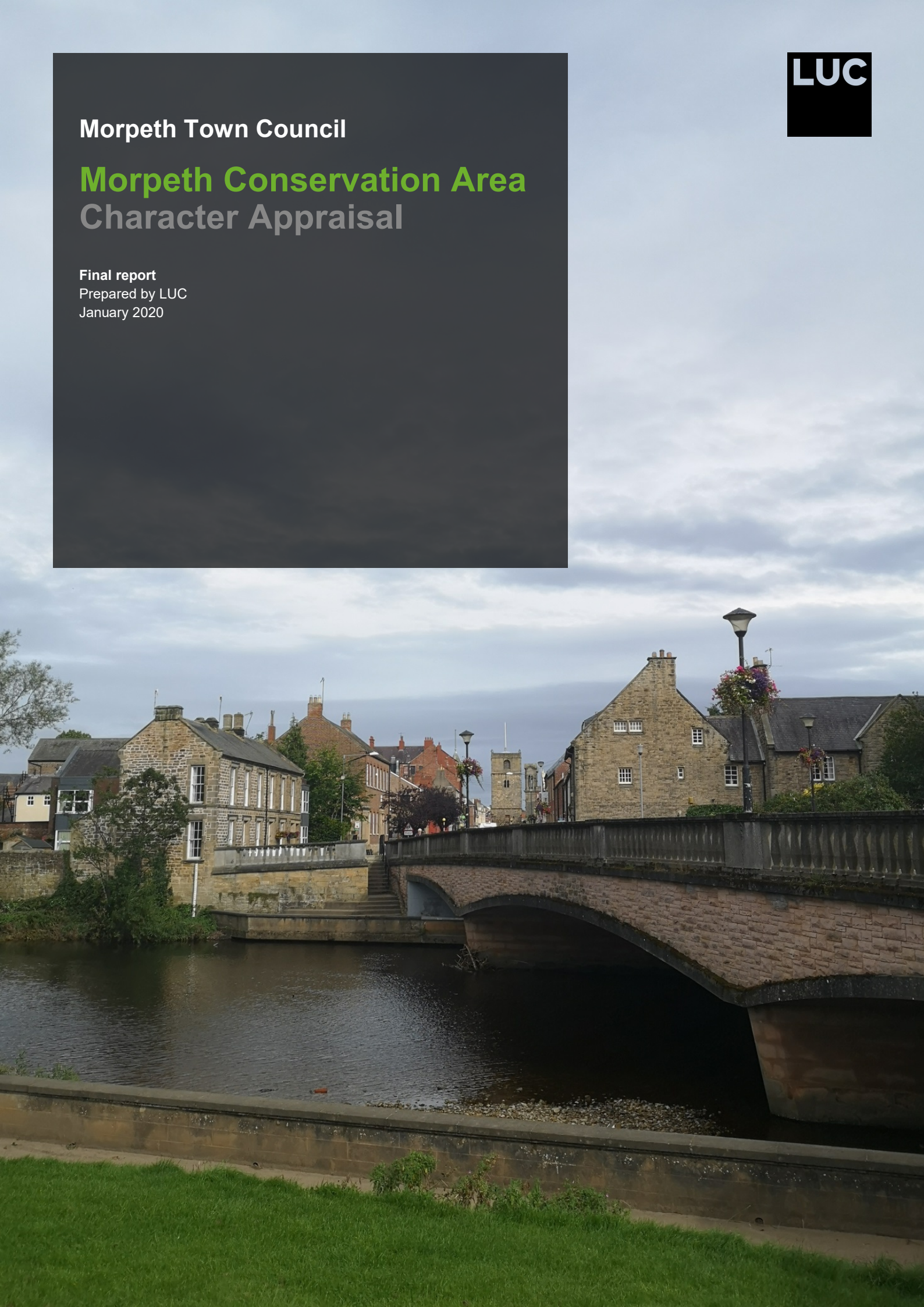

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Contents

Contents

Chapter 1
Executive Summary

Location and context

1.1 Morpeth is a historic, rural market town situated in the mid-Northumberland landscape of rolling countryside, scarps and wooded river valleys. The town is tucked into a wide meander of the River Wansbeck at the base of its valley. The river is both a unifying and divisive feature of the town: it physically divides one half of the settlement from the other but has at various times also been a source of security, identity, prosperity and amenity. Morpeth is the first point inland from the mouth of the river to the east where it can be both forded and where there is sufficient flatness and breadth to the valley bottom to accommodate a sizable town alongside the banks of the river. All approaches to the centre of the town descend into this valley, which rises steeply to the south past the castle but takes a gentler incline to the north.

1.2 The special interest of Morpeth and the desire to celebrate and preserve its historical importance was recognised by its designation as a conservation area in 1970. The conservation area boundary has not changed since this designation and centres on the market place and the principal routes that radiate from this point:

1.3 This document considers how both national and local events, communities and activities have shaped Morpeth, and how and where these influences are still legible in the built and natural environment of the town today. There is a requirement by legislation and national and local planning policies to preserve and enhance these special features, but this is not intended to discourage or prevent change, rather to inform and actively manage that change to conserve and strengthen those elements that contribute positively to the area's character.

Historical development

1.4 The story of Morpeth as the settlement we know today begins with the arrival of the Normans, who were the first inhabitants to leave any evidence of permanent occupancy of the area. The settlement grew at the foot of the castle overlooking the fording point of the River Wansbeck, but was to spread most extensively on the opposite bank, where we find the core of the town today. Morpeth's historic position on the east coast's principal north-south road ensured that the town was well serviced by travellers and passing trade in the coming centuries, and so it flourished to become the principal market town in central Northumberland.

1.5 The chief trade at the market was livestock and this remained the case into the 19th century until the arrival of the railway. With a station on the east coast main line, the market in Morpeth declined as it was easy enough to transport livestock straight into Newcastle for sale instead; at the same time, the transport link ensured that the town continued – and continues – to grow, but with residential and retail development as the principal driver, rather than agricultural.

Summary of defining characteristics of Morpeth Conservation Area

1.6 The specifics of the context and historical development of Morpeth are unique to the town and it is from this that it draws its individual character. This strong sense of place comes from many facets, but the following characteristics are of particular importance to the character and appearance of Morpeth:

- The preservation of the town's market place, medieval streets and alleyways, burgage plot layouts, building hierarchies and boundaries, and some important medieval structures; this includes significant survivals within its setting, such as the castles and the approach along Castle Bank.
- The town's intimate relationship with the River Wansbeck that encircles it, and the survival of several key crossing points.
- The organic evolution of the buildings, which has furnished the town with an array of building types and styles that together document the development of the town and define its appearance. Aside from medieval and early post-medieval buildings, phases of particular note are late-17th to mid-18th century handmade-brick residential buildings constructed after the fire of 1689 and an interesting collection of late-19th to mid-20th century commercial buildings.
- The harmonious, but not homogenous, appearance of streetscapes. Their piecemeal development means that buildings largely conform to the established scale, proportions, orientation, back of pavement building line and materiality of their neighbours, and so whilst there is eclecticism in styles there is an overarching coherence that ties the street scenes together. Taller buildings tend to be merely accents that punctuate the skyline and are almost exclusively religious or civic in function. This arrangement means that glimpsed views of assets and dynamic views of streetscapes are particularly important in conveying the character of the town.
- The continuing use of buildings in the town for a range of functions brings variety and activity to the streets, with a mixture of residential, commercial, educational, religious and civic buildings throughout the town. There is, however, a higher concentration of commercial buildings around the market place and along Bridge Street, with more residential properties found the further out of town you go along Newgate and Oldgate.
- Pockets of public and private green spaces, planting and street trees within the conservation area give respite from the bustle of activity and harder urban townscape of the main streets. Similarly, secondary streets, alleyways and yards provide an experience of the town that is much quieter and more intimate.
- The conservation area's setting contributes greatly to the character and appearance of the town for two principal reasons:
  - The town is surrounded by rising landforms that elevate the enveloping countryside above its roofscape, crowning it with a green horizon that underlines the rurality of the location and the town's links to its agricultural hinterland.
  - The boundary of the conservation area is so tightly drawn that many features that are fundamental to our understanding and appreciation of the area – the river, the castles, the full extent of medieval burgage plots, Carlisle Park, for example – fall outside the boundary. This does not diminish the contribution they make to our understanding and appreciation of the area, however; it merely increases the importance of the area's setting.

Chapter 2
Introduction

Conservation area designation is about celebrating and preserving the local distinctiveness of places, but what exactly is a conservation area and what are the implications of designation? The aim of this section is to explain why we designate areas, why it is important to protect their character and appearance, and how this legislative protection relates to Morpeth.

What is a conservation area?

2.1 In 1967, the Civil Amenities Act introduced the simple concept of recognising buildings and areas of historic interest and making provisions for the protection of that special interest. Today, the spirit of that Act has been extended and incorporated into the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which makes provision for the designation of "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"[1]. Although the legislation applies nationally to England, conservation areas are identified and designated by local authorities based on criteria appropriate to their area.

2.2 The importance of conservation areas centres on their distinct character and appearance. This may be something that has evolved over centuries and imparts an enduring sense of time-depth, or may be illustrative of a particular moment in time relating to specific events, industries or communities. The most obvious source of this character are features such as the materiality, detailing and scale of buildings, streetscapes and open spaces, but our experience of a conservation area is also shaped by the way these elements are configured and the sounds, views, colours and activity of the area. It is the interplay between all these

elements that makes conservation areas such interesting and distinctive places, worthy of preservation.

2.3 To date, nearly 10,000 conservation areas have been designated across the country, covering everything from towns and villages to country houses, rural landscapes, industrial heritage sites and housing estates.

Why produce a conservation area appraisal?

2.4 Section 71 of the 1990 Act places a duty on local authorities to 'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas'[2], but, more than that, a conservation area appraisal is a tool to help people understand what is important about a place.

2.5 *Preservation* of the character and appearance of conservation areas is about avoiding harm and maintaining those features of an area that make it distinctive. *Enhancement* of the character and appearance of conservation areas is concerned with the promotion of positive improvements; that is, both the removal of elements identified as harmful or detracting from the area's special interest, but also advocating and directing new development so that it responds to and reinforces the character of the area.

2.6 This desire to preserve and enhance the significance of conservation areas is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. At its core is the principle of sustainable development, the objective of which is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[3]. Achieving sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the environment, including ensuring developments are sympathetic to local character and history[4], establish or maintain a strong sense of place through the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials[5], and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping[6]. In the case of conservation areas, it also requires local authorities to look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal their significance[7] and to recognise that historic assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that future generations are able to appreciate them too[8].

2.7 The contribution of the historic environment to place making is further recognised in the Government's supplementary National Design Guide, published in October 2019[9]. It is a planning practice guidance for introducing new design into the built environment to create beautiful, enduring and successful places, but alongside key design principles is the recognition that well-designed places and buildings are "*based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design* [and are] *responsive to local history, culture and heritage*"[10]. Rather than identifying heritage as a constraint on development, it clearly identifies that well-designed places and buildings are positively influenced by:

- The history and heritage of the site, its surroundings and the wider area, including cultural influences;
- The significance and setting of heritage assets and any other specific features that merit conserving and enhancing;
- The local vernacular, including historical building typologies…the treatment of facades, characteristic materials and details[11].

2.8 The NPPF also states that local authorities should maintain a record of up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in order to aid understanding of the significance and potential significance of the historic environment in their area[12], and to make information gathered through the planning process publicly available[13]; this is the baseline information referred to in the National Design Guide which is needed to conserve character and inform new development. One of the principal aims of a conservation area appraisal is to provide that baseline evidence by assessing the area's character and identifying what makes it distinctive.

2.9 The requirement to preserve and enhance an area is not intended to discourage or prevent change, but rather to inform and actively manage that change to conserve and strengthen those elements that contribute positively to the area's character; this duty is made considerably easier if the reasons for which an area is special are gathered together and clearly laid out in one document. By recognising what it is that makes an area distinctive, local authorities are better equipped to take account of that special interest when developing Local Plan policies and assessing the effects of individual planning proposals. Similarly, prospective developers are able to bring forward appropriate schemes, and local people can readily understand the likely effects of change in their area.

What about Morpeth Conservation Area?

2.10 The special interest of Morpeth and the desire to celebrate and preserve its historical importance was recognised soon after the Civil Amenities Act was passed, and Morpeth became a designated area of special interest in 1970. However, the reasons for its designation have not been formalised in any enduring way until the production of this document.

2.11 The positive role heritage assets play in defining local identity and character was recognised by Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan, which was made in May 2016. The Plan identifies the historic environment as an asset that needs to be conserved and enhanced, and that its safeguarding needs to be informed by appreciation, understanding and recognition of its special interest and the contribution it makes to local distinctiveness. The fact that Morpeth Conservation Area was designated in 1970 but was yet to have a conservation area appraisal was specifically identified as a deficiency by the plan. Consequently, it set *Community Action CAHer3 A: Review of the Morpeth Conservation Area and preparation of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan supported by the introduction of Article 4 Directions where appropriate*. This appraisal is a big step towards achieving this action.

What are the implications of designation?

2.12 To facilitate the preservation or enhancement of a conservation area, as required by the 1990 Act, the designation of an area introduces some restrictions on what can and cannot be done without planning permission. These include:

- For the demolition of any building within the conservation area
- Control over partial demolition
- Control over works to trees
- Limited permitted development rights
- The option to use Article 4 directions to further restrict specific permitted development rights
- Limitations on the type of advertisements that do not require consent

2.13 Research by the London School of Economics in 2012 into the effects of conservation areas on value demonstrated that these restrictions have benefits - beyond the conservation of character and appearance – as they help sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within designated areas.

What information does the appraisal contain?

2.14 This document is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all that is present in Morpeth that contributes to its special character (although the gazetteer in volume 2 does give a snapshot in time of the area as it currently stands); neither is it a thesis on the historical development of the area . The narrative of a place can aid understanding of why it now appears the way it does, but to describe the historical development of an area is not the same as assessing what is special about it.

2.15 In order to assess the character and appearance of the conservation area then, this document considers how both national and local events, communities and activities have shaped the settlement we see today. Although we can predict what features are likely to be present in a medieval market town – features that are commonly found across this type of settlement – it is the configuration of these features that makes Morpeth recognisable as Morpeth, distinct from Hexham, Alnwick, or any other town in the country. Similarly, in later centuries pattern books for architectural detailing became more common place and so certain features and building types can be found repeated across the country, but how and where they were applied depended on the architect, craftsperson, the space available and local aspirations, as much as national fashions. This is what this document aims to capture, as it is the coalescence of all these things that gives a place its unique character.

What should the appraisal be used for?

2.16 The appraisal is a publicly accessible document, available as a source of information for anyone interested in the conservation area. Its principal aim is to widen appreciation of the town's special interest, raise awareness of why the area is – and should – be protected, and as an evidence base for managing change.

2.17 One of the main ways change in a conservation area is managed is through the planning system. By adopting a conservation area appraisal, due and proportionate weight can be given in the planning process to the special interest of the conservation area. This will, in turn, result in better informed and balanced decisions in relation to the historic environment. It can also be used to support potential strategic plans and policies for the area, and to promote its conservation and regeneration.

2.18 In presenting a sound understanding of character, a conservation area appraisal can be used to assess how well new development responds to the character or Morpeth, where there may be opportunities to reverse changes that have adversely affected its character, as well as opportunities to enhance what is already present. As such, it can be used as a basis for refusing poor design that fails to respond to the character of the place or take advantage of opportunities to enhance it.

2.19 The planning system is not the only way to facilitate positive improvements to the historic environment, however, and so the document's overarching aim is to help people better-understand and engage with – and engender enthusiasm for – the places where they live, work and visit.

Chapter 3
Location and Context

The character of an area starts to form long before the human interventions of buildings, streets, fields and towns are established: it starts with the geology and topography of a place. These literal foundations are what makes some places suitable for human habitation and others not, what makes some settlements flourish whilst others fade. This section considers what it is about the location and context of Morpeth that made it ripe for successful occupation.

Location

3.1 Morpeth is a historic, rural market town in mid-Northumberland, 22 kilometres north of Newcastle upon Tyne and some 9 kilometres east of Ashington and the mouth of the River Wansbeck, where it flows into the North Sea. As of the 2011 census it had a population of just over 14,000, making it one of the largest settlements in the county of Northumberland. It is also home to Northumberland County Council, the unitary authority whose administrative base lies to the south of the town centre and conservation area. The settlement is split into three wards: Kirkhill, Stobhill and North Ward. The majority of the conservation area falls within the North Ward, with just the small parcel to the south of the river in Stobhill.

The Geology & topography

3.2 The landscape of Northumberland is one of variable character, from the sublime uplands of the Cheviot Hills in the north-west of the county descending through to the flat and

fertile plains of the coastal fringes in the east. Morpeth is found in the transitional zone between the two, in the mid-Northumberland landscape of rolling countryside, scarps and wooded river valleys.

3.3 Underlying this area are the Pennine Lower Coal Measures, the youngest sedimentary rock formations of the Carboniferous period at some 300 million years old. They comprise sandstones, shales and coal seams overlaid by gravels, sands and clays that were deposited on top of the measures during the last Ice Age. The Lower Coal Measures can be found extending north-easterly from the eastern edge of the Pennines in the south of the county, through Morpeth, and on to Amble on the coast.

3.4 This band of sedimentary rock sits alongside the older volcanic rocks of the Cheviot Hills and it is the nature of these different types of rock formation that directly accounts for the topography of the county. As movements in the earth lifted the Cheviots, the overlying sedimentary rocks were drawn up with them in the northwest of the county but were less affected the further away they were, resulting in the eastward tilt in the land mass that characterises the landscape today[14]. This effect is relatively subtle around Morpeth, although still legible as a gentle west-to-east trending slope.

3.5 The underlying geology has endowed the county with a plentiful supply of tough and durable sandstones that make excellent building stone, as well as rich deposits of coal that brought landowners in the region much wealth, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is this comparatively easy access to quality stone that makes Northumberland a predominantly sandstone county, although it is by no means homogenous; stones with hues ranging from greys and buffs through to pinks recall the locality from which they were quarried, tying the buildings back to the landscape that they stand on and, indeed, are hewn from. Interestingly, Morpeth is something of an anomaly for the region: a town defined neither by stone nor mining. Many buildings were rebuilt in brick following a fire in the 17th century and Morpeth's well-established market continued to be the commercial focus for the town even as the surrounding landscape was combed for coal.

3.6 Whilst lacking the rugged drama of the northwest of the county, the topography of the town and its surroundings has a distinct identity. The town is tucked into a wide meander of the River Wansbeck at the base of its valley, one of the many that carves it way from the western uplands of the region eastwards towards the sea. It is a defining feature of the settlement, both unifying and divisive: it physically separates one half from the other but has at various times also been a source of security, identity, prosperity and amenity for the town as a whole.

3.7 All approaches to the centre of the town descend into this valley, which rises steeply to the south past the castle but takes a gentler incline to the north. This more moderate northern ascent is the result of a number of secondary streams that traverse the landscape at this point too – the Cottingburn, How Burn, Church Burn and Postern Burn – which, over the course of centuries, have helped smooth the steep valley sides. Consequently, Morpeth is the first point inland from the mouth of the river both where it can be forded and where there is sufficient flatness and breadth to the valley bottom to accommodate a sizable town alongside the banks of the river. This low-lying and relatively flat basin that the town sits in allows for long-ranging views across the town but also contains it, with heavily-wooded valley sides encircling it above the line of the roofscape.

3.8 The longevity of these features in the landscape – the burns that cross it and the trees that enclose it – and their importance and legacy in defining the character of the town is evidenced in the town motto:

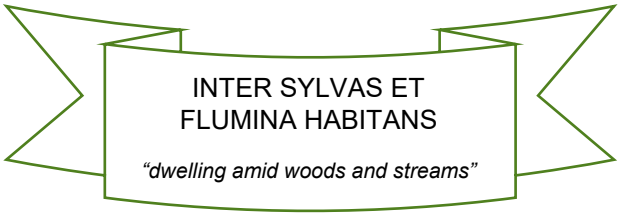

Figure 3.1: View across the town

View from the motte, looking NNW. In the foreground Carlisle Park (and possible site of the castle's bailey), then the river, town, and hills beyond.

concentrates primarily on the built form and appearance of the densely packed street frontages; and yet, the appearance of most of them has been restricted, shaped and influenced by the centuries of urban development that came before. This is most apparent in the street layouts, widths and plot sizes, and also the spaces between and surrounding the town, all of which are clear indications of the town's medieval roots. These features had a decisive role to play in the development of the town, the evidence for which extends far beyond the street frontages.

The conservation area boundary

3.9 The conservation area boundary (Figure 3.2) has not changed since it was designated in 1970. It centres on the market place and the principal routes that radiate from this point: Newgate Street, stretching north between the market place and Bullers Green; Oldgate, between the market place and the river to the west; Bridge Street, between the market place and St George's Church to the east. The boundary also extends tentatively across the river to the south at Telford Bridge, skirts around the base of the Norman motte and bailey castle to take in a small collection of buildings to the west of the foot of the bridge, before looping to the east to include the early-19th century court house.

3.10 This boundary is very tightly drawn, with an emphasis on the 17th to 19th century commercial core of the town. It

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Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure 3.2: Morpeth Conservation Area Boundary

Conservation Area

Chapter 4
The Historical Development of Morpeth

Conservation areas did not develop in isolation, and in order to understand what is included within the boundary and why we must look beyond to give the area context. This section considers how Morpeth developed from its earliest origins into the town we see today.

"Wansbeke, a pretty river, runneth through the side of the towne. On the hither side of the river is the principal church of the town. On the same side is the fair castle standing upon a hill longing with the town to the lord Dacres of Gilsland. The town is long and metely well builded with low houses, the streets paved. It is a far fairer town than Alnwick."

John Leland c1540, quoted by Hodgson in "A History of Morpeth" (1832)

Early beginnings: *prehistory to the Anglo-Saxons*

4.1 The pre-Norman Conquest history of Morpeth remains something of a mystery. Evidence of prehistoric, Roman or Saxon occupation of the area extremely limited: a Neolithic stone axe head found in the vicinity of the present Court House hints at activity in the area; excavations to the west of the castle motte in the 1830s by William Woodman found what was interpreted as a prehistoric burial cairn (a stone burial mound) and cist (a burial chamber, in this case containing bone and pottery fragments); to the eastern edge of Ha' Hill an isolated earthwork was uncovered in excavations in the 1830s and again in 2000, potentially the remains of a prehistoric or Romano-British enclosure.

4.2 Nevertheless, given the prehistoric activity recorded in nearby Pegswood and west of Newminster – and more

generally along the North East's coastal plain – it seems highly improbable that the area was not at least being utilised by prehistoric peoples, if not settled. The low-lying flood plains would have provided a wildlife corridor for larger herbivores and wildfowl and the wooded valley a plentiful supply of timber and quick-growing resources like grass and willow, making the area an attractive and fertile resource that would have made it a prime location for at least seasonal occupation of the area.

4.3 Morpeth lies approximately in the centre of what was the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria – stretching from the Lothian plain of southern Scotland to the Humber. Formed out of the semi-permanent union of the kingdoms of Deira (broadly, East and North Yorkshire) and Bernicia (broadly, the Lothians and present-day Northumberland). In AD654, Northumbria's centres of power were located on the east coast – at Bamburgh, Lindisfarne, Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. Nevertheless, although little conclusive material evidence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement has been found to date, in Wilson's 1876 work *A Handbook to Morpeth and the Neighbourhood*, the "fair town of Morpeth" is reported to have been burned to the ground by Ives de Vescy during the Norman suppression of the North and the town subsequently granted to William de Merlay (who is credited with the building of the castle). This suggests that there was at least some form of notable settlement that had grown up around the crossing point of the river, and would also account for the necessity to install a castle in this location. Indeed, considering the topography of the area and the ability to ford the river at this point, it seems highly probable that there was a settlement of some kind during the Anglo-Saxon period. What form it may have taken is unknown, but it is possible that some of the burgage plots of the Norman town were developed from earlier crofts and tofts. Unfortunately, the two have similar characteristics and so distinguishing between them on the ground is extremely difficult.

How does this phase contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

4.4 Whilst early occupation cannot be discounted, there is currently little evidence to support any assertions that the area was anything other than periodically occupied up until the arrival of the Normans and their probable destruction of Morpeth's Anglo-Saxon predecessor. Whilst a subject desperate for more research in relation to the history of Morpeth as a settlement, in terms of the conservation area this period has left little mark on its character and appearance, especially as the boundary includes very little to the south of the river where most evidence for the period has been recorded.

Figure 4.1: Early beginnings word cloud

A word cloud created using the above text to illustrate the key factors and defining influences on prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon Morpeth.

The Normans arrive: *11th to 13th centuries*

4.5 Firm evidence for the story of Morpeth as the settlement we know today begins with the arrival of the Normans. It is from this time onwards that we have contextual, documentary and physical evidence that can confirm permanent occupancy of the area and start to build a picture of the medieval town.

4.6 William the Conqueror landed in England in September 1066 and, once crowned William I of England, spent much of the first few years of his reign securing and stamping his authority on the inhabitants of southern England. Once the South was largely brought under control his attention turned to the North. The subsequent subjugation of inhabitants and occupation of the lands was executed with characteristic ruthlessness and efficacy, and Northumberland is strewn with the evidence of this in the form of castles and monastic houses (and sometimes a combination of both) dating from this period.

4.7 One of the principal tools by which the Normans colonised and instilled order in the region was through the creation of boroughs. Whilst in Saxon times *burhs* were defendable settlements (usually surrounded by a wall – of which there is no evidence at Morpeth), *boroughs* by this point were established towns with an allowance for some self-governance bestowed on them by the monarch and administered, in Morpeth's case, by a baron – William de Merlay. Morpeth was one of ten Norman boroughs established in Northumberland at this time, the others being Newcastle, Bamburgh, Wooler, Corbridge, Norham, Alnmouth, Newbiggin, Alnwick and Hexham[15].

4.8 The Norman feudal system was to profoundly influence the social hierarchy of England in the 11th to 16th centuries. A key component of that system was the borough, and a key component of the borough was the castle: this system was not just an intangible set of rules but was physically imposed through the building of monumental defensive structures. Castles as we think of them today have essentially evolved from Norman innovation, and as well as a defensive function they also had an important symbolic function as an expression of power and authority. To this end, they were often sited for dramatic effect as much as for strategic control and their dominance was reinforced with an element of architectural display as well as functional, defensive features[16].

4.9 These assertive manifestations of Norman power are often located on strategically important routes or river crossings. Such is the case at Morpeth, which was significant as a military stronghold and administrative centre for long enough to warrant the building of two castles as well as the founding of Newminster Abbey. The role of the castle as an expression of might and dominance may well explain why the sites of the castles are on the opposite side of the river to the town – contrary to the usual medieval set-up of the town nestling at the foot of the castle – as this naturally elevated position served to make their presence all the more impressive and afforded views of the fording point of the river. Furthermore, most of the threats to the authority based in the castle would have come from the north and so siting it south of the river means that this natural feature could be exploited as an additional layer of defence.

4.10 It is said that the barony of Morpeth was granted to William de Merlay in circa 1080[17] in recompense for his services to William the Conqueror (King William I). It is likely that construction of the first castle on Ha' Hill began shortly after this, although the first documentary evidence of its existence is in 1095 when it was reportedly captured by William II from the de Merlays who, along with other northern lords, had initiated a revolt against the King[18].

4.11 The exact layout of this first castle complex is open to speculation, with the location of the associated bailey being variously suggested as west, north and east of the motte[19]. Excavations on the motte by Woodman in the 1830s uncovered a number of decoratively carved Norman stones[20], however, so it is clear that whatever was here was not just a basic, functional, defensive structure but also a building of status. Whatever its form it was destroyed, and the town burnt along with it, by King John in 1216 whilst quelling yet another northern revolt[21]. Now all that visibly remains is the substantial earthwork of the motte.

Figure 4.2: The Norman motte and bailey castle

View of the north side of the substantial 11th century earthwork

4.12 After the construction of the first castle, the de Merlays' focus shifted to the establishment of Newminster Abbey. The land that the abbey is built on was granted for its foundation by the family in the mid-12th century. Hodgson (1832) states that *"John of Hexham indeed expressly affirms, that in 1138, Ranulph de Merlay, a powerful man in Northumberland, received into his castle of Morpeth, certain monks of Fountains [Abbey], who, under his patronage, founded the abbey of Newminster"* (p.20). The founding of an abbey, as previously mentioned, was yet another way for the Normans to put their stamp on an area – aiding control of the population's spiritual as well as temporal lives and contributing to the process of 'Normanisation' of the North. Although outside the boundary of the conservation area, the site of the abbey is inextricably linked to the town's Anglo-Norman past not only through its associative relationship with the de Merlays, but also as it is recorded as having been endowed with the land and woods that surrounded it on both sides of the river[22].

4.13 Following the destruction of the first castle, a second was constructed to the south of the remains of the first on even higher ground. The date for this second castle complex is conjectural, but there is a general consensus that it was probably built following the destruction of the motte and bailey castle in 1216; how long after this event is uncertain but it is probably late-13th / early-14th century in date[23]. The reproduction 1604 town map (Figure 4.6) clearly shows this site with the gatehouse, a curtain wall and a (improbably large) tower keep in the centre. This type of castle layout gradually fell out of fashion from the end of the 13th century and throughout the 14th century in favour of enclosed and concentric castles, where there was no one dominant building. As such, the layout of this second castle complex – as well as the date of destruction of this first – indicate that construction was at the beginning of the date range suggested, rather than the end. Either way, once built this second castle then became the home of de Merlays and their descendants, and the administrative headquarters of the town.

Figure 4.3: The curtain wall of the second castle

The site abuts the south edge of Carlisle Park and is accessible from it. This view is looking west, but the wall continues around the corner to enclose the whole of the site, a reminder of the status and principal function of the castle as a defensible structure.

4.14 Another notable feature of Norman boroughs is the bridge. Northumberland is dissected by rivers running from west to east, all of which are wide enough to pose a significant obstacle to anyone travelling north or south. In order for the Normans to coordinate control of the region, the need for bridges was an understandable priority[24] and such is the case for the River Wansbeck at Morpeth. The early-13th century bridge installed at Morpeth (of which only the scheduled piers and abutments remain) was one of the earliest in England and was built to accommodate the re-routed main road north[25].

4.15 Although bridges are a familiar and largely uneventful sight now, the importance of such a structure to the development of the town at the time cannot be overstated. Situated on this principal route, Morpeth was well serviced by travellers and passing trade in the coming centuries, and flourished to become the principal market town in central Northumberland. Morpeth's standing in the region was further bolstered by its relationship with Newbiggin – located on the coast east of Morpeth – which was the town's outport and had some modest success itself at the time as a small port with a fair and market[26].

4.16 The Norman town grew quickly after the building of the castle, although it is not until 1199 when King John granted Roger de Merlay license to hold a fair and market[27] that there is clear evidence of the status of the settlement at this time. It may be at this point that the town partially divorced itself from the seat of authority at the castle and moved north of the river, as *'the balance of consumption…swung from the aristocracy to the artisan and rural population.'*[28] Another incentive for this move came from a need to expand the market area and main

street frontages to support economic growth, which would have been difficult to achieve had the town remained in the small space at the foot of the castle.

4.17 Further evidence for the development of the town is tantalisingly fragmentary. A number of 13th century charters refer to the confirmation of the liberties of the town's burgesses as well as the extension of the borough, which indicate that it was prospering, although not necessarily to any greater or lesser extent than neighbouring settlements. There are also a number of surviving buildings from this period, notably:

- the 14th century Church of St Mary (south of the castle sites and outside the boundary of the conservation area);
- the 13th century chantry chapel of All Saints (at the head of Telford Bridge on the north side of the river and within the boundary of the conservation area). A chantry being a chapel that is endowed in exchange for the celebration of an agreed number of masses for the soul of the donor – intended to speed the progress of that soul through Purgatory. Wealthy people would often pay to have them built so that a priest could say prayers for them every day to ensure their place in heaven;
- the mid-12th century Newminster Abbey (to the west of the town on the south side of the river and outside the boundary of the conservation area);
- the early-13th century piers and abutments of the old bridge (on the line of the present footbridge to the west of Telford Bridge and within the boundary of the conservation area);
- the gatehouse to the second castle (of 13th / 14th century date, located 200m south of the original motte and bailey castle and outside the boundary of the conservation area);
- The outbuildings behind 19 Bridge Street (partially within the conservation area).

4.18 Although these buildings are scattered and seemingly isolated, fortuitous medieval survivals, they are linked by the most influential feature of the period, that of the layout: the width and scale of streets patterns, open spaces and building plots of the town. Today's principal routes through the town – Newgate, Oldgate and Bridge Street – have been the principal routes through the town since its medieval beginnings. Whilst the buildings that line these streets may not date from the period, the burgage plots set out at this time are still legible in the pre-defined widths of the street frontages and in the gentle curve of the plots, alleys and later streets that extend behind them. The market place, the commercial hub of the town and its source of prosperity for so many centuries, was given license in this period and conceivably has occupied its current location since this time

Figure 4.4: Examples of surviving medieval buildings around Morpeth

The gatehouse to the second castle

The Chantry in the centre of town

How does this phase contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

4.19 This phase is of the utmost importance in the development of Morpeth. This period is the genesis of the town as we see it today, as it was during this time that its basic form was laid out, a form that is still entirely legible today.

4.20 Furthermore, the town is punctuated by the fortunate survival of several important medieval structures. Surrounded by the more numerous buildings of ensuing centuries, these buildings are both surprising and charismatic stalwarts of local character and a tangible link to the town's early beginnings.

4.21 Although not within the boundary of the conservation area, the castles – especially the motte – remain large and impressive structures and must have been even more so when enclosed by extensive outworks and topped with a keep; they are still visible even now in long-reaching views and on the approach to and from the town along Castle Bank. Those adventurous enough to climb to the top of the motte are rewarded with scenic and informative views of the town as well as a much better understanding of why a castle would be located here, looking over the river and town, in order to best display the inhabitants' authority. As such, the features of this phase that are within the setting of the area have an important role to play in our experience and understanding of the conservation area.

Figure 4.5: The Normans arrive word cloud

A word cloud created using the above text to illustrate the key factors and defining influences on 11th-13th century Morpeth

Markets, manufacturing and morality: *the 13th to 19th centuries*

4.22 There has been a market in Morpeth since at least 1199 when King John granted Roger de Merlay license to hold a fair and market in the town. Although not the earliest in the region to be granted this liberty – with Alnmouth, Alnwick, Bamburgh, Newcastle and Norham preceding it[29] – this royal charter planted the seeds of an economy that was to fuel the town's prosperity and shape its identity for centuries, in a way that the others would not. Morpeth, in time, would become the principal market in central Northumberland; indeed, a weekly market is still held on a Wednesday to this day.

4.23 It is highly probably that the location of the market place today has been the location of the market since its inception. It appears in this location on the 1604 town map (Figure 4.6) and, despite a fire in 1689 that destroyed a substantial number of buildings (providing a potential opportunity for reconfiguration of the town that was not taken), remains so on 19th century historic mapping onwards.

4.24 On closer inspection of the 1604 map, one notable feature that is missing is the clock tower, which is now such an enduring characteristic of the market place. It once was essential to the functioning of the town, as it would have tolled the hours of the working day and evoked a sense of locality for the people living there. Although Morpeth's tower dates from the 17th century, the need to provide an inarguable point of reference for all townspeople when it came to timekeeping had been a distinguishing feature of urban life since the early-medieval period. It was a role usually fulfilled and monopolised by the monasteries, until their dissolution in the 16th century, and so the erection of secular clock towers often had a symbolic function – the attainment of a degree of independence for the townsfolk – as well as a practical one[30]. It is perhaps fitting then that the tower contains earlier historic fabric, potentially sourced from the by then defunct Newminster Abbey.

4.25 The chief trade at the market was livestock and this remained the case into the 19th century. The 1827 Kelly's Directory reports that:

> "A weekly market is held here on Wednesdays, for corn, fat cattle, sheep, and the sale of all kinds of provisions. Upwards of 200 oxen and 2,500 sheep and lambs are usually sold every week at this great market…the butchers of the neighbouring maritime ports were formerly obliged to purchase a great deal of fat cattle in the vicinity of Darlington, and other parts of the county of Durham; but circumstances are now reversed, the Northumberland farmers being not only able to supply the increasing population of these places, but to send great numbers of both fat cattle and sheep to Leeds, Wakefield, Manchester, and other manufacturing towns."

4.26 The idea that the aforementioned cities were partly dependent on goods supplied by Morpeth may seem quite unbelievable to us now, but towns like Morpeth benefitted from both the agricultural and industrial revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries by acting as the conduit between the countryside and the city – supplying production for consumption. This remained an important role until the mid-to-late 19th century, when increasing numbers of transportation links around the country made central points of trade less critical – especially somewhere like Morpeth, where the train station was built some way from the centre of commercial activity.

4.27 The principal routes of Newgate, Oldgate and Bridge Street are also present on the 1604 map in the same arrangement as we find them today, radiating from the market place. Although the individual outlines of burgage plots are not legible on this map, the depiction of the narrow, dense, ribbon development of street frontages reveals the layout of a quintessential medieval town. Unlabelled secondary routes are also present on the map in the vicinity of where we find Copper Chare, Dark Lane and Cottingwood Lane today, providing access to the backlands and surrounding fields beyond burgage plots. The road to Mitford is also present, labelled as Westgate (now Dogger Bank), as well as Hillgate at the foot of the old bridge on the south side of the river.

4.28 It is not only the principal routes within the town that appear on the map. Unusually, approaches into the town from the surrounding countryside can also be traced in the road map of today. The clearest of them is the route of the A197, which takes a course very close to that depicted on the historic map. This road now links the town with the A1, but on the 1604 map this route is labelled *'Clifton Longings London Ways'* and leads out to *Stannington Moare*: a drovers' road for driving cattle from the moors down to the market in the town. A similar situation is true of the A192, although it does not follow its historic predecessor quite so closely. This route leads out past Stobhill and, where it meets what is now the roundabout with the A196, opens out into *Whitakamore*. Both roads converge at the castle, approximately where Mafeking Park roundabout is today (see Figure 4.6 / Appendix A).

Figure 4.6: 1604 map of Morpeth

This is an extract from the 1604 map of Morpeth, concentrating on the town centre. Oldgate, Newgate, Bridge Street and Hillgate are all labelled, as well as routes depicted where we find Dark Lane, Copper Chare and Cottingwood Lane today. The market place is also identified with a market cross; another cross is marked at Bullers Green, labelled Bowles Cross. A full copy of this map can be found in Appendix A; this shows the surrounding area and drovers' roads into the town. © Northumberland Archives.

4.29 There is also a gateway depicted on the map at the end of Oldgate on the banks of the river where the current road bridge is now. Although there is no evidence of a bridge on the map, the location of a gate at this point suggests that this was a controlled point of entry to the town, so it is likely that there would have been some means of crossing the river. On the later 1826 town map, stepping stones labelled *Oldgate steps* are shown alongside a footbridge; another set of stepping stones are depicted further downstream beyond the old bridge, whilst upstream are the *Bakehouse steps* (stones replaced but still present today in the same location) and *Bullers Green steps* (in the location of the current 1904 pedestrian bridge).

4.30 Increasing issues with the narrow and steep profile of the old bridge to the south of the town also led to it being superseded by the existing road bridge, built in 1830 to the designs of Thomas Telford. The old bridge was demolished, bar its piers and abutments, but was brought back into use in 1869 when the remains became the foundations for a new footbridge, funded by public subscription

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Figure 4.7: Historic crossing points across the River Wansbeck

The Bakehouse steps. Although replaced, there have been stepping stones at this crossing point for centuries.

The substantial abutment of the old medieval bridge with decidedly more the dainty footbridge of 1869 on top. In the background we can see the stone arches of Telford Bridge.

4.31 The 1604 map also reveals some interesting, if at times tantalising, clues as to what else was happening in the town at the time. For example, Fulling Mill is marked on the map between Dark Lane and the river to the north-east of the town. Just south of this is Dobmill, a water-powered mill that appears to be along the line of the Cottingburn as it joins the Wansbeck, and a little further south is Tenter Greene. This layout is essentially a pre-industrialisation production line: fulling was a process of cleaning wool to rid it of dirt and to make it thicker, a process that by the medieval period was usually powered by a watermill, and a tenter was a framework on which fabric was then stretched. The location in which these activities were taking place is also characteristic of a medieval settlement, with the deliberate positioning of the more unpleasant undertakings downstream and downwind of the town. Intriguingly, by Wood's 1826 town map (Figure

4.10), the area labelled Tenter Greene is renamed Barker's Close. Tree bark (often oak) was used to tan leather, and tanners were often known as barkers, and so there appears to have been continuity for at least two centuries of this area being used for textile production.

4.32 This eastern edge of the town continued to be the principal site for some of the less appealing industrial activities of the town well into the 20th century, variably home to sewage works, an abattoir, gas works, electricity works, iron works and a number of mills.

4.33 Another indicator of important trade activities in the town during this time can be found by considering its governance by *The Corporation of the Baliffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Morpeth*[31]. In order to participate in a particular trade in medieval towns and cities you had to be a member of the associated guild and Morpeth was no different. There were 7 guilds or companies of the Corporation of Morpeth: the Merchant Tailors; The Tanners; Fullers and Dyers; Smiths, Saddlers and Armourers; Cordwainers (shoe makers); Weavers, and the Skinners, Glovers and Butchers[32].

4.34 Membership of a guild was by prescription, with restricted numbers for each in order to control the market for each trade, the price of goods, trading hours and competition. Each guild member had to be a burgess or free brother of the town, and each guild was overseen by a senior burgess called an alderman along with deputies called proctors. The guilds also exercised civil duties and governance of the town, as members of each guild were elected as Council members to preside over the Corporation, establish local law and sit on the bench at various courts in the town. These guilds are memorialised today in the market place, which contains plaques commemorating each guild.

Figure 4.8: Guild commemorative plaques

Top row from left to right: Cordwainers (1417); Weavers (1485); Smiths, Saddlers & Armourers (1523); Merchants & Tailors (1524)

Bottom row from left to right: Skinners, Glovers & Butchers (1560); Tanners (1617); Fullers, Dyers, Carvers & Hatters (1676)

4.35 By the time we reach the early-19th century, documentary sources start to add more colour to the outline image we have of everyday life in the town up until this point. The Kelly's Directories mentioned previously provide a snapshot in time of a place: they give a potted history of the town and notable inhabitants, a description of governance and activity at the time of writing, and list commercial ventures located within the town; think of it as a 19th century precursor

to the Yellow Pages or Trip Advisor (without the reviews). In this particular edition of the directory in 1827, the description of the market and market place is particularly enlightening. Further to the quote above, we are told that:

> "The Market Place is conveniently situated near the centre of the town, but is not sufficiently capacious for the numerous droves of cattle, flocks of sheep, swine, &c. which are here exposed for sale. The sheep pens partly front the shops, leaving a narrow passage to the doors, and are partly set up in narrow lanes and courts adjoining the market place."

4.36 Add to this that around the market place alone the directory records:

- 6 grocers, tea & flour dealers;
- 5 linen & woollen drapers;
- 5 hotels, inns & taverns;
- 4 milliners;
- 3 glass, china and earthenware dealers;
- 2 each of bankers, painters & glaziers and auctioneers, and
- an attorney, a blacksmith, a boot & shoemaker, a clog & patten maker, a confectioner and fruiterer, a cooper, a corn miller, a flax dresser, a hat manufacturer, a joiner & cabinet maker, a saddlers & iron mongers, a tailors, a wheelwright and a wine and spirit merchant.

4.37 All this activity squeezed into an area of less than 4000m^2, and that list is but a taste of the professions that line the other streets of the down – anything from perfumers & hair cutters to stone masons, rope & twine makers, weavers & linen makers, druggists, gardeners, butchers and skinners. *And* no less than 34 hotels, inns and taverns, illustrating that travellers and traders continued to be an important source of revenue for the occupants of the town.

4.38 The layout of the town was well established by the 1604 map and little would change over the next two and a half centuries. Wood's 1826 town map (Figure 4.10) shows that Oldgate, Bridge Street and Newgate remain the principal routes through the town and development remains focused along these routes. Interestingly, between what is now Copper Chare and Bullers Green, Newgate Street is labelled as Silver Street; the reference to both copper and silver on this map does suggest the potential presence of a small metal-working industry in this area at some point, but there is nothing else labelled on the map to confirm this. Kelly's 1827 Directory provides a bit more detail, but if the reference was to metalwork this trade had since moved on, as the primary activity on Silver Street and Bullers Green at this time is weaving and linen manufacturing (with 11 out of 14 manufacturers mentioned located in this area). Whatever the story behind it, Silver Street had reverted back to Newgate Street by the 1859 OS map.

4.39 The same map also shows a clay pit and brick and tile works to the north of the town, situated along the Cottingburn. Although the use of brick as a building material in the town is clear before this date, bricks were usually made in temporary brick kilns located on the site of the building being constructed. The presence of a permanent brick works indicates the continuing popularity of the material, both within Morpeth but also reflecting architectural fashions of the time.

4.40 Outside of time spent on commercial endeavours, the other principal call on town inhabitants' time was to religious observance. The earliest evidence of this is the medieval parish church of St Mary's, the Chantry Chapel and nearby Newminster Abbey, but the ensuing centuries saw a diversification of denominations, each of which required dedicated places of worship. By the 1826 town map there is, in addition to the above:

- a Presbyterian Chapel, Union Street, now Cottingwood Lane. c1722, later used as a school and now converted to residential;
- a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Manchester Street, rebuilt 1823 and again in 1884, and now the Boys' Brigade headquarters; and
- a Catholic Chapel, hidden behind the streetfront on Oldgate, now converted into commercial and residential use. Built c1778, it was superseded by the building of the Church of St Robert across the road once the Catholic Relief Acts of the late-18th and early-19th centuries finally allowed Catholics the right to own and inherit land and properties, partake in civic life, and openly worship in dedicated churches. (Prior to this masses were carried out behind private, closed doors – in a Morpeth this was done in a house at Bullers Green – hence the surviving chapel on Oldgate taking the appearance of a handsome but inconspicuous dwelling.)

4.41 By the beginning of the 20th century there was added to that list:

- a Congregational Chapel, Dacre Street, 1898;
- St George's United Reformed Church, Bridge Street, 1860. Formerly a Presbyterian chapel, located at the head of Telford Bridge on the site of the old town mill;
- a Primitive Methodist Chapel, Howard Street, 1904;

- the Anglican Church of St James the Great, Newgate Street, 1846; and
- the Catholic Church of St Robert, Oldgate, 1849.

4.42 Morality was not confined within the walls of a place of worship, however, and evidence of the drive for social improvement could be found throughout the streets of Morpeth. One unmissable testament to this can be seen on the approach to the town down Castle Bank in John Dobson's uncompromisingly assertive new prison and courthouse of 1822. It replaced a gaol that had stood, in various forms, on Bridge Street for centuries[33] and a house of correction that was demolished to make way for Telford Bridge and the new route across the river. Despite the loss of its ancillary buildings (and planned 21 foot high enclosing wall[34]) and subsequent residential and commercial use, Dobson's courthouse remains an imposing monument to its original authoritative purpose.

4.43 As the industrial revolution continued into the 19th century so the emphasis on social duty and intellectual and moral betterment of less fortunate members of society intensified. Already established by the time of Kelly's Directory of 1827 are several philanthropic and benefit societies, a Masonic Lodge and a Lodge of Odd-Fellows, as well as a Freemasons' Hall built in 1813 in Percy Court[35]. It also records how the grammar school (located in part of the Chantry), founded by Edward VI in 1552[36], was obliged to educate the children of all freemen and brothers without cost, and the sons of tenants and farmers at the cost of no more than 20s per annum. In 1793 the English Free School was built on Bridge Street, which could accommodate the education of 60 children of burgesses of the town. By the 1855 Kelly's Directory these have been joined by *The Borough School*, which was funded by the Town Council and had 150 girls and 120 infants in attendance, and *St James's Nation School*, which was built at the same time as the church in 1846, and had an average attendance in excess of 300 pupils.

4.44 A dispensary 'for the relief of the indigent sick and lame' (Kelly, p449) was opened on Oldgate in 1817 along with a subscription library, which was joined in 1825 by the *Mechanical and Scientific Institution* and, by 1855, a *Mechanics Institute* located on Market Place. Although morally questionable by today's standards, the *county lunatic asylum* – later known as St George's Hospital – appears by the 1859 OS map to the north of the town, situated in isolated and extensive grounds.

4.45 A Union Workhouse is recorded on the first edition OS map of 1859 between Newgate Street and the river, but provisions for the poor of the parish were established well before this time: parishes had a legal responsibility to provide poor relief from the early-17th century onwards, and an advert in the *Newcastle Courant* in 1764 sought a master for Morpeth workhouse. In 1836 Morpeth Poor Law Union was formed; they took over the management of the existing workhouse but replaced it with a substantial new building, on the same site, in the mid-19th century[37]. This building survived until the middle of the 20th century until it was demolished to make room for the telephone exchange that now occupies the site.

How does this phase contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

4.46 Although no doubt lamented at the time, the fire in the late-17th century has inadvertently made Morpeth the distinctive town it is today and unlike all other towns in Northumberland: in a region where stone is the customary building material, Morpeth is a town clearly of medieval origins but composed principally of 18th to 20th century brick buildings. These peculiar circumstances have had a defining influence on the character and appearance of the town, one of the reasons for the conservation area's designation.

4.47 The success of the settlement as a centre for trade and as a stopping point on the principal north-south road financed some of the more ambitious buildings in the town. As such, today it is furnished with an array of building types and styles that together document the development of the town and define its appearance. Thankfully, the piecemeal upgrading of buildings has meant that whilst architectural style and detailing could be supplanted, buildings have been constrained by their neighbours so that the fixed proportions set down in the form of burgage plots are still legible, even where plots have been amalgamated.

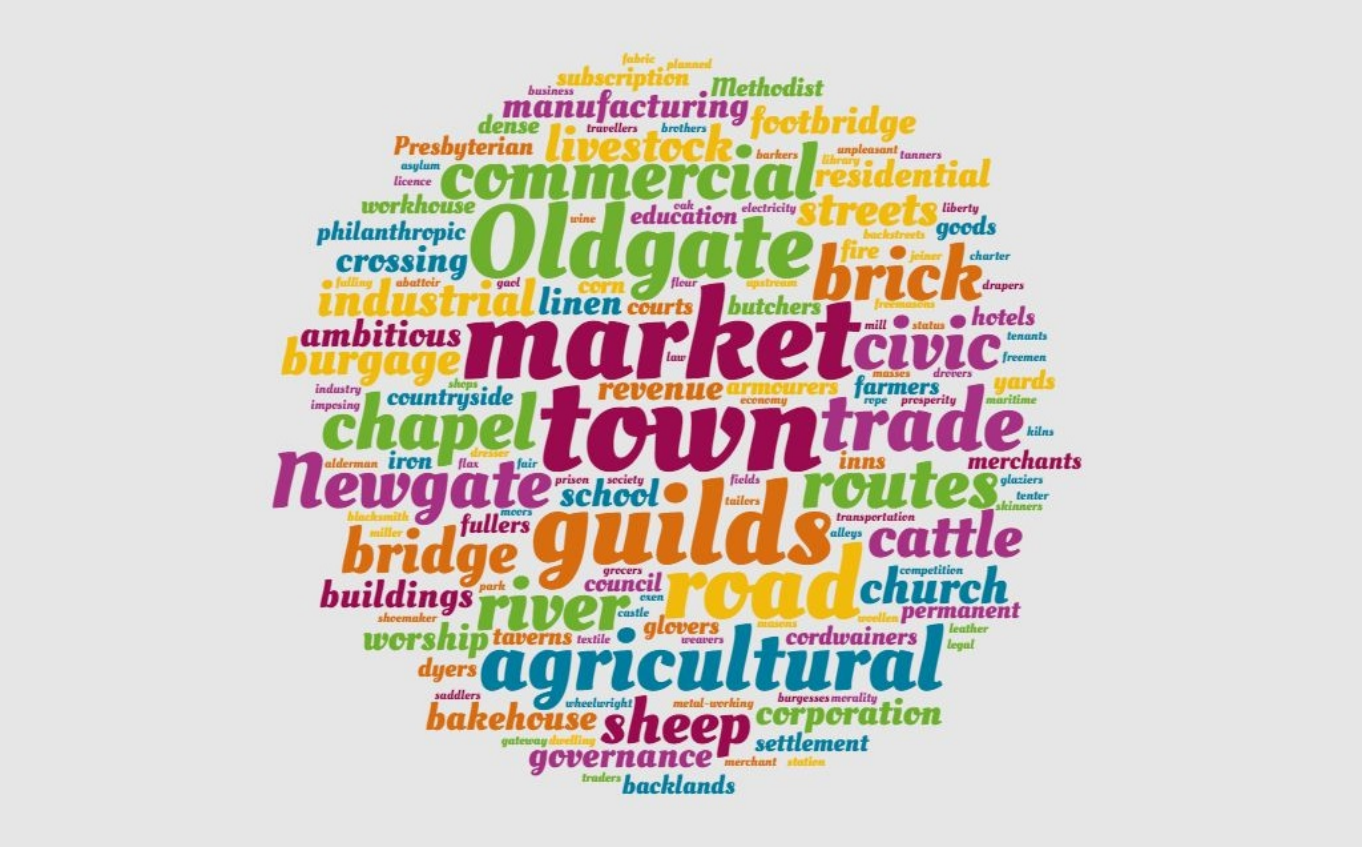
4.48 The architectural treatment of street elevations give little hint of the vast range of trades and activities taking place during this time, but this is unsurprising: this is the display elevation, advertising the status of the occupants or distinguishing the quality of the product being sold from that of a competitor. Consequently, many have been remodelled as architectural fashions and functions changed; however, evidence of Morpeth's industrious under-belly can still be found behind the scenes in the backstreets. Here, to the rear of some properties, more functional buildings can be found, sometimes incorporating stonework of earlier agricultural and industrial buildings and boundary walls that extended back into the burgage plots.

4.49 Many of the alleys and yards that run between and behind the street fronts have been preserved from earlier times (such as Old Bakehouse Yard), but many of their names relate to this period and the activities and businesses that were operating at this time, for example: King's Head Yard, Turk's Head Yard, George and Dragon Yard, Old Post Office Yard, Horse Entry. Others relate to the names of residents: Wigham's Yard, Scott's Yard, Fawcett's Yard, Duncan's Yard

4.50 Although not directly contributing to the character and appearance of the conservation area, the historic routes into

the town from Stannington, Stobhill and Mitford help place the town in a wider context, and can help explain how the town interacted with and relied upon the surrounding landscape.

Figure 4.9: Markets, manufacturing and morality word map



A word map created using the above text to illustrate the key factors and defining influences on 13th-19th century Morpeth

Railways, residences and recreation: *19th to mid-20th century*

4.51 The arrival of the railway in the 19th century was both part of the reason for the decline of the town's commercial standing in the region, but also its saving grace. With a station on the east coast main line, the market in Morpeth declined as it was easy enough to transport livestock straight into Newcastle for sale; the station was built in 1847 and by the 1859 OS map an auction mart and weigh house are depicted, already located adjacent to it.

4.52 This evolution did not mean total collapse for the town's economy, however, as there was still a sizeable town with locals that required goods and services. The Kelly's Directory of 1914 notes that *"brewing and brick and tile making are carried on, and there is an iron foundry, saw mills, corn mills and a woollen factory"* (p.195) and goes on to list the numerous traders and proprietors operating in the town. Investment in the town's building stock also continued, evident in some of the finely detailed and, at times, quite ornate late-19th century and early-20th century commercial buildings that line the principal routes through the town.

4.53 On the 1921 OS map a cattle market is depicted on land between the Town Hall and the river, where the leisure centre is now. No longer needed for agricultural and industrial production, the 20th century saw increasing development of these backlands, which also brought with it new streets needed for access; in this instance, it involved the demolition of buildings to the west of the Town Hall and the introduction of the unsurprisingly named New Market street.

4.54 At the same time, the transport link ensured that the town continued – and continues – to grow, but with residential development as the principal driver, rather than commercial. By the 1859 OS map, the start of Victorian housing can be seen emerging north-east of the town centre with the establishment of Howard Terrace and Dacre Street. By the 1896 OS map they have been joined by Hood Street and, to the south of the river, Wansbeck Terrace, Melbourne Terrace and Tenter Terrace. By 1921 the familiar grid pattern of Victorian streets and housing is well-established, the earlier streets having been joined by King's Avenue, De Merlay Road, Thorpe Avenue, Olympia Gardens, Fenwick Grove and Stanley Terrace; behind Oldgate Pretoria Avenue; to the south of the river the development of Goose Hill, Alexandra Road and surrounding streets. The residences are a range of both terraced housing and sizeable Victorian villas set in generous grounds. By this time, it has also been joined by Hollon Street, St Mark's Street, Lady's Walk and Price Street located west of the river, the wavy streets and cul-de-sacs typical of 20th century housing.

4.55 Also of note on the 1826 town map is an area called *The Terrace*, a public promenade funded by the Corporation of Morpeth and the Earl of Carlisle[38]. The provision of walks (that is, specifically for perambulation rather than carriages) took-off in the middle of the 18th century and was at the height of popularity by the end of that century. Large cities with wealthy citizens were the first to establish them (notably in Liverpool and Leicester). Morpeth's is already established by the 1826 town map (although called Wansbeck Terrace at that point) and remains public space on subsequent OS maps until the end of the 19th century. The creation of a public walk in a town the size of Morpeth in the early-19th century – at the latest – is relatively unusual and is a further indication of the commercial success and affluence of the town – and the desire to be seen as such – at that time. By the 20th century the site had been split, half becoming part of the grounds of the adjacent St George's Church and the rest the private grounds of a newly built residence. Today, it gives its name to the car park that now occupies the site.

Figure 4.10: 1826 town map of Morpeth

What is most striking about this map is legibility of the medieval layout of streets, burgage plots and agricultural surroundings into the 19th century. Barker's Close and Wansbeck Terrace can be seen to the right-hand side of the map, as can Dobson's courthouse, but Carlisle park has yet to appear. © Northumberland Archives.

4.56 At the beginning of the 20th century we see the establishment of Carlisle Park on the south side of the river, stretching between Castle Woods to the west of the town and the sites of the castles to the south of the town. The evolution of public parks was a response to the industrialisation and urbanisation of the country, with its origins in concerns for public physical and moral health. Expanding urban populations had no access to green open space and it was recognised by some that this could be provided in towns and cities for the betterment of the working classes. Alongside improved health, parks could provide entertainment, education and sporting facilities. The first publicly funded public park was opened at Birkenhead in 1847 and a great number of, particularly northern, towns and cities followed suit.

4.57 Morpeth was rather late in joining the movement, with Carlisle Park opening in 1929. Prior to this there was a small parcel of land north of Castle Wood that is noted on the 1896 map as *Victoria Pleasure Grounds*, complete with bandstand. Its existence was short-lived, however, as by the 1921 map it has become allotment gardens. This is perhaps unsurprising though, as it coincides with the creation of Carlisle Park, a much large public space that could easily accommodate a pavilion and recreational space in one area.

4.58 Carlisle Park occupies land that was donated by the Countess of Carlisle – hence the name – in 1916, although prior to this it was already an established open space crossed by a network of footpaths. This, along with the facts that until the late-19th century *The Terrace* and *Victoria Pleasure Grounds* were still in use as public space and Morpeth did not industrialise to anywhere near the same extent as other towns, may account for the later date of the park's establishment.

Figure 4.11: Carlisle Park

The beautifully well-kept planting and walks of Carlisle Park. To the middle right the base of the Norman motte is visible, and beneath that the statue of the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, unveiled in 2018.

4.59 Public space and entertainment was not a completely new idea, however, and we know that to the north of the town a race course had been present since at least 1746 (as it is at this date that races are advertised in the Newcastle Courant)[39]. The area is marked-up on the 1604 map as Cottin Woode and so the course must have been established sometime during the 17th / early-18th century. Interestingly, although called 'woode' there are no trees identified in the area, only some scattered around its perimeter. As such, it appears to be an area of common ground, perhaps previously wooded or grazed wood pasture, but land that was progressively cleared, possibly through overgrazing. By this point it was most probably of marginal agricultural quality and so remained unenclosed and a 'common' pastime became established – horse racing. By the 1859 OS map the area is named *Cottingwood Common* and the course clearly marked; it remained in use until St George's hospital was built in the mid-19th century, after which it is labelled as the old race course, although the track is still clearly demarcated. The popularity of the pastime did not go with it though, and by the 1914 Kelly's Directory we are told that "*races are held annually, on a course at Morpeth common, on the south side of the town.*" (p.195).

4.60 It is not only permanent residents that benefitted from the attractive setting and amenities that Morpeth had to offer. The 1914 Kelly's Directory (p.194) tells us that:

> "the town, from its picturesque situation, is frequented during the summer months by parties of pleasure from Newcastle, Alnwick and neighbouring places."

4.61 Morpeth had always been a town with plentiful and frequent visitors, but by the end of the 19th century the primary reason for trips to the town were for leisure rather than work. Surrounded by a landscape scarred by mining activity and towns and cities immersed in industrial progress, Morpeth offered an accessible rural respite for the increasingly mobile and affluent middle classes.

How does this phase contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

4.62 This phase undoubtedly marked a dramatic shift in the town's focus, economic activity and sense of place; however, the majority of the buildings and spaces that tell us about this chapter in the town's development are outside the designated boundary of the conservation area – the residential streets, the railway, the park. Within the boundary it is principally documented by the presence of some fine late 19th century and early 20th century commercial buildings. Often, but not always, they are a re-fronting or rebuilding of older buildings, but their character and appearance is very much of their time and adds to the architectural variety of the town. As with the previous phase, their piecemeal development has meant that that they largely conform to the established scale, proportions, orientation and materiality of their neighbours, and so whilst there is eclecticism in styles there is an overarching harmony that ties the street scenes together.

4.63 The biggest change in character for the town was the infilling and loss of backlands. These long, narrow plots had been a fundamental component of the town, needed to sustain and facilitate trade and commerce. In an area where any expansion of the core of the town is constrained by the river, space is at a premium and so it is understandable that, as the plots became less of a necessity and more of a luxury, development started to creep in. Luckily, this did not affect the fundamental layout of the town but built on it, so that whilst in many cases the character of the land was changed from open to developed it still followed the layout of the plots, such as with Pretoria Avenue. Any undeveloped backland that survives now is not only valuable space but a palpable link to the town's historic roots.

4.64 Although not directly contributing to the character and appearance of the conservation area, the residential development and location of the railway place the town in a wider context, helping to explain its changing fortunes and role in the region.

Figure 4.12: Railways, residences and recreation word cloud

A word cloud created using the above text to illustrate the key factors and defining influences on 19th and early-20th century Morpeth

Recent past: *mid-20th century to present day*

4.65 Compared to the upheaval of some of the events of previous centuries – fires, changing technologies, industry, social attitudes and mobility – the most recent phase in Morpeth's history has been a relatively stable time for the town. Throughout the course of the century, demolition and infill of plots across the town continued to be carried out largely on a piecemeal basis – an inevitable, and at times necessary, process of evolution of the settlement's building stock.

4.66 The infilling of backlands is a trend that was well-established by now and one that continued in the latter half of the 20th century. Similarly, the demand for housing also continued. This principally took the form of extensions to the areas previously mentioned; however, by the 1959 OS map we also see a change in the use and character of the area adjacent to Low Stanners on the eastern edge of the town, where previously mills and other larger-scale industrial activities were concentrated. As these disappeared or were relocated further out of town, so the land became available for redevelopment and this took the form of residential properties and further retail development. This marked the end of any notable industrial activity in the town, although the link is still preserved in the names of some streets, such as Gas House Lane and Staithes Lane. Mirroring this change, the cattle market is still present on the 1959 OS map, but by the 1967-70 OS map it has also disappeared, replaced by swimming baths.

4.67 Behind Bridge Street residential development was also developing, but in a move away from historical precedent it was to turn its back towards the town and take advantage of views of the river and Carlisle Park. This is a notable departure from the historic development pattern. Although the backlands of this area of the town had started to be repurposed well before the middle of the 20th century, development had (as it had for many centuries) predominantly followed the course of the historic plot boundaries – sometimes amalgamating plots to gain more width, but always running perpendicular to the principal street frontages. As late as the 1922 OS map this is still the case, but by the 1938 OS map this pattern has started to change. By the end of the century, developments such as that around Mathesons Gardens (behind Oldgate), Dawson Place (to the east of Newgate) and Mains Place (to the west of Newgate) have taken an approach very much of their era; these developments are far more insular, with focus on the individual scheme and less concern for the prevailing patterns of their wider context.

4.68 One of the most noticeable shifts that the town has had to accommodate is people's increasing use and reliance on the car. This development has been a double-edged sword: keeping the town accessible has helped ensure the historic core of Morpeth remains the centre of activity in the town, but it has also meant much open space has been sacrificed over the years to car parking. This includes public spaces such as *The Terrace* adjacent to St George's Church being completely given over to parking, private plots behind Bridge Street being truncated to make space, and swathes of parking spaces adjacent to Low Stanners and to the north of Bridge Street.

How does this phase contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

4.69 Purely in terms of reinforcing and responding to the historic character and sense of place of Morpeth, there have in more recent years been some sympathetic changes and some well-meaning but regrettable ones too. On the whole though, the merits of buildings from this era are limited: at best they are innocuous, at worst they fail either to express and respond to Morpeth's individual character – taking the form of a generic historical pastiche or making a token gesture towards materiality – or to add an ambitious, contemporary building that would continue the rich architectural legacy of the town.

4.70 This phase has seen increasing dispersal of activity with the expansion of the town's retail offering away from the principal street properties shifting focus and activity patterns somewhat. Thankfully, the resilience and requirements of smaller businesses and independent shops means that the use of historic buildings remains proportionately high and there is a still a good balance of commercial and residential properties right at the core of the town.

Figure 4.13: Recent past word cloud

A word cloud created using the above text to illustrate the key factors and defining influences on 20th century Morpeth

Chapter 5
Character Analysis of the Conservation Area

This section considers how the historical development of the town, as outlined above, is evidenced in the historic environment that is included within the boundary of the conservation area.

Function and form

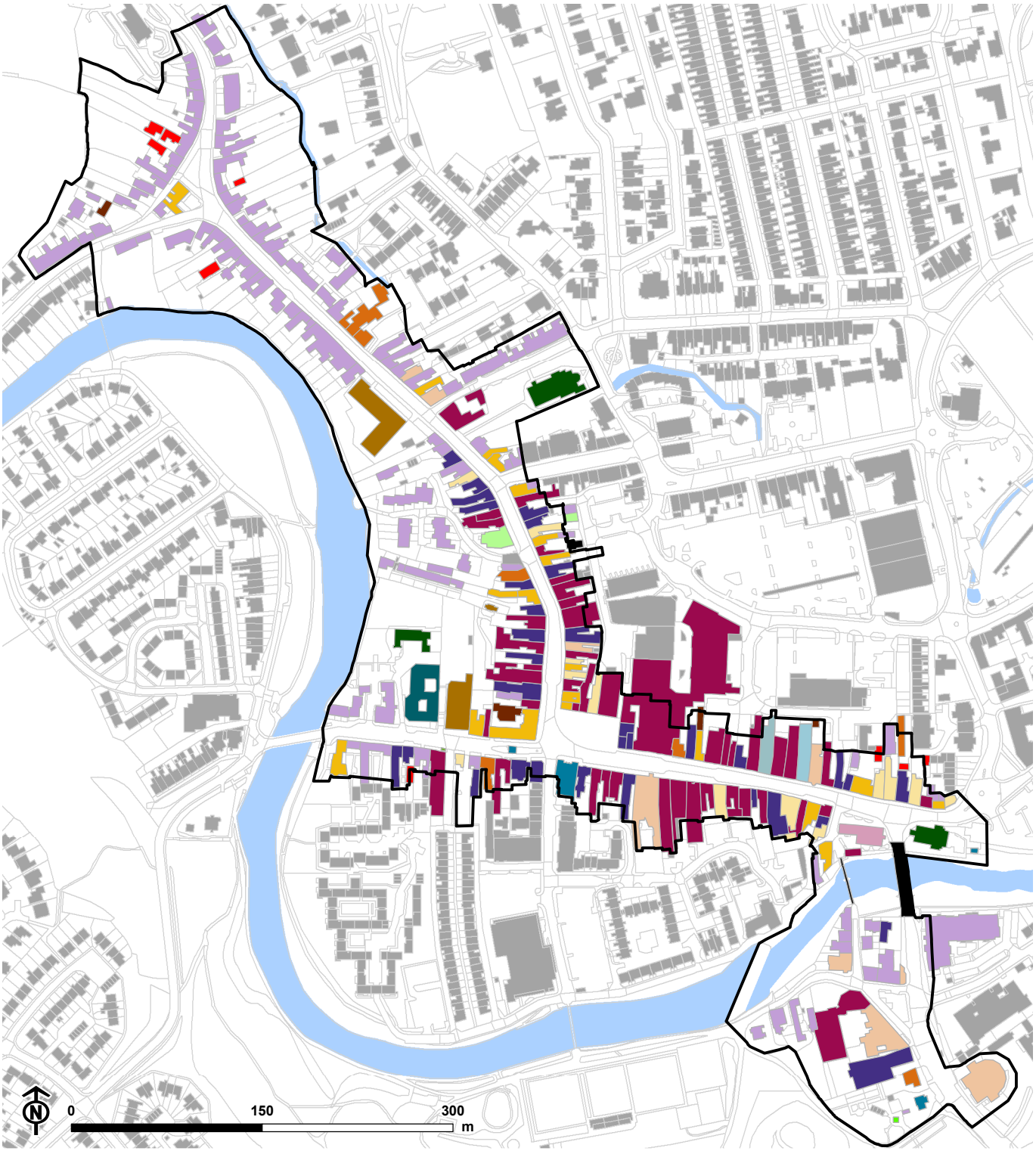
Uses

5.1 The conservation area concentrates around the principal historic routes through the core of the town and so predominantly contains a mix of residential and retail uses until you reach Bullers Green, where it is principally residential. This is interspersed by places of worship (often appearing as such in character although not always in religious use anymore) and other public buildings such as the town hall, and the bagpipe museum and tourist information centre located in the Chantry.

5.2 Although nowhere near as numerous as in previous centuries, there are also a goodly number of public houses in the town, as well as restaurants and cafes. The healthy mix of residential accommodation right within the centre of the town's commercial activity, as well as its continuing draw to non-residents as a well-appointed and historic market town, ensures they are well-frequented by locals and visitors.

5.3 Although towards the edge of the conservation area, St Robert's primary school, located at the quieter, west end of Oldgate, brings a unique dynamic to the area. The school building itself is not of particular note, but the sound and activity of a primary school right in the heart of the town makes an important contribution to its character by reminding us that Morpeth's story is not just one of commerce, but of community too.

5.4 The map on the following page (Figure 5.1) shows the break down in building uses across the conservation area.



CB:EL EB:lendak_e LUC FIGR5-1_10648_r1_Use_A4P 07/01/2020
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure 5.1: Building Use Type

Conservation Area

Building use

- Civil
- Commemorative
- Commercial / Residential
- Commercial – eatery
- Commercial – hotel / pub
- Commercial – office
- Commercial – retail
- Commercial – services
- Culture and Entertainment
- Domestic
- Educational
- Gardens, parks and urban spaces
- Health and Welfare
- Industrial
- Places of Worship
- Sports and recreation
- Street furniture
- Transport
- Utilities and communication
- Not accessed

Scale

5.5 The height of buildings in the town is generally 2 to 3 storeys, although the overall height can vary depending on the age of the building and the floor to ceiling heights. The range of these variations is not vast though, and on the whole the roofscape of the street frontages transitions gently from one building to the next, adding variety and visual interest without any one building particularly dominating a scene.

5.6 Having said that, there are a few notable exceptions that punctuate the skyline. These are usually civic or religious buildings – public buildings intended as landmarks. Whilst drawing a little more attention to themselves, they do not overwhelm because the height is but a slender accent in the overall composition – a spire, a turret, a tower, a gable, a chimney.

5.7 The only exception to this rule is Dobson's courthouse, the sheer bulk of which commands attention, as was the intent. However, this is only the case on the southern approach to the town – once you are over the bridge and into the core of the town the enclosed nature of the streets and the separation provided by the river mean that its prominence is immediate but ephemeral.

Figure 5.1: Building scales

The view west up Bridge Street. The Clock Tower and the towers of the Town Hall can be seen in the distance, punctuating but not dominating the gently undulating roofscape.

The approach to town down Castle Bank, with Carlisle Park to the left and Dobson's courthouse to the right. Although an impressive and architecturally significant building, its size is something of an anomaly in the conservation area.

Hierarchy

5.8 There is a strong and legible hierarchy to Morpeth's historic environment, one that on the whole has been the set pattern for development in the town up until present day. It generally follows the form that the greatest financial investment went into the front of the building and public spaces internally, whether a building of domestic, commercial or civic use. This was the showpiece, the part of the building that conveyed the status and standing of the occupants, distinguished your business from that of your competitors, or conveyed its authoritative or erudite purpose. The further back into the plot, the less money was spent and the less grand the buildings; this is why the return gables and rear of stone-fronted buildings are often constructed in brick, as this was a much cheaper material to build with than dressed stone. Behind the street-facing building were ancillary outbuildings, functional in style and appearance in whatever way best suited their purpose – industrial, agricultural, storage.

5.9 Many of the properties in Morpeth still follow this pattern, with the most expensive and largest of the buildings toward the front of the plot, diminishing in size and status towards the rear. As such, the character of the side streets and alleys is markedly different from the principal streets, having a more functional, humble and haphazard appearance. Because of the traditionally more private and practical uses for these buildings, investment was kept to a minimum and remnants of older buildings can often be found reused and adapted to suit changing requirements; so whilst the street frontage of a plot may appear 19th century in character, the rear can often reveal earlier origins.

Figure 5.2: Building hierarchies

The distinctive stepping of building heights from the street frontage down and back into the site, this example found to the rear of 51 Bridge Street.

Not only are the rear outbuildings subservient to the principal building in scale, but their character is also distinctly more modest and functional. This example is found to the rear of 20 – 22 Bridge Street.

Figure 5.3: Building evolution and hierarchy

The frontage of 26 - 28 Newgate Street…

…and its rear, incorporating, adapting and repurposing an older building.

Architectural detailing

Medieval

5.10 Complete, surviving medieval buildings in the town are not numerous, and even less so within the conservation area, which includes only the Chantry and the outbuildings behind 19 Bridge Street. The Chantry is a fortunate and endearing survival, but hardly representative of the majority of buildings that would have once characterised the town at this time: it is a building of status and remains an impressive and intriguing addition to the streetscape to this day.

5.11 The outbuildings to 19 Bridge Street (see annotated photograph on the following page), on the other hand, are a more surprising and unusual survival, as it is these more modest buildings that are more likely to be lost or altered beyond recognition. Although it experienced some alteration in the 19th century, the essential characteristics of the building give away its origins: the steeply-pitched roof, the individually sized and placed openings, the invariable use of stone – the small, squared and dressed stones being a particularly distinguishing feature. It has a distinct character that gives us a tangible link back to the early days of the settlement.

5.12 Deviate from the principal streets and more evidence can be found of these medieval roots, where boundary walls and older buildings have been reused as the foundations for later buildings. And there is, of course, the piers and abutments of the original 13th century bridge across the river that survive, which give some indication of the impressive scale of the structure and of the capabilities of the town's early inhabitants.

5.13 Buildings identified as being predominantly medieval in character are identified in Appendix B, Figure B.1.

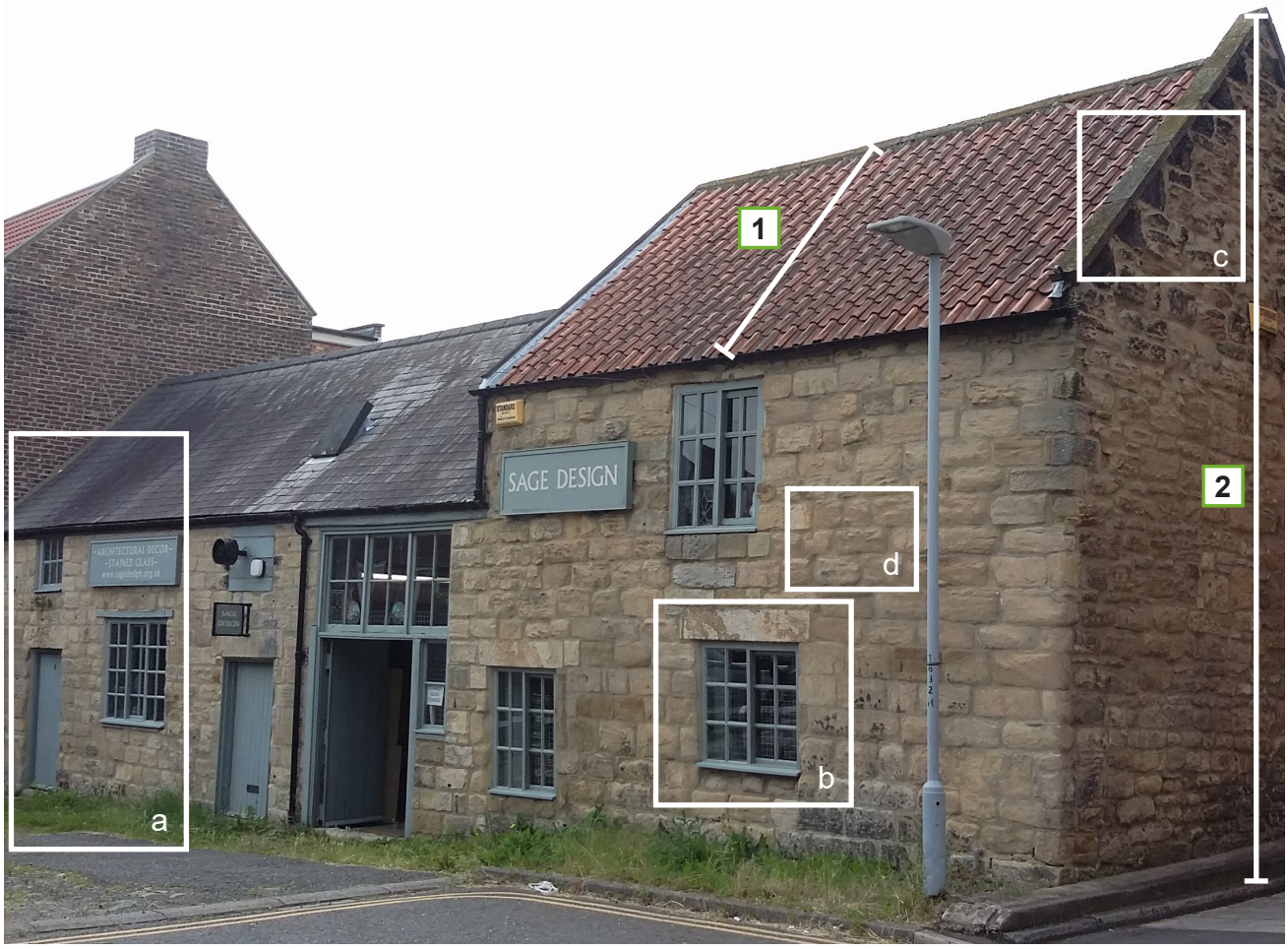
Character: individual, charismatic, enduring

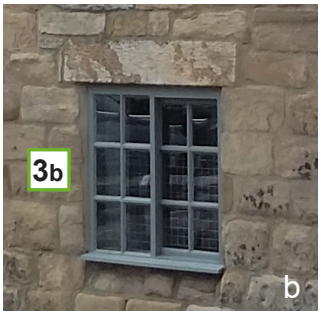
15th to 17th century

5.14 Due to the fire in the late 17th century, most buildings dating from this period that would have occupied this well-established town were lost. A handful survives that remain identifiably of this era, although they are not always easily distinguishable from their predecessors. This is because the scale, form and materiality of the buildings are principally the same. However, some subtle differences can be found: there may be more uniformity to the size and placement of window openings, and the stonework more elongated (sometimes coursed, sometimes laid in random-rubble formation).

5.15 Buildings identified as being predominantly 15th to 17th century in character are identified in Appendix B, Figure B.1.

Character: engaging, modest, distinguished.





1. Steeply pitched roof
2. Small-scale building
3. Small openings, individually placed and sized (3a + 3b)
4. Reverse-stepped gable
5. Squared, dressed stone

Early-to-mid 18th century

5.16 The 18th century is a particularly well-documented period of Morpeth's history. Following the fire in 1689, there was substantial rebuilding of the town and an opportunity to introduce the latest styles and fashions in both construction and architectural detailing. Numerous buildings survive from this period and they make a considerable contribution to the character and appearance of the town.

5.17 There is commonality to buildings from this century, but there is also a subtle progression in character, an increasing sophistication and refinement, that means the contribution they make to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area is distinct and warrants independent discussion.

5.18 The most apparent feature of buildings of the first half of this century is the almost ubiquitous use of brick. At this time bricks were still handmade, usually on site in temporary kilns and using local clay. The clays around Morpeth have resulted in bricks of soft oranges with highlights of red, and a deep almost plum coloured undertone. They give a beautifully warm and rich appearance to the buildings and are quite distinct from the mass-produced and imported bricks used from the mid-19th century onwards.

5.19 Whilst they are made from the same clay, the process of hand-making bricks means that there is subtle variation in size and finish depending on the skill of the craftsman in charge of firing, where the brick was placed in the kiln and the builder's personal preference. There was no standardised sizing and so this can alter from building to building, but they tend to be thinner and longer than they are today. The surface is more textured than later bricks, partly because of the wear and tear of intervening centuries, but also because the firing temperatures that could be achieved at this time were comparatively low, and so the fireskin of the brick – the surface of the brick that protects the softer inner – did not vitrify to the same extent, resulting in a rougher finish.

5.20 Once the bricks were made, further variation and character was achieved through how they were laid. A variety of bonds could be used, although buildings of this period in Morpeth favoured English garden wall bond. Equally though, examples of stretcher bond and Flemish bond can be found, as well as some interesting examples that appear to be a randomly applied mixture of all three (see Appendix D for illustrations of the different bond patterns). Lintels, stringcourses and eaves detailing – such as sawtooth or cogged cornices – are all in brick and animate an otherwise flat façade.

5.21 There is less variety to be found with roof materials, which on the whole would have been a regional slate – such as Cumbrian or Westmorland – although most have been replaced over the years with Welsh slate.

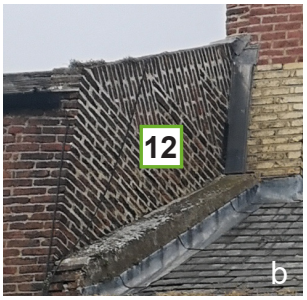
5.22 Another tell-tale feature of this period of building is the window. By this date the use of sash windows is absolute, but advancing technologies, changing fashions and legislative directions on design mean that an early 18th century sash is quite distinct from an early 19th century one. A healthy proportion of buildings from this period in Morpeth retain their original windows, or replacements that accurately replicate them, and they do much to reinforce the character of the building. Those from the early 18th century are rectangular but modest in size. The frame is visible – giving the windows a thick border – and they are placed flush with the façade of the building. The lights are small and numerous – 8 over 8 or 6 over 6 – and the glazing bars that hold them in place are moulded but thickset. There is appreciation that the arrangement of windows should be more regular, but the symmetry that underpins classical design is not always successfully applied: the internal layout of these buildings dictates the need for four bays, which necessarily pushes the door off-centre.

5.23 These buildings often display a slightly naïve application of classical detailing; that is, they apply classical elements but not always in the established proportions or arrangements. This results in some quirky effects, most notable in Morpeth in door surrounds, where you can find any combination of ogee arches, triangular pediments and engaged columns that sometimes, most curiously, have pilasters sat atop them.

5.24 Buildings identified as being predominantly early to mid-18th century in character are identified in Appendix B, Figure B.2.

Character:	**charming, spirited, aspirational**

1. Gable-end chimney stacks
2. Eaves fronting road
3. Shallow-pitched roof
4. Brick stringcourse
5. Handmade bricks
6. Diminishing window sizes, regularly placed



Neoclassical door detailing:

7. Pediment
8. Decorative semi-circular/ semi-elliptical fanlight
9. Pilaster
10. Column
11. Solid, 6 panelled door

12. Tumbled-in gable brickwork detailing

13. Flat, segmented brick lintel
14. Small panes of glass- 6 over 6, or 8 over 8
15. No horn to meeting rail
16. Visible frame, flush with elevation
17. Thick glazing bars

Mid-to-late-18th century

5.25 In terms of materiality, buildings of the latter half of the 18th century are again principally handmade brick with slate roofs, although stone does start to pick up popularity again in this period. In terms of appearance though, these buildings are on the whole a refinement in style of their early-18th century predecessors.

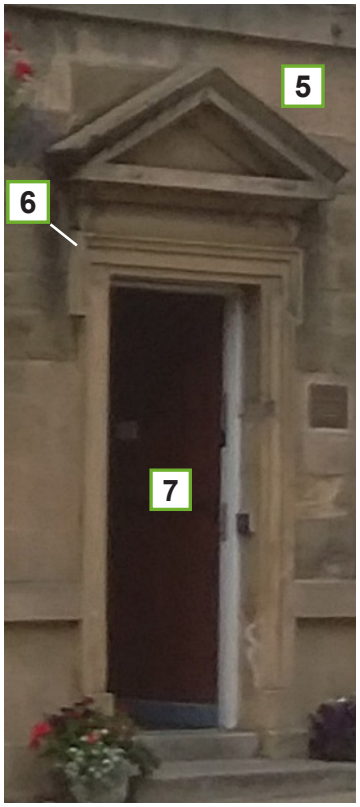
5.26 The bricks are marginally more uniform and the bond is more consistently applied (usually English garden wall – see Appendix D). If stone is used, the blocks are large, rectangular and ashlar – that is, with a finely tooled or smooth finish. Window frames and glazing bars are slightly finer but principally the same in proportion; however, by now legislative changes brought in to reduce the speed at which a building burns if it catches fire means they have to be set back from the front of the building into the window reveal. The arrangement of doors and windows now is invariably symmetrical or, if the door is set to one side, at least precisely aligned into bays.

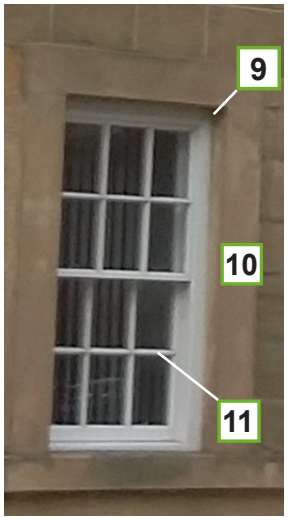
5.27 One distinctive and particularly fine feature of buildings of this period is tumbled-in brickwork to the gable end, usually found on higher status buildings of the period. It may have been started by a particular craftsman working in Morpeth at the time, becoming a fashionable feature in the town that was subsequently emulated by others.

5.28 Towards the end of the century this process of refinement reaches its climax. Stone has re-established itself as the building material of choice. Architectural detailing is pared back and more delicately executed than on earlier buildings. Proportions have become even more slimline and elegant. Windows have larger and fewer panes of glass and the glazing bars reduced to their absolute thinnest. They are also tallest on the first floor now, a reflection externally of the importance placed on the *piano nobile*, or the principal rooms of the building, which at that time were located on the first floor rather than the ground floor as they generally are today. Completing this minimalist approach, frames are also now totally hidden, built into the window reveal rather than set into it, so their appearance is extremely slight.

5.29 Buildings identified as being predominantly mid to late-18th century in character are identified in Appendix B, Figure B.3.

Character:	**refined, elegant, confident**





1. Slate roof
2. Eaves fronting street
3. Continuous stone stringcourse
4. Symmetrical frontage
5. Projecting pediment
6. Moulded architrave
7. Panelled door

8. Ashlar stone-work

9. Frame set back into reveal but still visible
10. Plain but raised, continuous architrave
11. Slimmer glazing bars, 6 over 6 sashes

19th century

5.30 The late-19th century is not a period of particular architectural note in Morpeth. There are numerous residential and commercial buildings dating from this period – or re-fronted at this time – but they display little architectural embellishment or ambition. This does not mean that they don't contribute to the character of the area: they are still very much of their time and add coherence to the streetscape that reinforces its overall character, but there are fewer notable buildings from this period. The exception to that rule is the places of worship, which, within the conservation, all date from this period. They are finely built and create accents in the streetscene and long distance views.

5.31 At the beginning to the middle of this century the material of choice remains stone, sometimes ashlar, sometimes with a slightly rougher, tooled finish. If stone could not be afforded then the façade was often rendered to give a smooth finish and disguise the use of brick. By now the facades are almost completely unadorned, without the stringcourses and projecting cornices that gave animation to the buildings of previous centuries. Slate is still used for roofs, but pantiles also become popular. One feature that is found on a number of buildings in Morpeth is the bow window, which is a common feature of buildings dating from the first part of the century. Examples can be seen on Bridge Street at the Black Bull and directly opposite at number 42, and most notably at the old Beeswing pub at the top end of Newgate.

5.32 From the middle of the century we see a shift in materiality. Brick starts to come back into fashion, but by now they are being mass produced. There is far more uniformity to these bricks, gained from the standardisation of sizes and production. The ability to achieve higher firing temperature also means the fireskin of the brick becomes smoother and more uniform too. The colour is more consistent as well, and a brighter red than seen in previous centuries, as bricks made from clays not local to the area were imported from around the country.

5.33 Unusually, Morpeth has comparatively few examples of the eclectic and ornamented buildings that characterise much late-Victorian architectural design. There are a couple of examples of Gothic Revival found at 94 Newgate Street and 9 Chantry Place, and some early-20th century mock-Tudor timber framing, most notably the Queens Head Hotel on Bridge Street. They do add to the architectural variety and interest of the town, but they are atypical of the character of the area rather than the norm.

5.34 Buildings identified as being predominantly 19th century in character are identified in Appendix B, Figures B.4 and B.5.

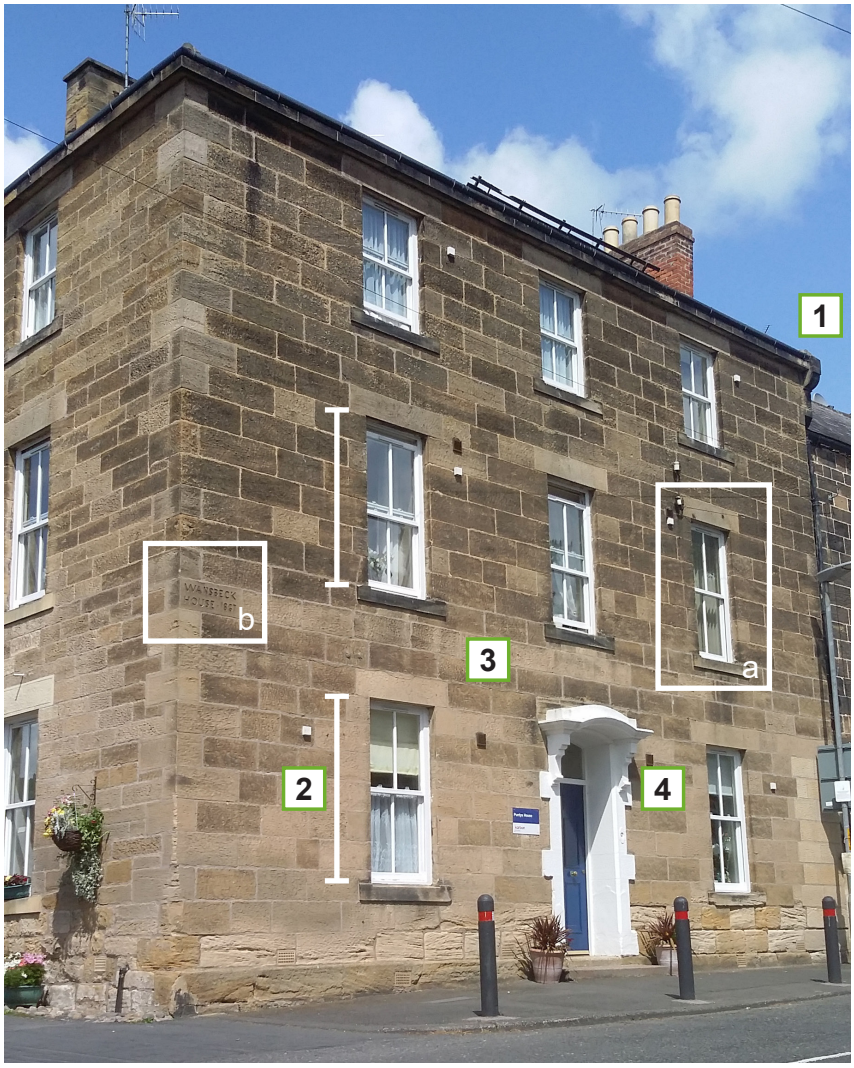
Character:	**composed, robust, handsome**

1. Slate roof
2. Projecting cornice
3. Brick gables
4. 2nd floor windows smallest
5. Stone stringcourse
6. Smooth ashlar stonework
7. 1st floor windows tallest

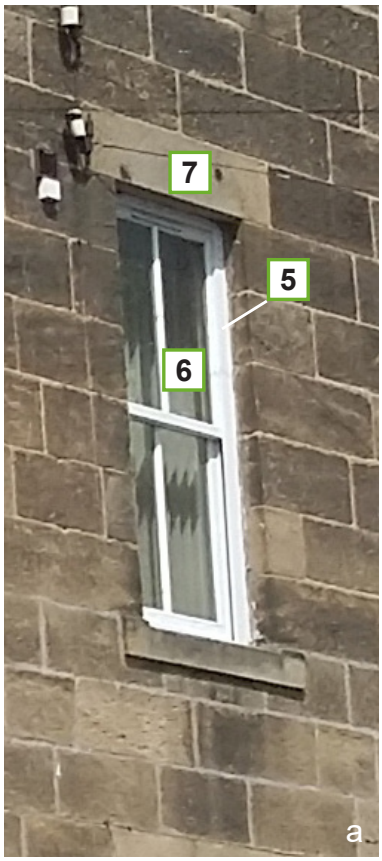
8. Ground floor windows same size as first, but generally marginally smaller
9. Slender glazing bars
10. Larger panes of glass- 6 over 6, or 4 over 4
11. Frame set back from elevation and into the window reveal
12. Elongated rectangular shape

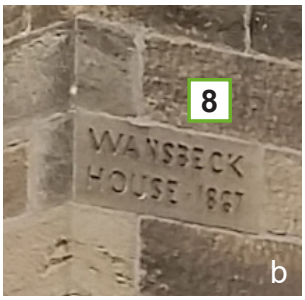
13. Rusticated quoin stones

14. Moulded, but restrained, architrave and cornice
15. Panelled door
16. Rectangular fanlight



1. Eaves fronting street
2. Ground floor and 1st floor windows are the same size
3. Plain ashlar stonework, lacking any decorative, architectural embellishment
4. Modest neoclassical door surround





5. Frame recessed and hidden
6. Large panes of glass- 2 over 2 sashes
7. Simple, flush lintel and slightly projecting sill.

8. Name/date stone

Early-to-mid 20th century

5.35 The turn of the 20th century brought resurgence in investment in architecture in Morpeth. It is at the cusp of a century that would see the most diverse and rapid progression through architectural styles that there had ever been. A wide range of historical precedents where drawn from in terms of form and detailing, but they were embellished, exaggerated and reinterpreted. This is the case in Morpeth as much as anywhere else and there are some fine and idiosyncratic examples to be found within the conservation area.

5.36 It is this freedom and playfulness of the finer detailing that distinguishes buildings of the era and makes the greatest contribution to the town's sense of place. Brick is once again the fashionable material of choice, smooth and vibrant in finish and often laid in the more expensive Flemish bond (see Appendix D), but further visual interest is created through the use of rubbed bricks, terracotta and stonework, used purely for decorative purposes most notably on door surrounds and keystones to window lintels. Later still there are examples of tiled frontages, either completely (as at Sanderson Arcade) or used as decoration around window openings and shop fronts.

5.37 Earlier windows of the period are predominantly still sash, although glass production is now capable of creating large sheets and so fewer glazing bars are required. A common feature of the period, however, was to combine smaller panes in the top sash and a single pane below, but this was an aesthetic choice rather than a technological restriction. As the century progresses, casement windows become more popular and metal was popular choice for the frame rather than timber. This gave the windows an extremely delicate appearance, as a much thinner profile for the frames and glazing bars could be achieved.

5.38 Buildings identified as being predominantly early to mid-20th century in character are identified in Appendix B, Figures B.6 and B.7*.

Character: animated, self-assured, uninhibited

5.39 An overview of all buildings in Morpeth by character phase is shown on the map in Figure 5.6.

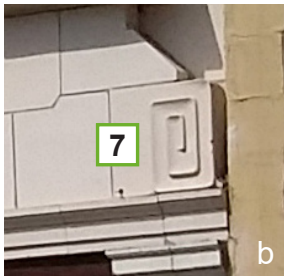
1. Slate roof
2. Tall ground floor, with integrated shopfronts

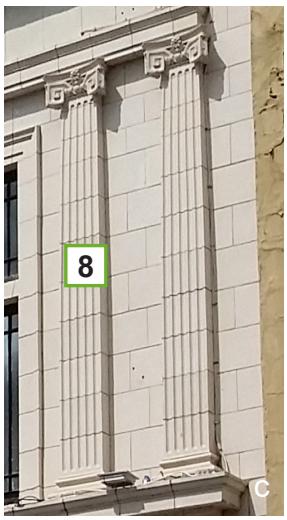
3. Decorative terracotta keystones, with exaggerated proportions
4. Splayed segmented brick lintel
5. Sashes, 6 over 1

6. Machine-made bricks

1. Slate roof
2. Machine-made bricks
3. Classically inspired detailing, but freely interpreted (3a + 3b)

4. Tall ground floor, with integrated shopfronts
5. Exaggerated moulding
6. Casement windows, smaller panes above





1. No chimney, roof hidden behind parapet
2. Pediment
3. Animated frontage through extensive use of projecting and recessed features
4. Tall ground floor to accommodate integrated shopfronts
5. Building is a smaller scale, but has a bigger footprint
6. Metal casement windows
7. Tiled/faience facade or detailing
8. Classically inspired detailing, but freely interpreted

Shop fronts

5.40 As a market town that still relies heavily on its retail offering for economic prosperity, shop fronts are a common feature up and down the principal streets of the conservation area. The highest concentration is on Bridge Street, the southern end of Newgate Street, and the eastern end of Oldgate, after which their frequency declines and the dominant use at ground floor level becomes residential.

5.41 The earliest shop fronts in Morpeth are modest affairs that have been inserted into even earlier buildings (Figure 5.4) but these are rare; by far the most common type is late-19th / early-20th century in style (Figure 5.5). By this point the importance of a well-designed and attractive shop front – and the difference this could make to attracting custom – is fully appreciated, and shop front design becomes its own specialism. Advancing building construction techniques mean larger openings can be achieved without destabilising the building, and advancing glass production means that increasingly large, single panes of glass can be created to fill them and maximise display potential.

5.42 There have been some unsympathetic alterations to shop fronts in Morpeth, principally through the introduction of oversized facia that unbalance and dominate the façade. Despite this, many others survive well and retain the proportions and detailing expected of late-19th / early-20th shopfronts; that is, delicately-proportioned, animated and moulded frames with classical detailing, often with recessed entrances, and large panes of sheet glass. Other notable, but exceptional, examples include the early-19th century bow windows at 42 and 71 Bridge Street, and the delightful detailed Arts and Crafts contribution made by 35a Oldgate.

Figure 5.4: Early shop fronts

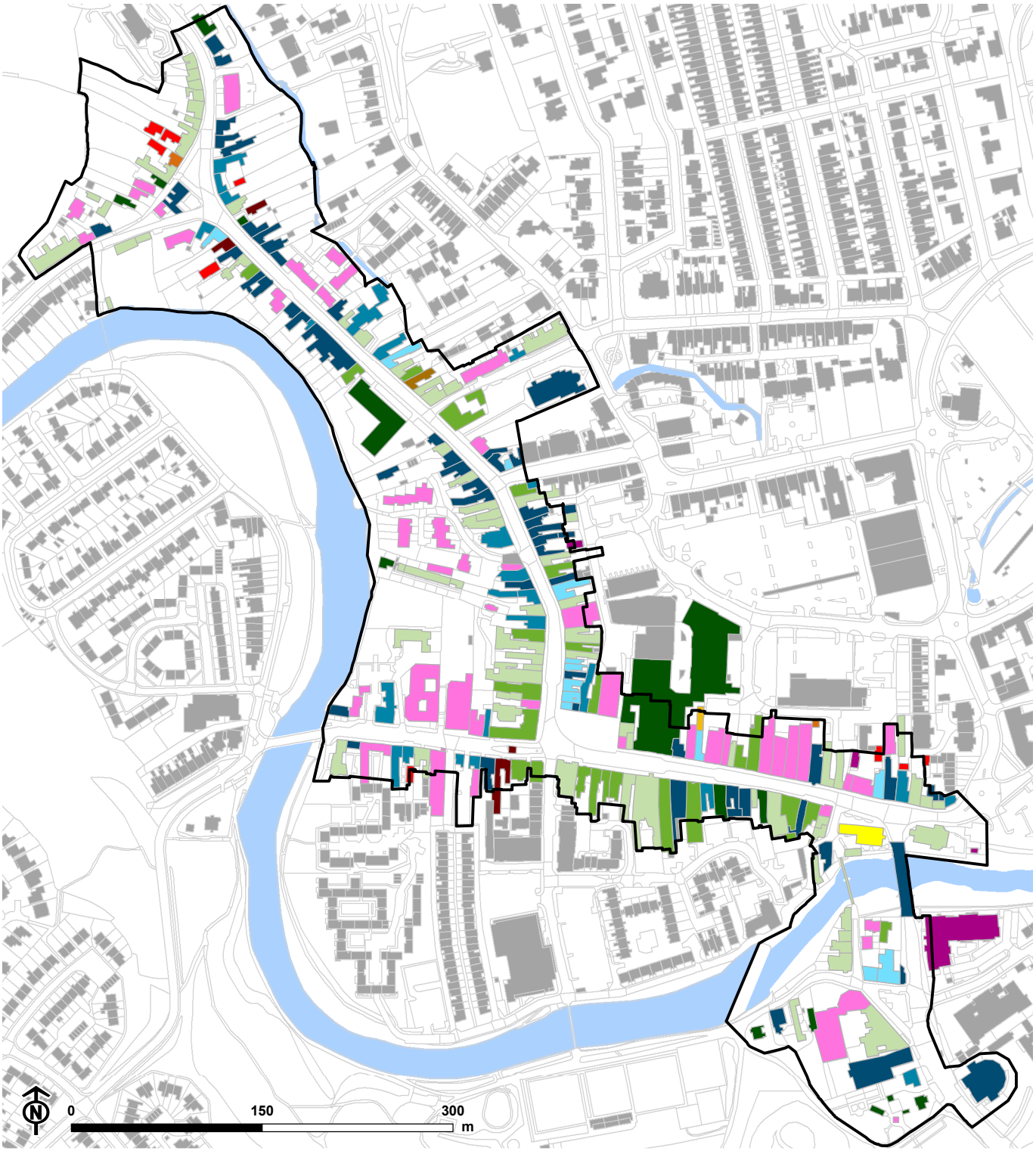
An early surviving shop front on Bullers Green, essentially an adaptation of an existing opening. Note the delicate profile and small panes of glass.

An early 19th century shop front inserted into an earlier building. By this point the shop front is developing its own style and starting to become a feature in its own right. Note again though the slender proportions and the balance that exists between component parts.

Figure 5.5: Later shop fronts

The shop front becomes an integral part of building design in the later-19th / early-20th century building. Note the key components – the profile of the columns, facia, scrolls and frames – of this example at 2 – 8 Oldgate are in proportion and harmony with the rest of the façade.

The huge proportions of a later, 20th century, purpose-built display window at 40 Bridge Street, as technology is now capable of producing large sheets of plate glass at relatively low cost; regrettably in this instance the original frames and entrance have been replaced, but the faience – glazed brickwork detailing that runs round the perimeter of the glazing – remains.



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Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure 5.6: Building Character Phase Map

Conservation Area

Building age

- Medieval
- Late-medieval
- 16th century
- Early – mid 17th century
- Mid – late 17th century
- Early – mid 18th century
- Mid – late 18th century
- Early – mid 19th century
- Mid – late 19th century
- Early 20th century
- Mid 20th century
- Late 20th century
- 21st century
- Not accessed

Spatial qualities

Development pattern, layout and density

5.43 The town follows a loose grid layout, but one that has developed organically rather than as the result of any kind of regimented foresight. Expansion occurred gradually, and once the alignment of principal street frontages and backlands were established any new development naturally followed this precedent, as did any later piecemeal development that replaced it. This meant that space was at a premium – the closer to the market place the more so – and so within the conservation area building density is high. Buildings are packed tightly against each other along the street frontage, often extending over yards, alleys and coach entrances to exploit every possible inch of this valuable space. The result is a gentle and pleasing variability of eaves and ridge lines, of complementary but individual proportions and details.

5.44 Naturally, this has resulted in streets that are enclosed, but this intensity is balanced by the long-reaching views along them, the glimpses between buildings and above the roofline of the surrounding countryside, and the broad width of the streets. This character is concentrated once you divert from the principal streets down one of the alleys. The experience here is much quieter, more intimate, more understated, but the smaller scale of the buildings towards the back of the plots ensures the experience remains embracing rather than overbearing.

5.45 This accepted development pattern continued in Morpeth until it could no longer: Oldgate met the river; Newgate met and merged Morpeth with Bullers Green; Bridge Street hit the industrial quarter and river to the east. It was once the opportunity to conform to this pattern of development had been exhausted that the town had to find other ways to accommodate further expansion.

5.46 The first move away from tradition involved elevating long established but secondary routes and back lanes within the town to a more genteel status, such as Copper Chare, Cottingwood Lane, Howard Road and Dark Lane. As the 19th century progressed and the space fronting secondary routes was also used up, new streets were created. Land to the rear of Bridge Street and Newgate Street that was previously essential agricultural land became more expendable as the economy and occupations of the town's residents diversified, and so it became the obvious place to build on. The only examples of this phase of development that fall within the conservation area, however, are St James' Terrace on Copper Chare and south of the river along Hill Gate and Wansbeck Street.

5.47 Although technically facing secondary routes, this second wave of development utilised the same hierarchical principles, with the highest status building positioned to the back of the pavement, fronting the highway so it could be seen. More uniformity in detailing and scale can be found with this later development, however, as whole terraces were often designed and built as one composition.

5.48 In more recent years, having run out of undeveloped land to convert, the town has begun to experience the subdivision and infilling of the plots and backlands of existing properties with further residential development. The narrow width of the historic burgage plots do not lend themselves easily to standard modern housing specifications and so this has resulted in the amalgamation of plots, the loss of historic boundaries, and development that seeks privacy rather than integration with public spaces, unlike the houses that line the historic streets. There are also a couple of examples where the desire for breathing space between the road and building frontage has led to development being positioned behind the established building line. This design feature is particularly conspicuous within Morpeth: the town's historic building line is one of the features that survives almost intact and defines development across the rest of the conservation area.

5.49 This type of backland development is a conspicuous departure from historic development patterns in the area, and is not a pattern that can be repeated again within the current conservation area boundary without further detriment to its historic character.

Figure 5.6: Alleyways and yards

The more intimate space of the alleyways of Morpeth provides respite from the busyness of the main streets and can reveal the hidden pasts of plots, as well as surprising and rewarding views. This example is Packhorse Yard off Newgate Street.

Even enclosed views are inviting, giving a glimpse of the life that lies beyond the street frontage. These alleys also more often retain historic floor surfaces, adding to their character, appearance and allure. This example is New Phoenix Yard off Bridge Street.

Figure 5.7: Roof and building line

The undulating roofline and robust building line of Newgate Street, as viewed from the market place…

…and further up the same street, the later 20th century development at Dawson's Place, conspicuous not only for its distinct building materials but also for its marked step back from the established building line.

Public space

5.50 Aside from the principal routes through the town, the most frequented public space within the conservation area is the market place. It is punctuated by a few horse chestnut trees, but is otherwise completely paved, with street furniture and box planting around the periphery. Its character is that of an urban space – as it should be and needs to be given its purpose – and its location at the meeting point of the three principal streets reminds us of its important role as the nucleus of the town.

5.51 Horse Chestnuts are a reoccurring species throughout the streets of the town – notably outside the chantry – as they were planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee. Their presence adds texture, variation and colour to the streetscene.

Figure 5.8: Market Place

The market place on market day. Horse Chestnuts add texture and variation to the scene, but its character is still one of town activity and urban life.

5.52 Within the conservation area there are scattered pockets of green public space, such as Millennium Green, the grounds to both the Church of St James's (Newgate Street) and St Robert (Oldgate), and the inclusion of part of Carlisle Park known as the William Turner Garden. These spaces are located towards the boundary of the area, just off the principal streets. Despite this proximity, the change in character as you move away from the street frontages into these spaces is pronounced. The relentless traffic, busy activity of the streets and hard urban environment gives way quickly into quieter, greener, softer environs, providing some welcome visual and audible contrast.

Figure 5.9: Church of St. James

Just off Newgate Street to the east: a fine, long avenue of lime trees leads to the Church of St James and provides respite from the activity and intensely urban character of the town.

5.53 Public green space within the setting of the conservation area also makes a significant contribution to the character of the town. The urban core of the town and the space that encloses it are so closely linked physically and inextricably linked historically that the designated boundary that separates the two becomes incomprehensible and immaterial when you experience the area in person. This is particularly true of the green corridor of the river and its banks, which is a much utilised space and is visible in glimpsed views between buildings and down streets even in the most densely-packed core of the conservation; the important contribution that the setting of the conservation area makes to its character and

appearance is such that it is discussed in more detail under a separate heading below.

Private space

5.54 Private space within the conservation area is relatively limited because the boundary is so closely drawn around the commercial heart of the town. Fleeting views down alleys can reveal small, enclosed yards and green spaces, but the biggest contribution to character garnered from private space is along the river bank to the west of Newgate Street.

5.55 Houses along this north-western side of Newgate have made the most of their outlook over the river. Bay windows to the rear of the properties give panoramic views along the river and out to the countryside beyond. The steep river banks have been tamed with attractive terracing, but are balanced against the more natural, lush vegetation and self-seeded trees that populate the banks of the river at this point.

Figure 5.10: Private spaces

The private terraced gardens to the rear of Newgate Street properties.

An entrance to a private rear yard at 19 Newgate Street.

Setting

5.56 Due to the conservation area's low-lying location – straddling the river basin – it is surrounded on all sides by rising landforms that elevate the surrounding countryside above the roofscape of the town, crowning it with a green horizon underlining the rurality of the location and the town's links to its agricultural hinterland. It also gives extensive views across the settlement – especially from the site of the motte and bailey castle to the south of the river – and from here the plan and evolution of the town can be read, punctuated by landmark buildings.

5.57 Historic Morpeth is largely contained within the river valley, with later development (to the northwest, southwest, south and southeast) beyond the valley basin and largely imperceptible from within the town. Whilst not directly influencing the character and appearance of the conservation area, these developments are of historic interest in as far as they illustrate the influence the railway had on the residential expansion – and commercial contraction – of the town in the 19th and 20th centuries and its current popularity as an easily accessible, rural satellite and commuter town.

5.58 However, the boundary also excludes significant elements of the historic core, much of which is essential to our understanding of the story of the town and, indeed, why it is where it is. The river and the castles in particular are major influences on the town historically and continue to exert a strong influence over how it appears today. They impart a powerful sense of character and place and our experience of the conservation area is greatly enriched by the contribution they make to its special interest.

5.59 The river especially is a fundamental feature of the town, encircling it from High Stanners in the west, past Carlisle Park to the south, and round to Low Stanners in the east. In all, the green space that lines and extends out from the banks of the river accounts for the majority of the town's amenity space, as well as having exerted considerable influence and constraint on its physical development. Because of the proximity of the river to the town, the transition from the densely packed and bustling activity of town life into the tranquil environs of the river happens very quickly. Whilst the historical link between the two is strong their characters are quite different, and this interdependent but contrasting relationship is one of Morpeth's most defining and pleasing features.

Figure 5.11: The contribution of setting

The 2nd castle is visible from a number of viewpoints within the conservation area, this particular view being down Wansbeck Street.

The River Wansbeck makes a considerable contribution to the town's identity and is one of its defining features.

5.60 The historic maps of Morpeth are not only a source of historic interest but a thing a beauty, a wonderful depiction of how well the layout of the town has survived and remained relatively unchanged for centuries; a prime example of a medieval settlement and its constituent parts. On the ground, this legibility has been regrettably eroded in more recent times, principally through the infilling of backlands that has overwritten plot boundaries and runs contrary to the established development pattern of the town. Not all has been lost, however, and the outline of burgage plots can still be read in the gentle curve of later streets that have replaced them, as well as in some plots that have survived intact. These generally fall outside the boundary of the conservation area or are dissected by it, but this does not diminish the contribution they make to our understanding and appreciation of the area: it merely increases the importance of the area's setting. As such, the setting of the conservation area has much to contribute to our appreciation and understanding of the town's evolution and distinctive character, as well as enhancing its aesthetic appeal.

Figure 5.12: The preserved form of burgage plot

Despite being a late-19th / early 20th century development, the curve of Pretoria Avenue preserves a form that was established centuries before.

Views

5.61 Whilst all senses are engaged in our experience of place, human reliance on the visual does mean that views play a major role in our understanding and perception of character, and Morpeth is no exception. There are numerous views that contribute to our appreciation of Morpeth, but they all fall largely into three distinct categories: static, glimpsed and dynamic.

Static

5.62 These types of views tend to be – although not always – designed or intentional, or at least self-aware. They are a specific, fixed point from which a particular aspect of the area's character can best be appreciated. There are less of these in Morpeth because the settlement has developed organically and pragmatically over time, but there are individual assets within the area that were clearly designed with a specific view in mind.

Figure 5.13: Illustrative static views

The principal elevation of the Town Hall facing onto the market place. An imposing civic structure, the architectural interest of which is at its most apparent and powerful from this perspective.

The view towards the river from the motte. Gradual accretion of intervening development and planting over the centuries has affected the potency of the view, but the historic significance of being able to view the fording point of the river from the castle is of the utmost importance to our understanding of the development of the town.

Glimpsed

5.63 Morpeth is especially well-endowed with this type of view because of the number of alleyways and side entrances that give views to back streets and yards. This is not the only place that glimpsed views add to our experience of the town, however, as individual assets may appear briefly in any number of *dynamic views* (discussed below). Glimpsed views are often enclosed and fleeting, and principally incite intrigue or surprise in those that notice them.

Figure 5.14: Illustrative glimpsed view

A fleeting view of the spire of the Church of St Robert through a gap in the building line on Newgate Street.

A snapshot of life behind the façade: a view down an alleyway at 20 Bullers Green to the private yards that lie beyond.

Dynamic

5.64 Dynamic views are the type experienced most frequently in Morpeth, and so are the ones that contribute most conspicuously to our appreciation and understanding of the town. These are views that steady reveal different aspects of the town's character and continually evolve as we experience them. This experience is shaped by both constant features – those that remain with us as we move through our journey – and transient features – those that come in and pass out of view at some point on the journey. Dynamic views come in two forms:

1. Dynamic kinetic: these are views that are experienced when moving through the town.
2. Dynamic panoramic: these are views from one place but that take in a wide area and multiple assets or characteristics.

Figure 5.15: Illustrative dynamic panoramic view

A picturesque but incidental view along the riverbank. From this single point the river, the steep banks of the valley sides, public green space and private residential space can all be taken in.

Figure 5.16: Illustrative dynamic kinetic view

Most commonly experienced as streetscapes, generally unfolding slowly to take in numerous features. This view is along Dogger Bank.

Seeing character in the view

5.65 *Static*, *glimpsed* and *dynamic* cover the types of views, but their relevance to the significance of the conservation area lies firmly in what those views contain; that is, what they can tell us about the history of the town or how they influence our experience of its character. For example, around the market place views tend to be strongly, or even wholly, urban and commercial in character: the open, paved space of the market place itself, the wide streets, the bustle of commercial activity and grand architecture – an experience of Morpeth as an historic market town. Bullers Green is urban too, but domestic in scale and less busy – a reminder that Morpeth is a home as well as centre for commerce. Views along the river can be wholly peaceful and green or take in part of the town too – a reminder of why the town is where it is in the first place. And of course, all of these views have their own, varying degrees of aesthetic appeal, degrees that are dependent on the viewer and what they find pleasing as much as established criteria of visual aesthetic or artistic appeal.

5.66 These views are not mutually exclusive: one asset may contribute to the character and appearance of the area in different ways in different views, and views may transition, interrupt and develop concurrently with one another. One example where this is clearly illustrated is Dobson's courthouse.

Figure 5.17: Static view of courthouse

This is the principal elevation of the courthouse, the public facing front. It is a composition intended to be seen, intended to convey the status and authority of the institution is represents. It is from this point that the building is at its most imposing and its finer detailing can be best appreciated. It is a building that also clearly adds to the architectural legacy of Morpeth and makes a powerful contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, due in part because this view is still so coherent and demonstrates the importance of Morpeth's historical role as a centre of law enforcement.

Figure 5.18: Dynamic panoramic view of courthouse

The courthouse as viewed from the motte. It is undoubtedly still a prominent element in the scene, but less dominant as it is tempered by the panorama of which it is just a feature. The wooded hinterlands that encircle the conservation area can still be read above its roofline and the height of the roof and spire of St George's Church provides some balance. There has always been a strong visual relationship between the site of the Norman castle and the early-19th century courthouse, that latter of which displays authority and gravitas through deliberate imitation of a fortified castle keep. The concentration of imposing civic structures in this area and its physical separation from what is now the economic heart of the town – which begins to sneak into view to the far left of the scene – is a defining characteristic of Morpeth; it imparts a strong sense of time-depth by reminding us of the important role that the town has played over the centuries as an administrative centre for the region.

Figure 5.19: Dynamic kinetic view of courthouse






This is the courthouse as experienced on the approach to the conservation area down Castle Bank. The approaches to Morpeth are an important part of our experience of the town as they shape first impressions and are the gateways into the historic core. This series of photographs shows how quickly this approach transitions from being relatively enclosed and well treed on the outskirts of the centre to the harder and more open environs of the built-up town. Here the courthouse appears suddenly and dominates the views – creating a memorable entrance to the town – but its influence also quickly recedes once you have reached the end of the descent into the river basin.

Chapter 6
Management and Enhancement

Understanding the historic interest of an area is the first step in being able to preserve its character and appearance; but change is inevitable, so how can the two be reconciled? This section considers the principles that underpin the sustainable management of place and how it can be achieved through the restoration, retention and reinforcement of character.

Restoring character

Changes do not have to be huge or dramatic to affect historic character. Indeed, some of the most damaging changes are the small ones: the replacement of sash windows with casement (or vice-versa), the reroofing of a building with a different material, the removal of a chimney, the demolition of an outshot or outbuilding, the replacement of a cobbled alleyway with concrete slabs. The harm to the overall character of the conservation area from alterations to one building out of many may seem insignificant, but the gradual erosion of individual detailing over many features cumulatively results in a significant erosion of character of the whole area.

Similarly, it is not only unsympathetic alterations to existing buildings that can result in the loss of character. The introduction of new buildings that adopt a generic or indifferent form or detailing to their context dilutes the character of an area; once an understanding of the defining characteristics of an area has been made, those changes that deviate from it become all the more conspicuous.

Restoring character is about recognising where such changes have already happened and taking advantage of any opportunity to remedy them. The existence of previous inappropriate development or changes is not justification to make the same mistakes elsewhere, or to ignore the

opportunity to improve on an existing situation when it presents itself.

Opportunities to restore character in Morpeth

- Reestablishment of historic **plot boundaries**
- Reestablishment of distinct **building hierarchy** and character across plots.
- Reinstatement of **building line** where it has been lost.
- **Reinstatement of lost features** – windows, doors, chimneys, shop fronts, decorative detailing.
- **Replacement of inappropriate materials** with area and era appropriate materials. This applies to both individual buildings and across the public realm, in particular floorscape.
- Reinstatement of lost views or, more pertinent to Morpeth, **rectify unsympathetic alterations to existing views** that detract from the special interest of the area.
- If you are planning work within the conservation area or to an historic asset then **speak to the local authority** as early as possible. They can help you identify ways in which enhancement of the historic environment can be drawn into your plans and so better meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Retaining character

The golden rule of historic environment conservation is minimum intervention, maximum retention. This does not mean that no changes can be made, but rather recognises that places that have been identified as having a special character worthy of preservation – as Morpeth has – derive a lot of that special character from the survival of historic fabric and form; consequently, the existing character and appearance of the town should be the starting point when considering any proposals for change. This is a continuous process of identifying elements of the existing environment that contribute positively to the character of the town and managing change – not preventing it – in a way that maintains that character.

Principles for conserving character

- **Minimum intervention, maximum retention:** where historic fabric, form, layout and spaces – that contribute to the special interest of the town – survive, every effort should be made to retain them in the development of any proposals for change.
- **A stitch in time:** regular maintenance is vital for any building or space, but even more so for heritage assets as the deterioration or loss of historic fabric and form can erode the character of the asset and of the area.
- **Traditional materials, traditional skills:** using materials and skills appropriate to the construction of the building will hold back the mechanisms of decay and ensure the lifespan of the building is maximised.
- **Reuse and adaptation of character buildings:** there is a strong history of building on the historic environment in Morpeth – figuratively and literally. Use what is already there as the basis for developing proposals for change.
- **Maintain mixed use:** a key part of Morpeth's character is the mix of use of buildings throughout the town centre – residential, commercial, civic, educational, religious. It not only necessitates buildings of different characters, but also enlivens the town with a mix of activity.
- **Maintain spaces:** the open space – urban or green – between buildings can tell us as much about the development or use of the town as the buildings themselves. They also have a defining influence on the changing atmosphere of the town, depending where you are in it.
- **Take time to assess views:** views change and evolve physically but also perceptually depending on the viewer, the time of year, the time of day, the weather, how busy we are etc.; sometimes an asset or street scene is so familiar that we never stop to engage with what it is we're seeing and what that is telling us. Don't get too hung up on defining views and labelling them: instead take time to experience them, to consider the ways in which they bring us visual pleasure or inform our understanding of the town's history. Every effort should be made to retain aspects and features of views that positively influence our experience of Morpeth.
- **Speak to the local authority:** if you have plans that will affect an existing historic asset it is best to approach the local authority as soon as you can. They can offer advice on appropriate methods of repair and restoration, identify where change may be most easily accommodated and where character must be maintained.

Reinforcing character

"Today's new developments extend the history of the context. The best of them will become valued as tomorrow's heritage, representing the architecture and placemaking of the early 21st century."[40]

Reinforcing the character of a place is not just about preserving the historic environment but about adding to it with high-quality design. Creating well-designed places is at the core of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework, which recognises new developments need to be *"sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting [and] establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit"*[41].

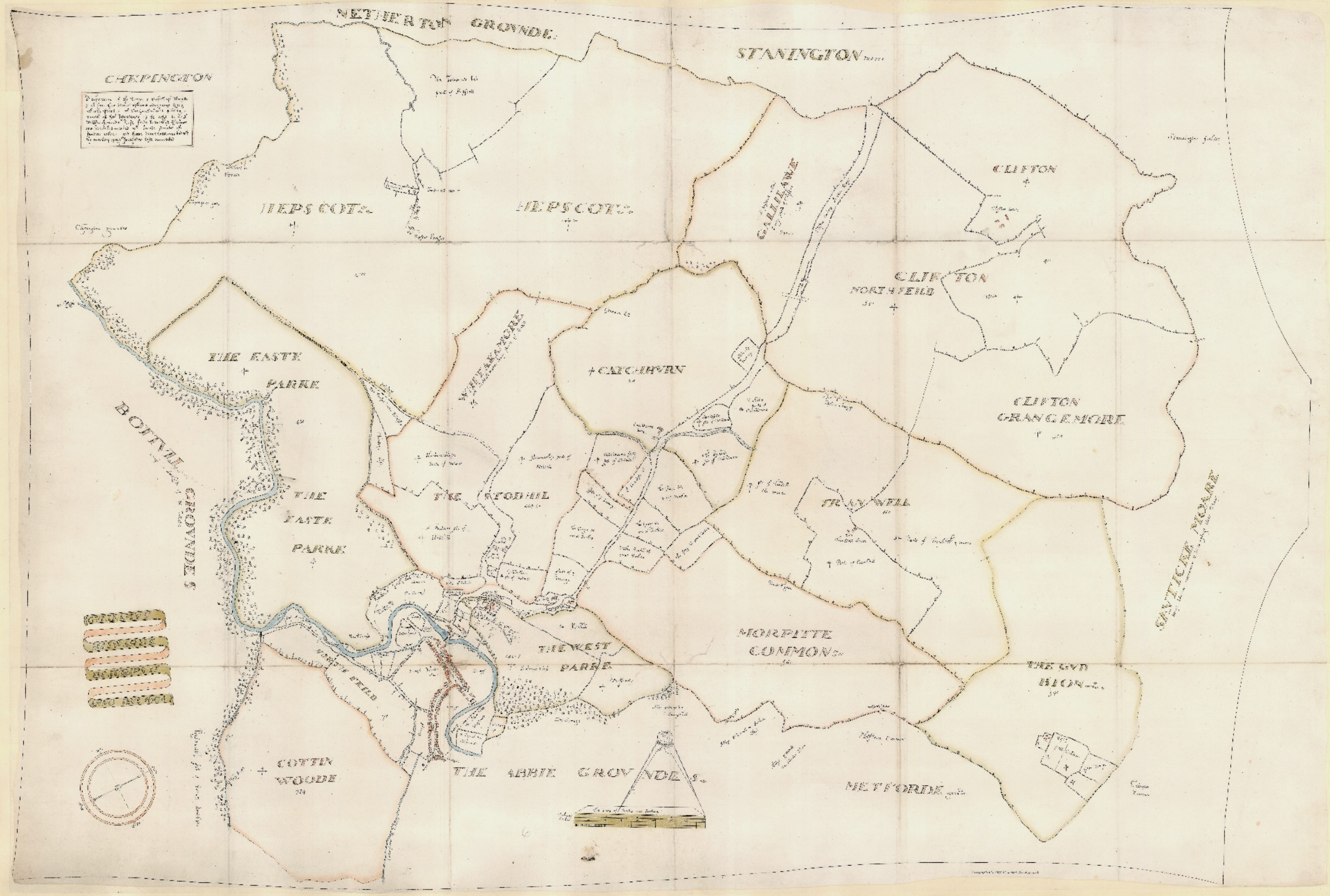
This is not about requiring a particular style or replicating what is there, but about taking the essence of the character of place and using that to inform high-quality new design that reflects its context and adds to Morpeth's architectural legacy. Traditional design may be an appropriate, desirable or preferred approach in places, but the attention to detail is just as critical here: a generic historic-looking design does as much to erode character as generic contemporary design.

New design considerations

- **Location:** is this an appropriate place for new development? Is this an appropriate use of this site?
- **Context:** what is the history of the site? What is its existing character? What is the history / character of its immediate surroundings? How have these influenced how the site appears today?
- **Positioning:** how will the development be accessed? How will it address the street, the river, the surrounding space? How will it interact with and address its neighbours?
- **Hierarchy:** how will different buildings / elements of the building relate to each other? How will they reflect their location within the site?
- **Density:** what is the capacity of the site? How does this fit with the character of the area? How does it relate to its neighbours? How do densities need to change across the site – what and how much development is appropriate where?
- **Scale:** not just about height. How many storeys? Plot and bay widths? Footprint? Mass?
- **Materials:** What type of material? What colour? What texture? What finish? And why?
- **Proportions:** what are the floor heights? How do features relate to each other – how do the windows relate to each other, to doors, to other architectural elements? What is the solid-to-void ratio?
- **Detailing:** how are the elevations going to be embellished and animated? Using what features and to what extent? How will detailing change across the building and across the site?
- **Style:** if the design is to be traditional, what period / phase is it relating to? What features will it have that are characteristic of Morpeth? If the design is contemporary, what principles of Morpeth's character will be used to inform its design? How does it add to the architectural legacy of Morpeth whilst showing respect for the town's history? How does the use of the building affect how it looks?
- **Views:** where will the development be seen from? What do those views currently contribute to our understanding of the town's history or to its aesthetic appeal? How will this change? What types of views will the development create or become part of? Is there an opportunity to reinstate a lost view, or create a new one? How will the new development be experienced in close, medium and long-range views? What assets will it been seen in conjunction with and how will this affect our experience of those assets?
- **Speak to the local authority:** the local authority can give you advice on all the above. Early engagement and negotiations with them increases the chances that an acceptable scheme will be reached, and reduces the risk of delays in the planning system further down the line.

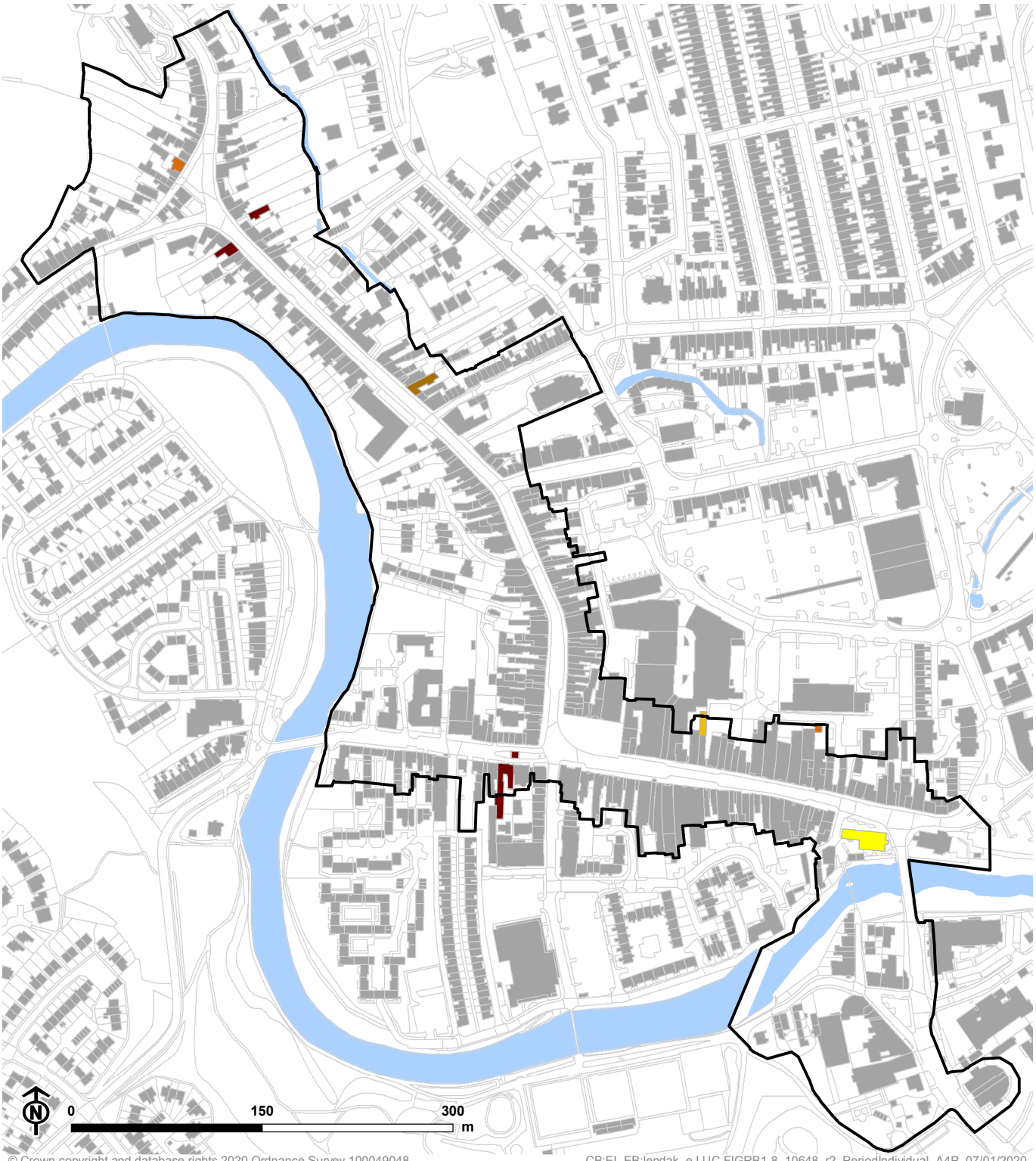
Appendix A

Full 1604 Map of Morpeth


NETHERTON GROVNDE
STANINGTON
CHEPINGTON
HEPSCOTE
HEPSCOTE
CLIFTON
CLIFTON
NORTH FEILD
CATCHBVRN
THE EASTE PARKE
CLIFTON GRANGEMORE
THE EASTE PARKE
MORPITTE COMMONS
THE WEST PARKE
COTTIN WOODE
THE ABBIE GROVNDES
METFORDE

Appendix B

Building Character Maps: Individual Phases



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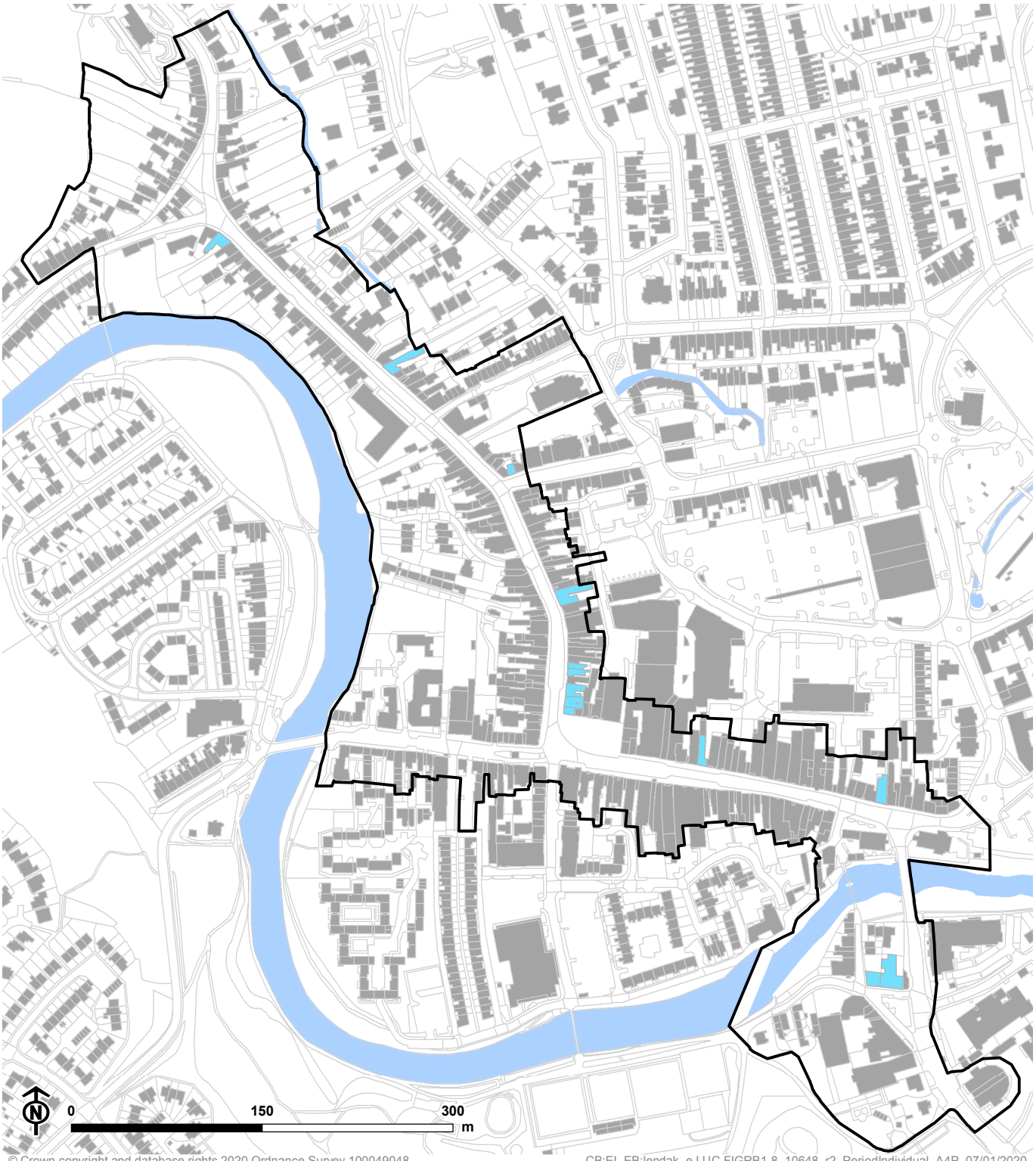
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.1 : Medieval to Late-17th Century Buildings

- Conservation Area
- Medieval buildings
- Late-medieval buildings
- 16th century buildings
- Early – mid 17th century buildings
- Mid – late 17th century buildings



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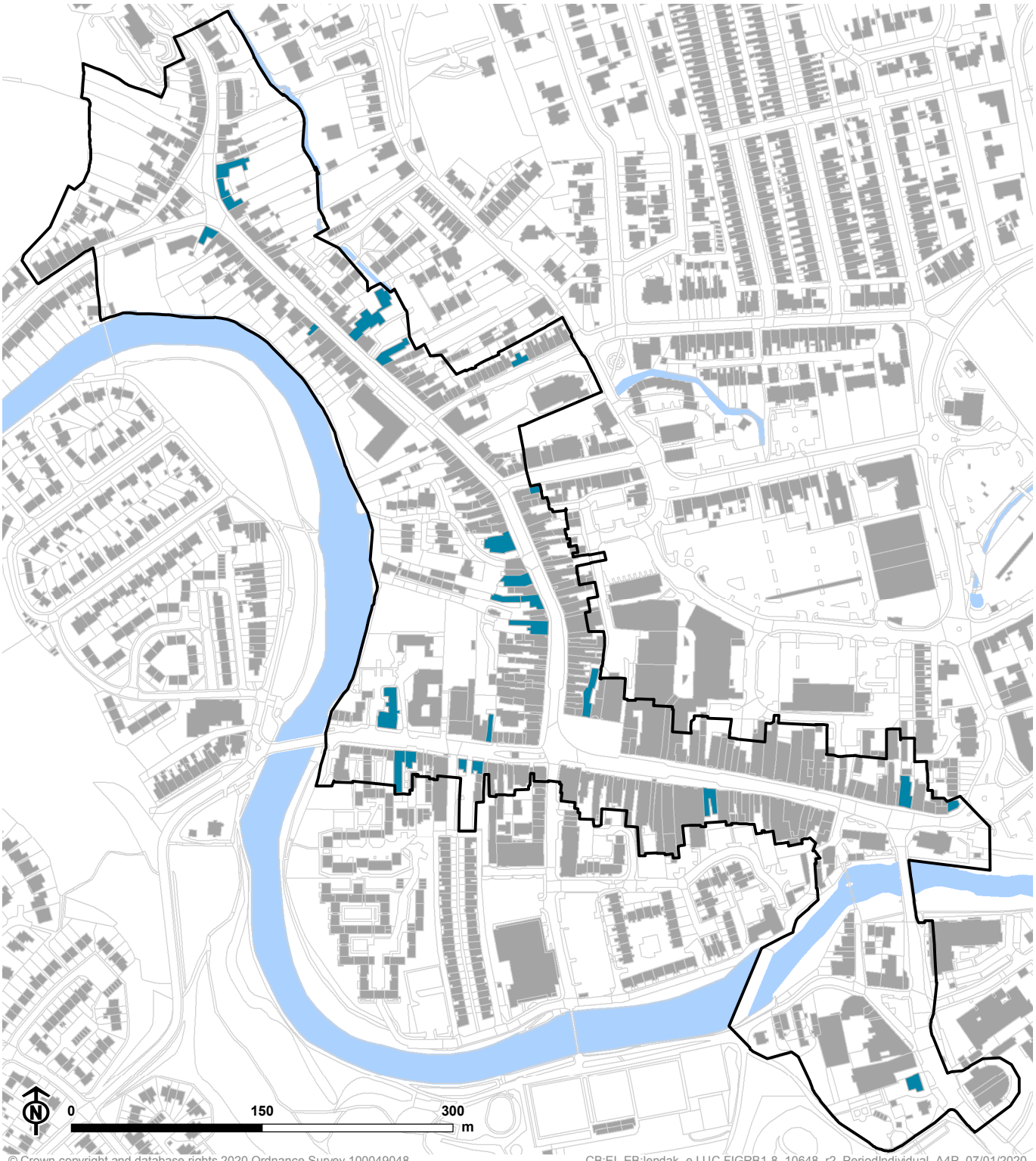
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.2 : Early to Mid-18th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Early – mid 18th century buildings

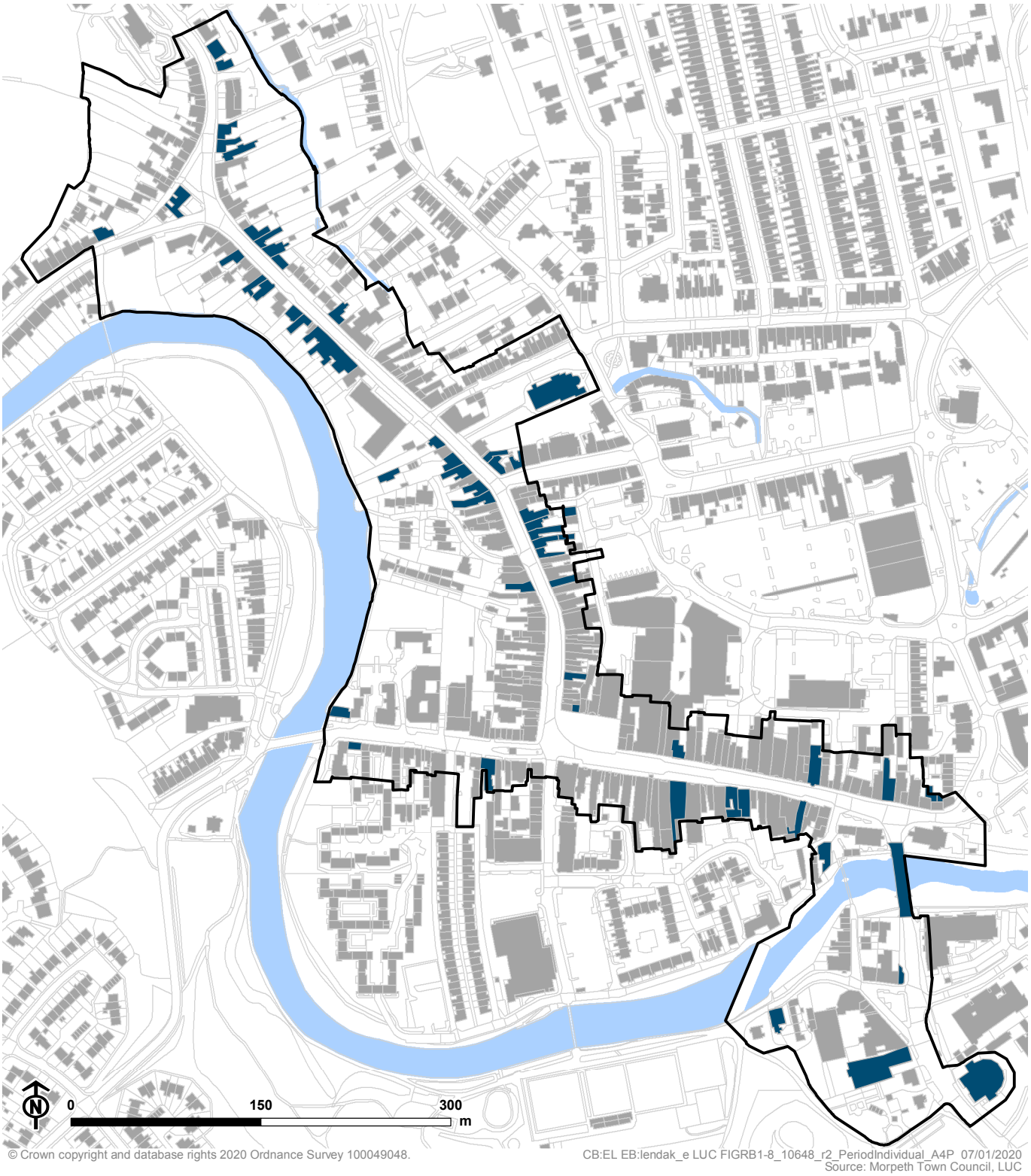


CB:EL EB:lendak_e LUC FIGRB1-8_10648_r2_PeriodIndividual_A4P 07/01/2020
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.3 : Mid to Late-18th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Mid – late 18th century buildings



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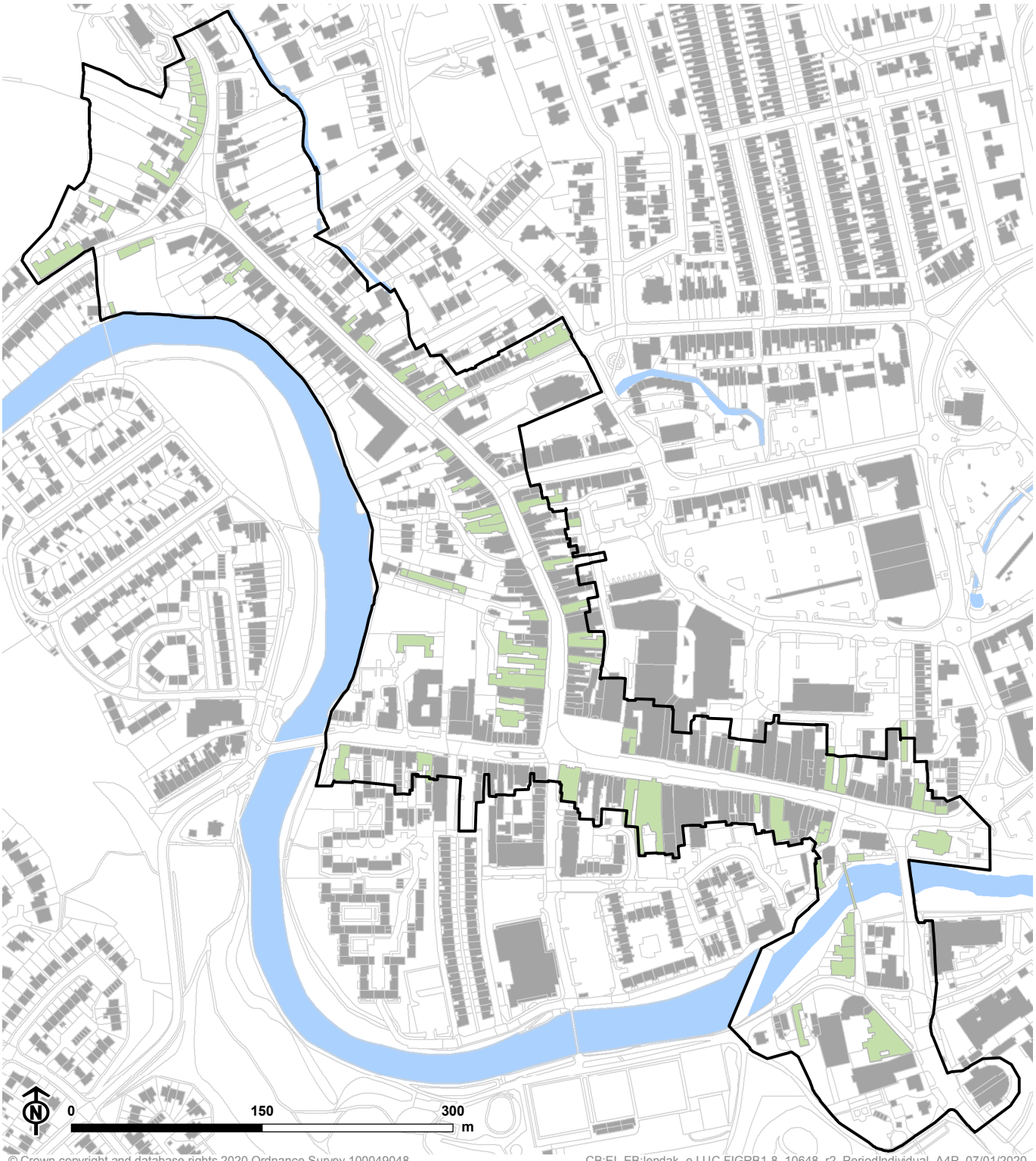
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.4 : Early to Mid-19th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Early – mid 19th century buildings



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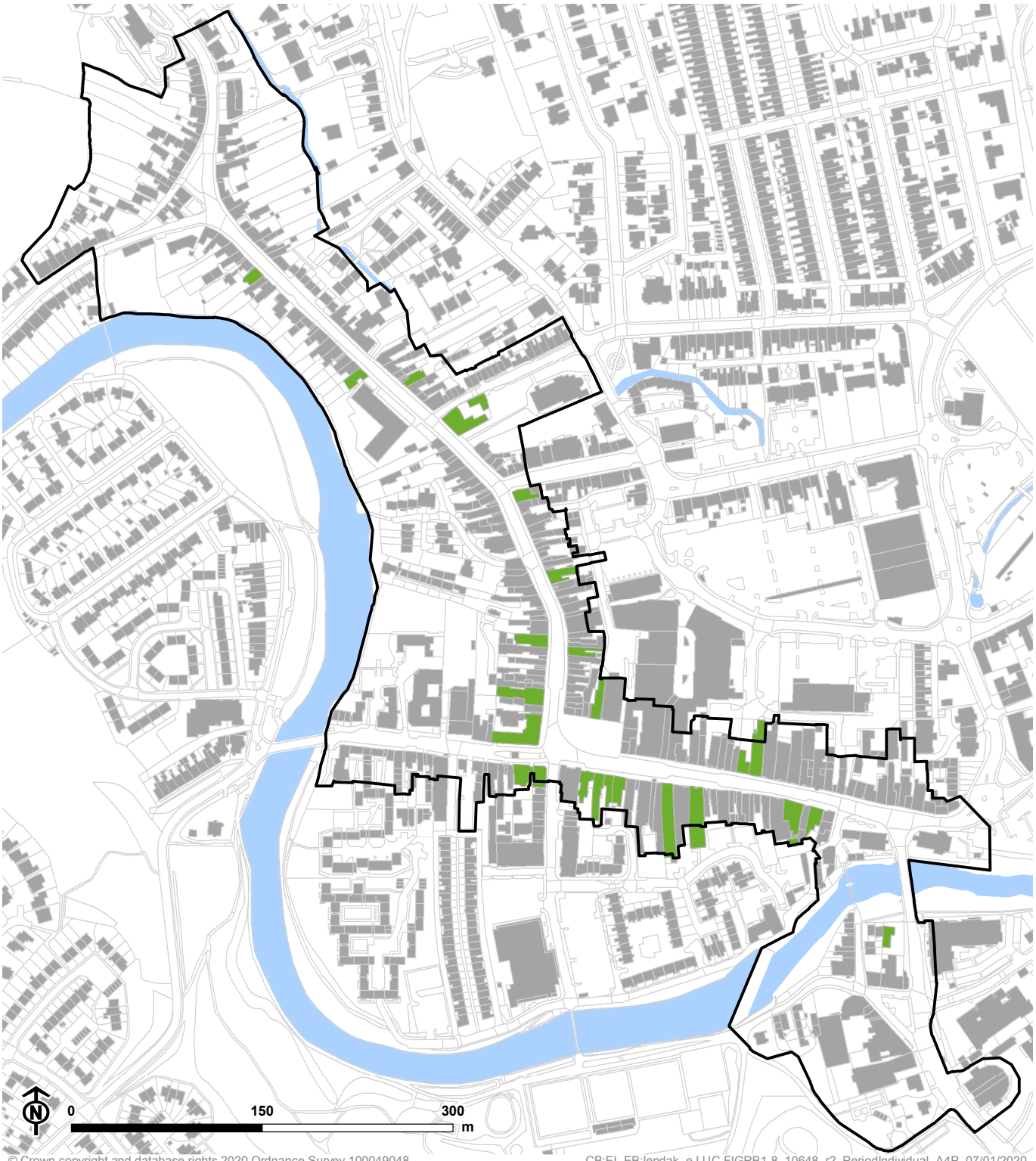
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.5 : Mid to Late-19th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Mid – late 19th century buildings



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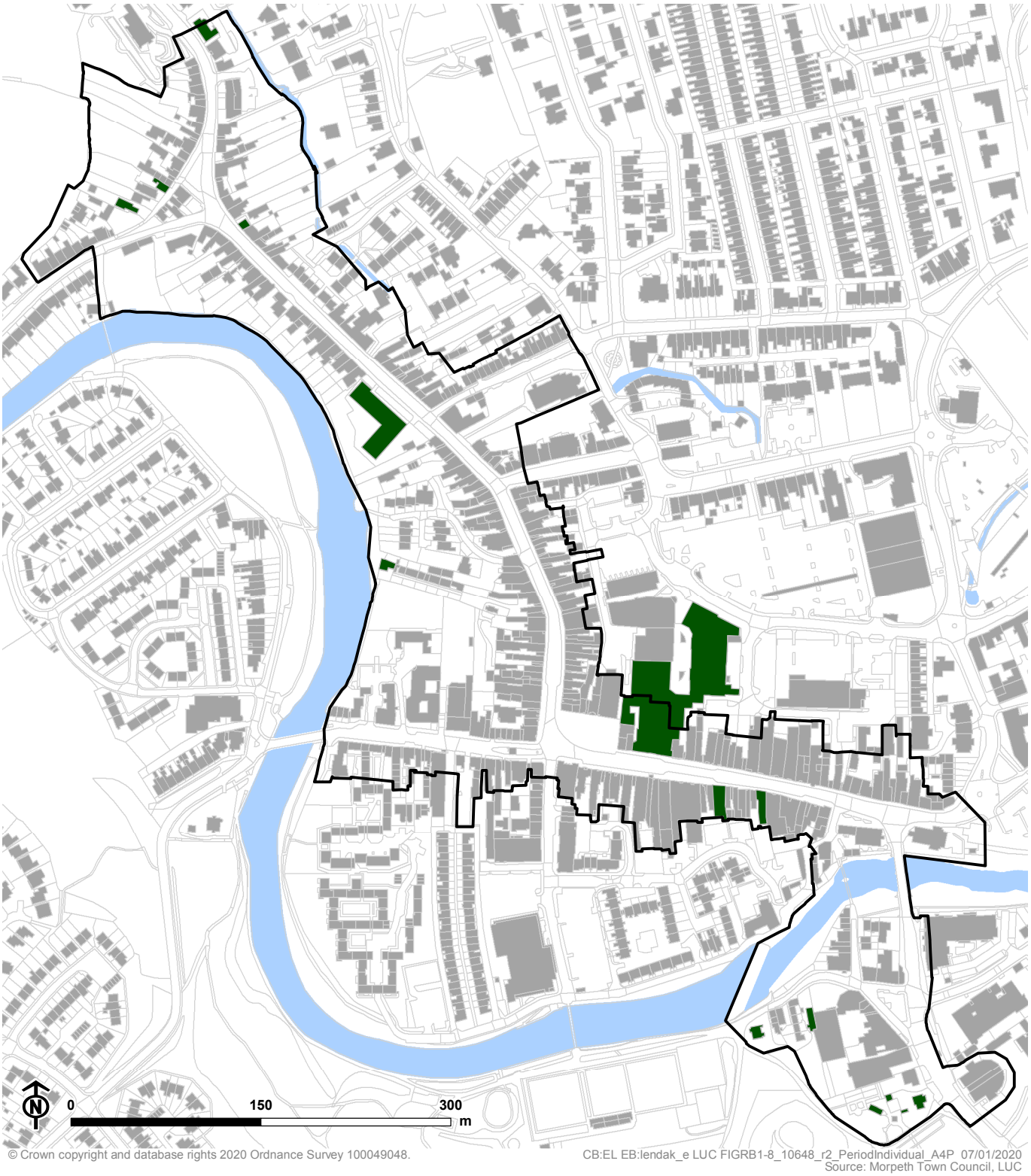
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.6 : Early-20th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Early 20th century buildings



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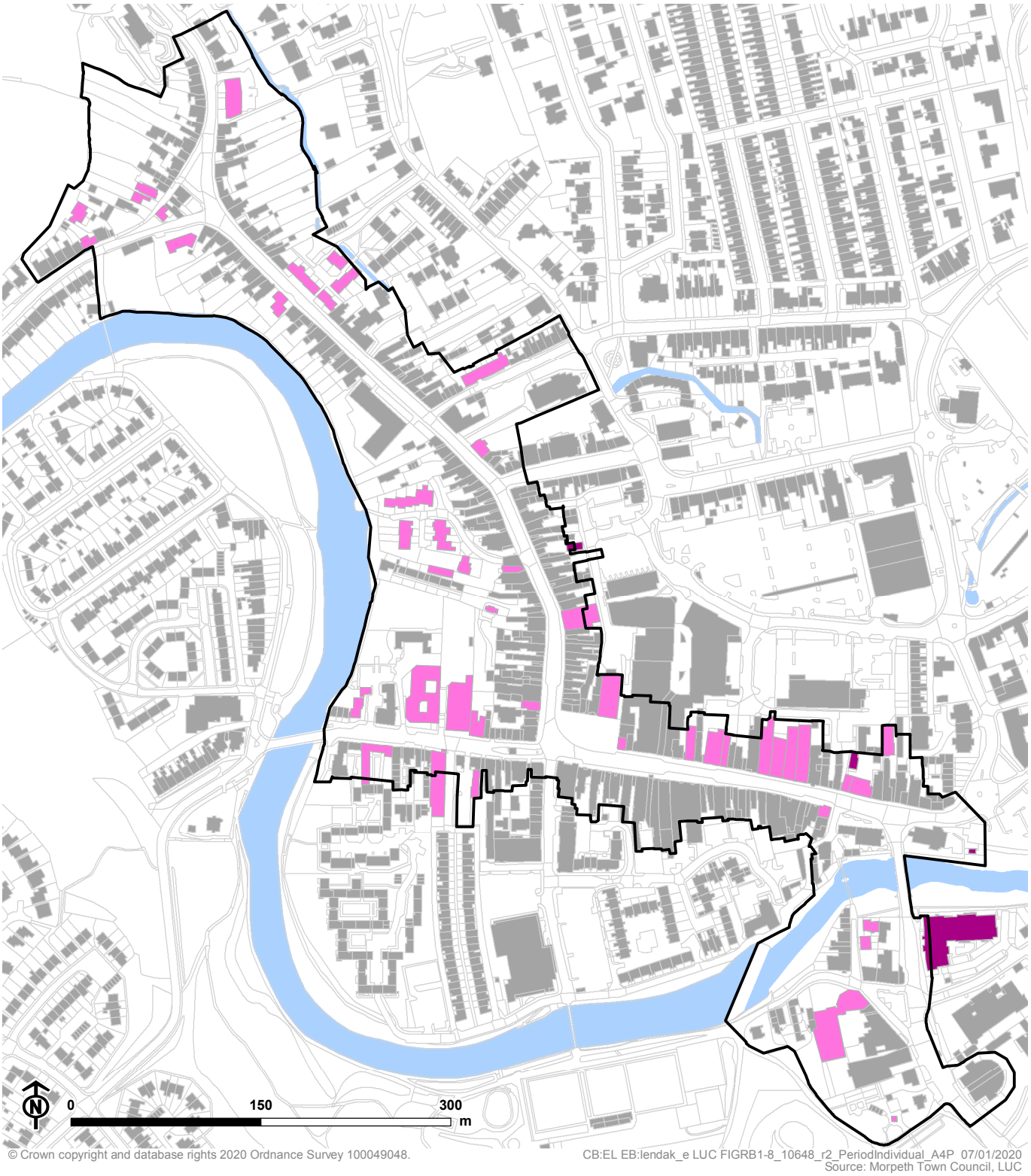
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.7 : Mid-20th Century Buildings

Conservation Area

Mid 20th century buildings



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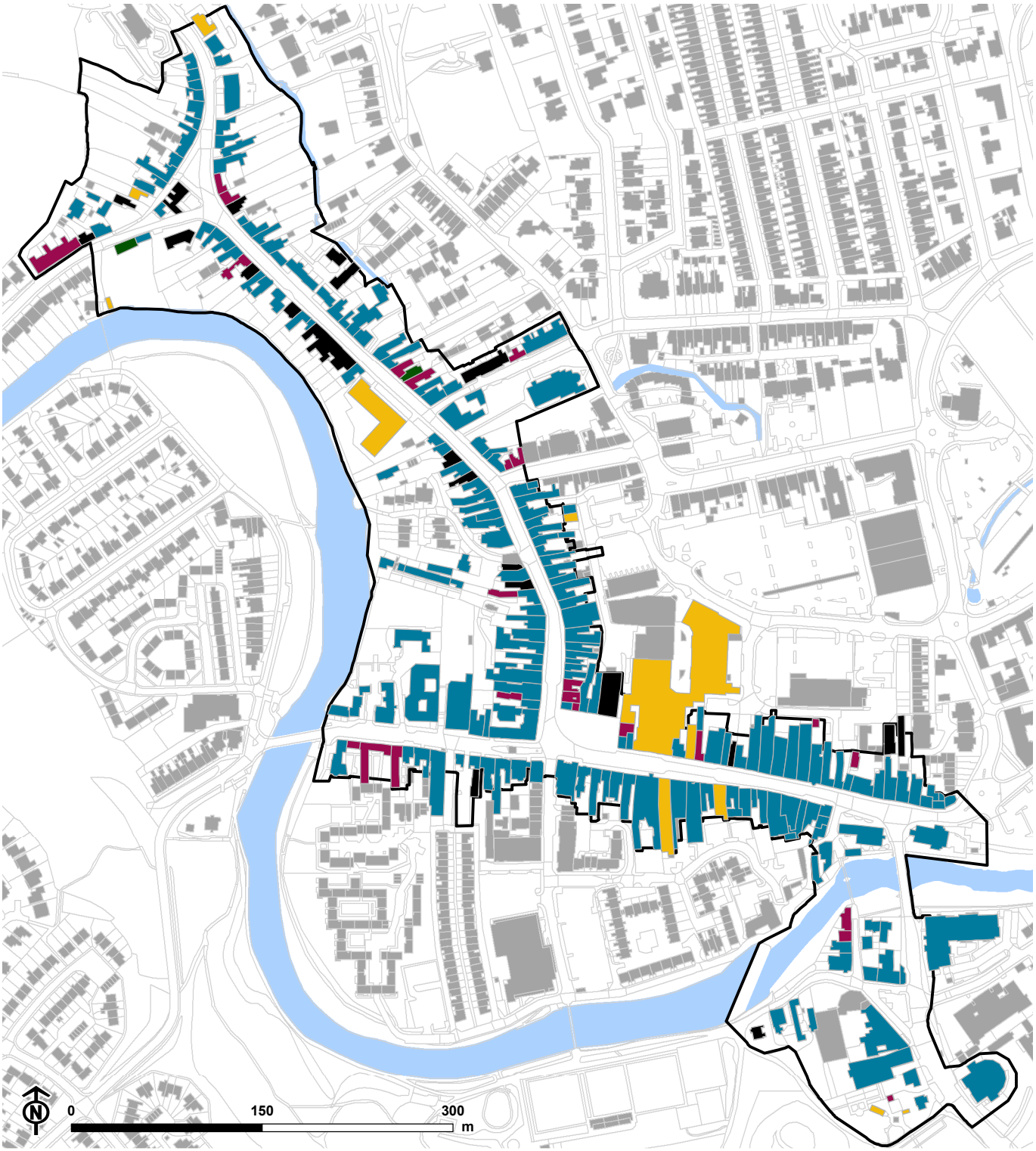
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure B.8 : Late-20th to 21st Century Buildings

- Conservation Area
- Late 20th century buildings
- 21st century buildings

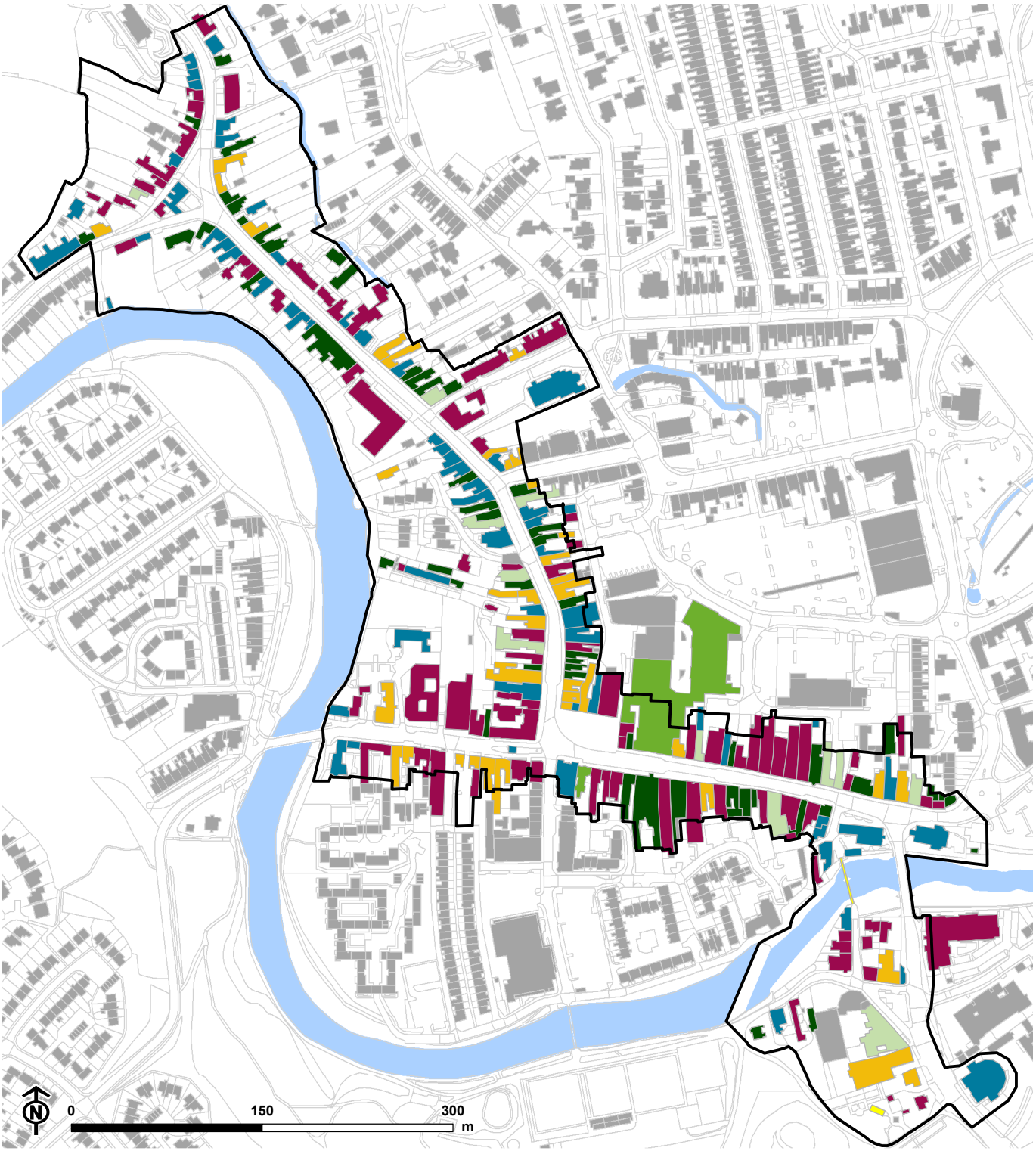
Appendix C

Building Character Maps: Materials



CB:EL EB:lendak_e LUC FIGRC-1_10648_r1_Roof_A4P_07/01/2020
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure C.1: Roof Material



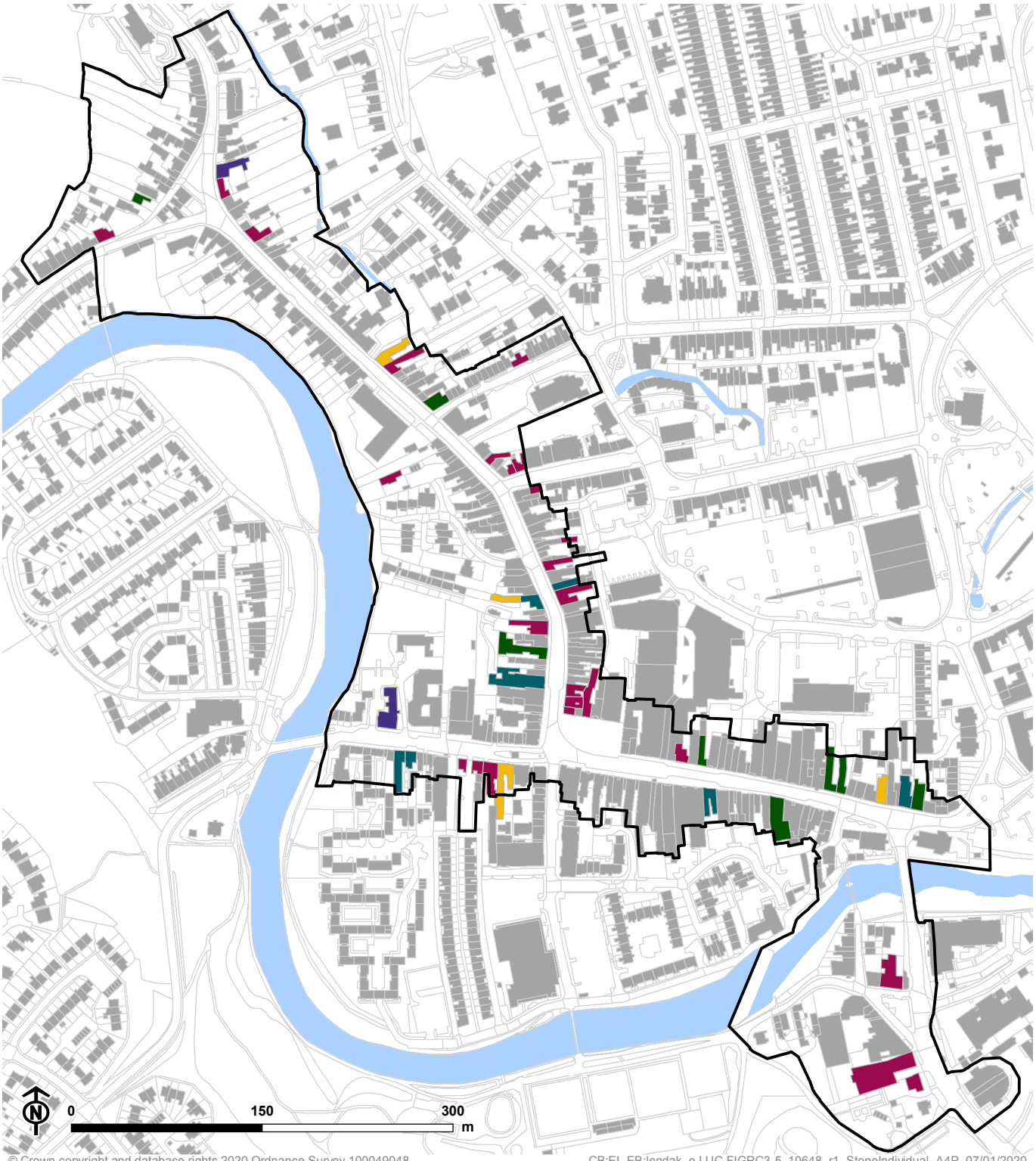
CB:EL EB:lendak_e LUC FIGRC-2_10648_r1_Wall_A4P 07/01/2020
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure C.3: Wall Material

Conservation Area

Wall material

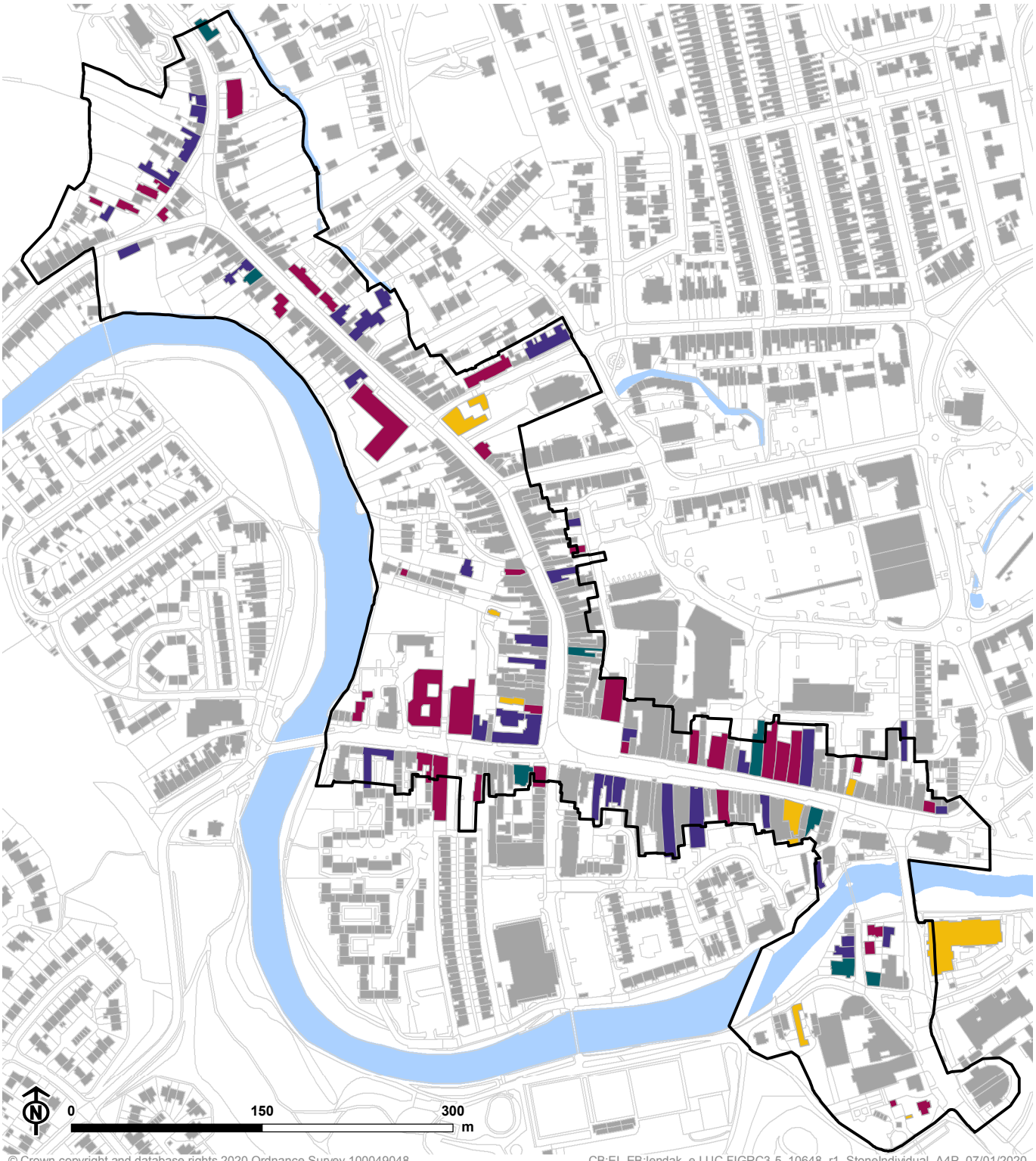
- Handmade brick
- Machine-made brick
- Stone
- Rendered
- Painted
- Tiles / faience
- Other



CB:EL EB:lendak_e LUC FIGRC3-5_10648_r1_StoneIndividual_A4P 07/01/2020
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure C.3: Handmade-Brick Buildings by Bond Type

- Conservation Area
- Handmade brick
- Handmade brick – English garden wall bond
- Handmade brick – Flemish bond
- Handmade brick – stretcher bond
- Painted brick



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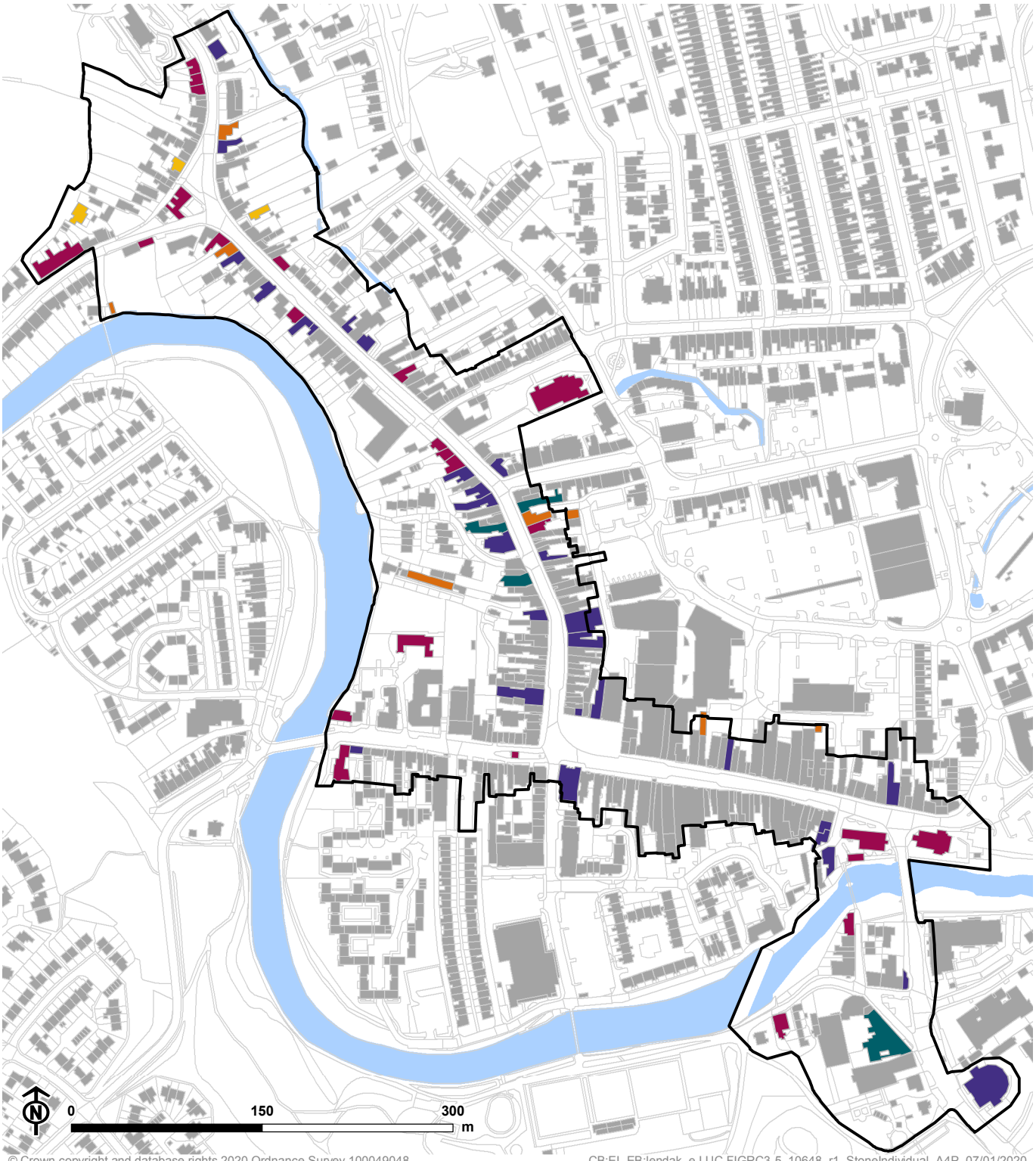
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure C.4: Machine-Made Brick Buildings by Bond Type

- Conservation Area
- Machine-made brick
- Machine-made brick - Stretcher bond
- Machine-made brick – English garden wall bond
- Machine-made brick – Flemish bond



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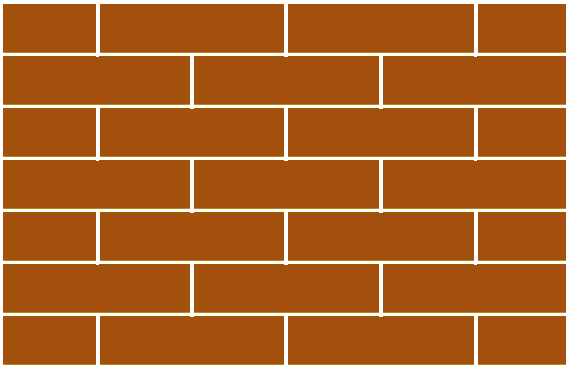
Source: Morpeth Town Council, LUC

Figure C.5: Stone Buildings by Finish Type

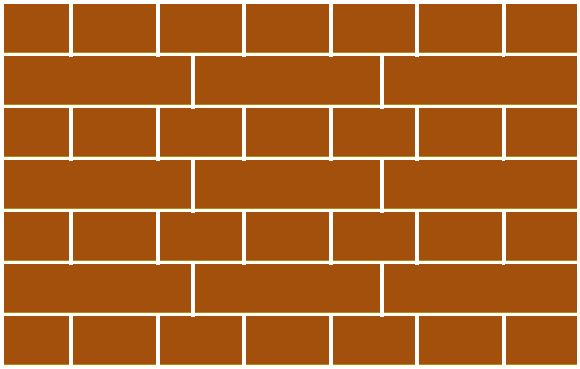
- Conservation Area
- Random rubble stone
- Coursed rubble stone
- Tooled stone
- Ashlar stone
- Painted stone

Appendix D

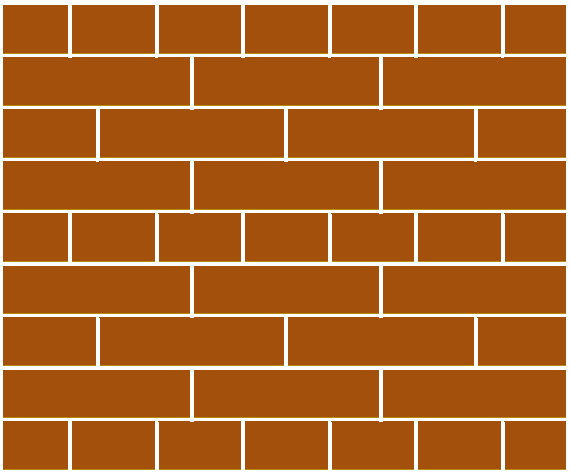
Brick Bond Types



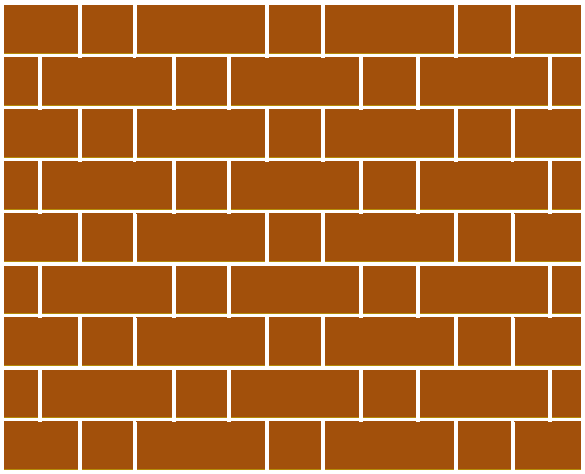
Stretcher bond



English bond



English garden wall bond



Flemish bond

Tumbled in brickwork to gable ends

Appendix E
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