



Wansbeck District Council

Regulatory Services Division

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

Conservation Area (Existing & Proposed)



Character Appraisal

Produced by _____

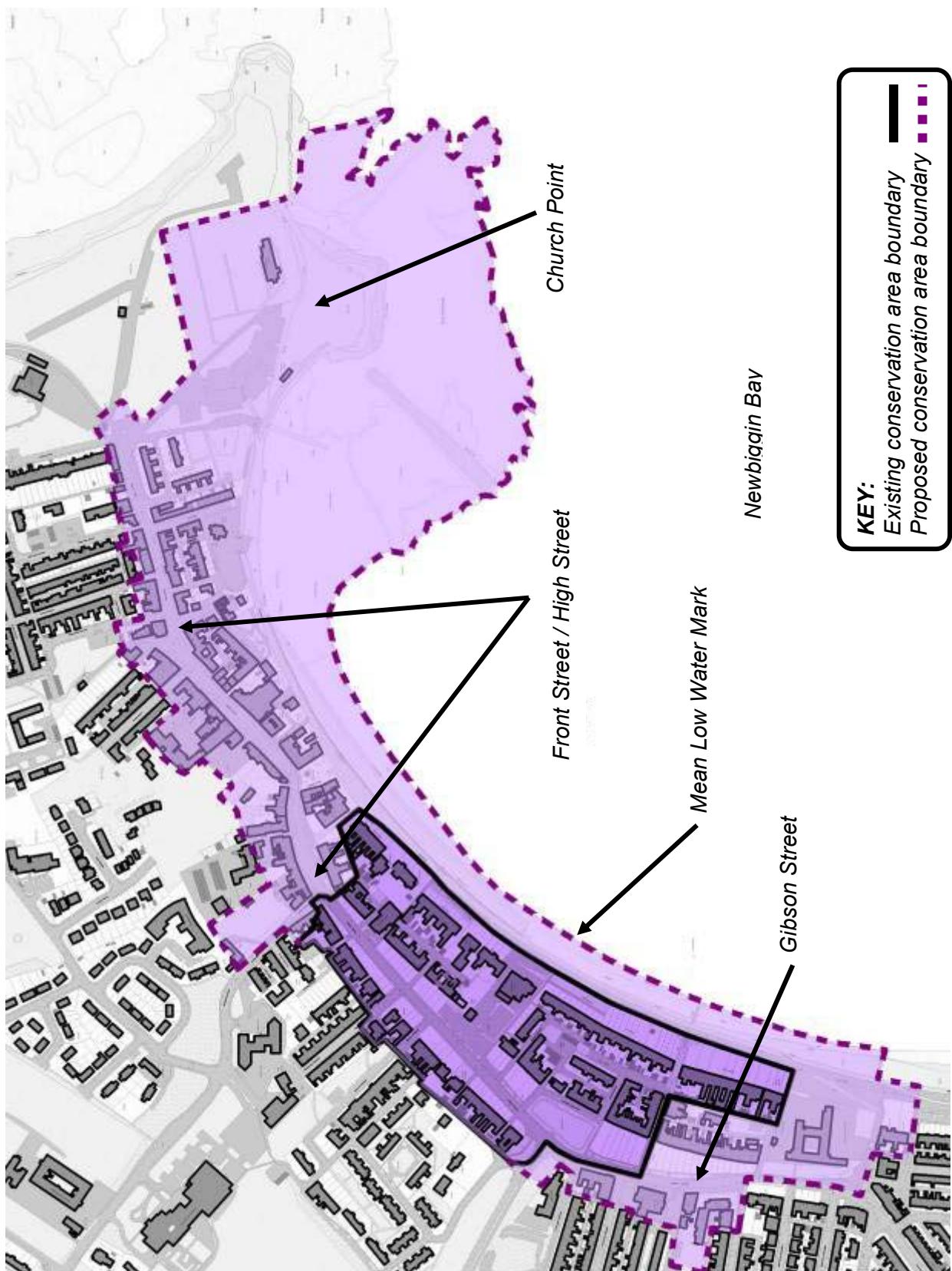


NORTH of ENGLAND CIVIC TRUST

June 2008

www.wansbeck.gov.uk

Fig 1: Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area (Existing and Proposed)
(See page 6 for boundary review)



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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas

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

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

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

The first conservation areas were created in 1967 and now over 9,100 have been designated, varying greatly in character and size. There are three in Wansbeck district:

- Bedlington
- Bothal
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

1.2 Town Planning Context

Designation remains the principal means by which local authorities can apply conservation policies to a particular area. The Council has a duty, in exercising its

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

planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. It also has a duty, from time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for preservation and enhancement, and to consult local people on them². The local planning authority also has extra powers in conservation areas over demolition, minor developments, and tree protection (see page 119). Government policy in PPG15³ stresses the need for local planning authorities to define and record the special interest, character and appearance of all conservation areas in their districts.

The Wansbeck District Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2007, replacing that adopted in 1994. This, together with the Northumberland County & National Park Joint Structure Plan 2005, forms the development plan for Wansbeck. Under the new planning system, the Council is preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF), a portfolio of development plan documents used to plan and control development across the district. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), also part of this system, sets out a spatial vision for the north east (but as RSS is draft; 2002 *Regional Planning Guidance* is still relevant⁴).

More specific local planning guidance is contained in the following:

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

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

1.3 ***This Character Appraisal***

The character appraisal was prepared during late 2006 and 2007 by North of England Civic Trust for Wansbeck District Council. It appraises the existing area plus the wider historic town in order to inform a boundary review (see page 8), and forms evidence for the conservation area management strategy SPD. After consultation, this appraisal will be adopted during 2008. The appraisal and the management strategy SPD can be downloaded from www.wansbeck.gov.uk.

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

² Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s72 and s71

³ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning & The Historic Environment

⁴ *Regional Spatial Strategy*, North East Assembly, due 2008

Fig 2: Policy and Guidance Context of this Character Appraisal

1.4 Further Information

For further information on conservation, character appraisals, design, planning permission or building regulations, please contact:

- Wansbeck District Council, Council Offices, Bedlington, N'land, NE22 5TU
- Planning Policy E-mail: ldf@wansbeck.gov.uk
Tel: (01670) 843 405 Fax: (01670) 843 484
- Development Control E-mail: planningenquiriesmailbox@wansbeck.gov.uk
Tel: (01670) 843 434 Fax: (01670) 843 484
- Building Control E-mail: buildingcontrolmailbox@wansbeck.gov.uk
Tel: (01670) 843 467 Fax: (01670) 843 484
- Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, N'land, NE61 2EF
- Archaeology E-mail: archaeology@northumberland.gov.uk
Tel: (01670) 534 057 Fax: (01670) 534 117

For information provided in other languages and alternative formats eg. Braille, audiotape and large print, contact Planning Policy on (01670) 843 405. Fax (01670) 843 484. E-mail: ldf@wansbeck.gov.uk.

1.5 Note on Local Government Reorganisation

This appraisal has been prepared in the knowledge of expected local government reorganisation in 2009 when all the existing councils in Northumberland, including Wansbeck District Council, will be replaced by a single unitary authority. As the life of this document is longer than 2009, it must continue to apply after reorganisation.

2 Location and Context

2.1 Location

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is in Wansbeck District in Northumberland County, and is 5km west of Ashington, the principle commercial and administrative centre in the District. It is 12km west of Morpeth, whilst Newcastle upon Tyne, the regional capital, is 32km to the south-west. The centre of the existing and proposed conservation area is at grid reference NZ 312 877.

Commercially, Newbiggin is one of four secondary retail and service centres in Wansbeck, and has a population of around 7,100. With a population over 28,000, Ashington is the principal centre of the district. Although considerable effort has gone into diversifying the local economy and new employment opportunities in the last ten years or so, the number of new jobs created has not yet been sufficient to offset previous losses suffered through the closure of all 15 of the working collieries in the district during the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, unemployment levels in Wansbeck remain consistently higher than regional or national levels.

Newbiggin, like other settlements in the district, now shows no continuing signs of serious economic decline, but does suffer from general long term under-investment in historic fabric in buildings and spaces which requires regenerative investment. This would raise the quality of its appearance and use as a local centre.

The existing conservation area covers what is essentially a nineteenth century suburb of the original medieval fishing village and later nineteenth century seaside town of Newbiggin. The proposed extensions cover that historic core, plus additional townscape to the south-west, north-east and east which more closely represents the special historic and architectural interest of the town.

2.2 Boundary and Proposed Extension

2.2.1 Existing Boundary

The existing conservation area, based on the nineteenth century residential extension of the town centre, was designated on 1986 and has not changed since.

The existing boundary is as follows. Starting in the south end, the boundary follows the south line of No.1 Windsor Gardens and then turns north along the back lane to

Windsor Terrace, turning west along Windsor Road to Gibson Street where it turns north to the junction with the open space at the site of the former station. At this point it curves briefly north-west and then north-east to include a corner of open space next to No.2 Front Street, and then runs along the back of plots facing Front Street from this point to No.64, including the former hall on Simonside Terrace but excluding Lorne Terrace on Woodhorn Lane. It then crosses Front Street to head up the back lane to Victoria Terrace, which it turns eastwards to include. At the Promenade it turns back southwards to Windsor Gardens, following the front of plots facing the Promenade but not the Promenade itself or the associated banking works below the gardens.

2.2.2 **Proposed Boundary**

This character appraisal has informed a boundary review, written up in the *Conservation Area Management Strategy* (see page 6). The review concludes that the existing boundary does not reflect the entirety of the special local architectural or historic interest of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. Significant elements of town centre and coastal townscape are excluded which help define the town's distinctiveness and which contain several unlisted buildings with historic significance in their own right.

Most of this is coherently linked to the existing designation, leading to a boundary which has Gibson Street, Front Street and High Street as its spine, and then wraps round to Church Point. This would include some historic development at the north-east end of High Street which has suffered intrinsically more change to architectural features and materials than elsewhere. Excluding it, however, would not recognise its importance to an historical understanding of the place, its role as an integral part of the historic development pattern to the north-east, or its position overlooking part of the bay. Consequently, it is proposed to include it, but to clearly identify in the adopted character appraisal its lower significance compared to the remainder.

The Management Strategy recommends boundary extensions as follows (Fig 1):

- **To the south-west:**
 - Development on and around the west side of Gibson Street including Nos.2-4 (even) Seaton Avenue; St Mark's Church and its halls and grounds; the Apostolic Church; No.13 Maitland Terrace; the library and its grounds; Nos.1-9 (odd) Gibson Street; and open space on the west side of the junction of Gibson Street and Front Street at the site of the railway station (but not the late twentieth century health centre there).
 - Development on and around the east side of Gibson Street including Beachville/Beach End, Windsor County First School and grounds; Nos.12-42 (even) Gibson Street; Marine Cottages; and the south side of Windsor Road.
- **To the north-east:**
 - Development facing both sides of Woodhorn Lane from Woodhorn Villa southwards to its junction with Front Street (including Lorne Terrace and the former allotments but excluding all of Coronation Street and West View).

- Development on both sides of Front Street and High Street from the White House PH north-eastwards to the Creswell Arms PH. On the north side, this would follow the back line of plots on these streets, thus taking in Allison's Yard and outbuildings, buildings round yards behind Nos.116-128 Front Street (but not Moor Croft, Maud's Tce, Queen's Place, New King Street and Prospect Terrace); on the south side, it would take in all development between Front / High Street and the bay, including Bridge Street, Covent Garden, Watt's Lane, Vernon Place, Robinson Square, Bay View East, Sandridge and Attlee Tce.
- Open space and car-parks from the turning head outside the Creswell Arms PH east to the tip of Church Point, including the church, churchyard and public toilets, but excluding the caravan park between them.

- **To the east:**

- An area enclosed by the mean low water mark between Church Point and Windsor County First School, including Promenade, beach and open space.

See the Management Strategy for further discussion. The rest of this character appraisal covers the area inside the existing and proposed boundary.

2.3 **Context**

2.3.1 **Geology and Landscape Character**

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



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

The 2000 Landscape Character Assessment of south east Northumberland, completed as part of the Northumberland Coalfield Enhancement Strategy,

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

identified four distinct landscape areas in Wansbeck: coast, valley of the River Blyth, valley of the River Wansbeck, and Willow Burn and Sleek Burn valleys. Newbiggin is evidently included in the first of these landscape areas.

Part of the proposed conservation area lies within the Newbiggin Shore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for its geological interest.

2.3.2 **Topography and Aspect**

Newbiggin lines the northern arc of a sandy North Sea bay. It is marked by high points at either end and has lower land along the long middle section. From the south, land climbs sharply from low-lying North Seaton Road to meet Gibson Street at the start of the proposed south-west extension to the conservation area, then drops quite steeply away down to Bridge Street. As it drops away, the road itself is distinctly lower than development lining it on either side. Bridge Street marks the lowest point of the area where a 'lost' stream once entered the bay. From here, land then climbs up gently towards Church Point where there are rocky outcrops overlooking the sea. This divides the topography of the town in two – development in the existing conservation area is perched high above the bay, whilst that in the north-east extension sits much lower, nonetheless still higher than the bay itself.



The descent down into the town centre.



Topography to the south (left) is higher than that in the town centre (right), which nestles behind the beach. The Promenade and flood defence wall artificially level topography along the edge of the bay.

The bay edge has been heavily engineered over the decades for sea and flood defence (beach re-modelling was completed in 2007), and so the topography at the bay edge is artificially level. This means there are steep embankments at the south end below the existing conservation area, and the bay is obscured from view by the sea defence wall at the lowest point in the town centre at Bridge Street.

The town's hinterland is relatively flat as Woodhorn Road and the line of the former railway head inland.

Most of the oldest development in the town is introspective in nature, ie. facing the street rather than responding to any particular aspect outwards. Some of the oldest

terraces at the north-east end are perpendicular to this, along routes to the bay and the activity there. As the town grew, however, development began to take advantage of the seaward aspect and much of the nineteenth century residential development was built to face east towards the sea views.

2.3.3 **Setting and External Relationships**

The existing conservation area and the proposed extensions are drawn quite tightly around the core historic town and its architecturally high quality linear suburb to the south. Beyond this there are large amounts of nineteenth and twentieth century

development which does not have the same special interest in conservation area terms. The town has grown outwards from the bay with red brick Victorian terraces associated with the colliery, followed by early twentieth century semis and later twentieth century suburban estates developed in large phases to the south and north. This continues with a large area of housing inserted at the Carrs directly behind Front Street in 2007. Victorian terraces at and behind Beach Terrace form the southernmost arc of development lining Newbiggin Bay, but do not have sufficient special interest to be in the proposed south-west extension to the conservation area.

In addition to housing, large leisure developments and open spaces characterise the area's setting – caravan parks to the north (Church Point) and south (Sandy Bay), a golf course to the north at Newbiggin Moor, and smaller areas of open space at the site of the railway station and Argyle Terrace. (Even though outside the existing and proposed conservation area, trees at Sunnymede are key to



Setting to the existing and proposed conservation area. From the top: the site of the railway station and track heading east from Front Street; new housing under construction behind High Street; Church Point Holiday Park between High Street and St Bartholomew's Church; Spittal Point at the bottom end of the bay, with Sandy Bay Caravan Park in the distance, and nineteenth century terraces at the south end of the town.

views through it from the south.) The north caravan park abuts the proposed north-east extension to the conservation area between Church Point and High St, and is the most prominent development outside the existing and proposed conservation area. It will be important to keep Spittal Point free from development which would challenge the supremacy of St Bartholomew's over the bay at Church Point.

To the east is the bay itself and the sea beyond. This setting is crucial to the conservation area, and defines the historic fishing village and modern seaside elements to its character. In 2007, major engineering works recharged the beach with sand to recreate its once much greater width, reinforcing its sea defence role. A new 200m long breakwater in the middle of the bay now protects the beach. The sights, sounds and smells which the sea brings are essential to the place's character and appearance, and the wide, infinite horizon provides for hours of relaxed reflection from the beach and parts of the Promenade. The new breakwater is topped with a dramatic new sculpture, *Couple*, by artist Sean Henry, which reflects and contributes to this atmosphere.

Newbiggin is not an obvious through route for traffic, with North Seaton Road, Gibson Street, Front Street and Woodhorn Lane forming a loop off the main north-south Coastal Route between Alnwick and North Tyneside. Traffic levels are reasonably high along this route, but the suggested new road on the line of the former railway should help relieve that. Nonetheless, the economic decline of the town has not been helped by the fact that this loop leaves Newbiggin along Woodhorn Lane before it reaches the town centre, reducing opportunities for passing trade on Front Street, and forcing its economy to rely too greatly on seasonal activity associated with the holiday parks.



Church Point lies within a Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area, an international designation to protect birdlife. The ecological interest of parts of the proposed conservation area is therefore high, but the other parts could also have interest, such as urban ecology in the copious, well-connected front gardens.

2.4 *Views of and from the Area*

Views of the existing and proposed conservation area from outside are actually few in number. Beach Terrace and land to the south provides the only opportunity to sit and study the exciting scene provided by the expansive elevated views of the full bay in panorama. The same view would be possible from boats at sea, now largely the privilege of fishermen operating from the bay. Approaching from the west, the existing and proposed conservation area does not have a marked presence in the landscape, being masked by the ring of later development around it. Only on arrival along North Seaton Road or Woodhorn Lane does the historic nature of the place become apparent in the stone buildings and maturing trees at Gibson Street and Front Street. A tall telecommunications tower forms a distinctive if functional feature on the horizon on approach to the town but it is fortunately not as visible from within the existing or proposed conservation area as it is from outside.



View out of the proposed conservation area from St Bartholomew's churchyard towards Church Point Holiday Park.

Views out of the area are dominated by those eastwards to the sea, discussed elsewhere. Other views out are minimal. Views back along North Seaton Road and Woodhorn Lane are short due to sharp bends in both roads. Views out at the site of the railway station site are long but uneventful, towards a neutral green reclaimed landscape. At Church Point Holiday Park, static caravans are quite prominent in views, and overhead wires and lighting columns do tend to dominate. The impact which the holiday park has on the setting of the church and churchyard is not something which would be planned today, but the park is crucial to the economy of the proposed north-east extension to the conservation area and adds to a modern seaside feel. Its impact in views is controlled to some degree by the topography, though this could be improved.

3 *Historical Development*

3.1 *Development History*

3.1.1 *Pre-Map History*

Although nineteenth century excavations were believed to reveal that the present village of Newbiggin “is built on the ruins of at least four previous Newbiggins” ranging from the meagre to the elegant in character (see 3.2 below), it is more likely that this is the story of just one or two sites within the village rather than representative of the whole town. Finds of Mesolithic and Bronze Age items around Newbiggin are testament to local settlement at that time, but not necessarily to a village where today’s Newbiggin now stands.

It is not known whether Newbiggin has either a Roman or Saxon history, although what was believed to be a Saxon water jug of coarse glazed earthenware was found in the town in the nineteenth century. The most likely local centre of this period is Woodhorn, being more sheltered inland from the ravages of coastal weather and raiders.

Historical documents put this early history on more sure ground. The earliest recorded spelling of the name Newbiggin is dated 1187 and is *Niwebigingā*, which in Old English means “new building or house”. There are three other Newbiggins in Northumberland, the names of which share the same origin. The significance of the word *new* is lost but in 1198 there must have been some kind of a fishing settlement here as Eustace Baliol, the owner of the land, confirmed his grandfather’s grant of a homestead in Newbiggin to the monks of Newminster Abbey (near Morpeth) in 1138, and added to it a further grant of a fishing boat.

In 1240, the village was in the hands of John Baliol, who at the time was Regent of Scotland and founder of Baliol College, Oxford. A document of 1294 confirms the Baliol family’s claim to a weekly market (on Mondays) and an annual fair on St Bartholomew’s Day (24 August). King Edward I confiscated the Baliol estates after John’s third son, who became King of Scotland in 1292, led an unsuccessful rebellion against Edward I and was forced to abdicate in 1295. The Newbiggin estates were transferred from the Crown to John Dreux, Earl of Richmond.

The recognisable burgage plot pattern that still survives in the village has been attributed by some to a medieval borough of Newbiggin established by 1307 as an earlier planted settlement carved out of the older township of Woodhorn – this is where the *new* part of the original name may have come from. The coastal land south of the burgages is probably the area of the borough fields and that to the north was likely to have been the borough moor. Although the north area is still called Newbiggin Moor, confirming its history, confirmation of the rest of this interesting speculation awaits more research.

There is much evidence that the village was for many years managed by bailiffs appointed by residents, or by freeholders acting on behalf of the villagers. The freeholders seem to have exercised their rights and privileges since 1235. These rights had been challenged over the years but always without success.

Maintaining the medieval port was not without cost, as seen by Edward III granting a charter that subjected Newbiggin's market to tolls to be used for the upkeep of the harbour, and also by Bishop Thomas Hatfield of Durham, granting in 1352 a 40 day indulgence to all those in his diocese who provided finance to repair the pier at Newbiggin. The pier had been built from north to south along the rocks on the north side of the harbour and appeared like a breakwater of large masses of rocks which had been rolled into place. Some of it was still remaining in 1832 but coastal erosion has since removed all traces.

The Crown again acquired control of the estates and in 1336, Edward III gave them to John de Denton of Newcastle through whom they passed to the Widdrington family. The Widdringtons held them for many years until they backed the wrong side in the 1715 Jacobite Rising and lost them to the Crown.

3.1.2 ***Armstrong's Map of 1769***

On this map, the most striking feature of Newbiggin is its church on a barren treeless promontory, well away from the shelter of its village. A local tradition maintains that the location of the church was chosen by monks from Lindisfarne and it certainly is the kind of challenging, elemental site that Celtic monks favoured. Although the church is fourteenth century with much rescue and remodelling in the nineteenth, its plan and some of its features suggest a possible earlier structure.

The church is shown separated from the village by a pond-fed stream that rose on the old common of Newbiggin. The route of this stream changes on every later map so its location on this map should be treated with some caution as its course seems to have changed over time.

The compact village shown on this map in diagrammatic form huddles along a short stretch of road as far west as the turn to Woodhorn, where it abruptly ends. Woodhorn is shown as a more important inland village with mill and church. From here a coastal route is shown only as a rough track turning south past the grindstone quarries towards a ferry. Newbiggin had long enjoyed a reputation as a major port for the shipping of grain and grindstones, but these activities were, in the

early nineteenth century, to be overtaken in size by one of Newbiggin's oldest industries – fishing.

3.1.3 ***Fryer's Map of 1820***

Unlike Armstrong's, this map is to scale. Newbiggin was now growing down the coast road beyond the Woodhorn turn, the road itself widened perhaps to accommodate the overflow of the markets and annual Bartholomew fairs from the High Street of the old village. The stream rising on the Common was now shown bisecting the old village rather than skirting it to the north.

On the road between Newbiggin and Woodhorn is Woodhorn Demesne (an old fourteenth century French word for land and gardens immediately around a substantial residence and landscaped for special enjoyment by the owner and his family). Woodhorn Demesne was to survive well into the twentieth century in spite of acquiring a coal pit as a neighbour.

The coast road south now ran directly to North Seaton, crossing the Spittal Burn on the way. It is likely that this burn is named after a medieval hospital which stood nearby – possibly on the site of Spittal House – from 1307 to its dissolution in the sixteenth century.

3.1.4 ***Tithe Award Map of 1847***

This is the first map in the sequence to call Newbiggin a township, surrounded by the townships of Woodhorn and North Seaton, and in the parish of Woodhorn. On this map, the stream from the Carrs runs through the village and under a small bridge – the origin of today's Bridge Street. Although it had a considerable influence on Newbiggin's high street for many years, the stream never seems to have had a name deemed worthy of recording on a map.

Development of the village southwards at this time only consisted of a few terraces, a brewery and Bank House. More 'weekend' or 'summer season' houses, as well as homes for the locals, were yet to be built in this southern expansion of the old fishing village, but in 1847 the parcels of roadside land were already divided up to receive them.

3.1.5 ***First Edition OS Map of c.1860 (25" Scale)***

This map shows significant change. At the western end is the suburban import of Prospect Place with its little individual front gardens and yards towards the sea, all quite new to the rough-and-ready fishing village of Newbiggin. The untreated open space south of High Street, used to park and repairing cobs (small fishing boats) above the high water line, would soon witness a huge expansion of the fishing fleet to include large herring boats as well as the local shallow draught cobs.

Scattered about this space were the essential services of a fishing community; the Lifeboat House of 1851 (now the oldest working lifeboat house in the country), enclaves of fisherman's cottages (eg. Vernon Place and Robinson Square), the Herring House by Skeleton Walls (for coopering, barrelling and kippering) and a small Wesleyan Methodist Church of 1844.



1st Edition OS Map, c. 1860.

The fishing quarter led onto the High Street where larger houses rubbed shoulders with locally owned shops and small brewery pubs with either royal or nautical names: The Queen's Head, The Queen Victoria, The King's Head, The New Dolphin, The Old Ship and The Coble. At Bridge Street, the High Street is pinched at the bridge itself, and the Bridge End buildings on the north side curve close into the bridge, further restricting the width of the High Street.

From this point, the road south, still called High Street on this map, had seen a little more development since the 1840s: Cresswell Terrace and the Haven look out to sea, whilst more embryonic terraces had begun to creep along both sides of the main road. Far from being a tightly contained space like the old village High Street, the southern part of the route south seemed to wend its way gently through wide, open land and past two ponds, one large one small, a rather extravagant use of urban land for the time.

As the copy of the map seen seems to be a working copy, possibly used by the local surveyor and engineer, it shows the line of underground drainage channels and surface manholes. In addition, it shows in diagrammatical form only, proposed terraces north and south of Cresswell Terrace, south of Brewery House

and across sites numbered 29 and 30 on the west side of the road along the coast. The map even shows an outline of the proposed railway station – without any rails – on plot 31. As the station was not to open until 1870, it would suggest that the modifications to this 1860s map were made in the later years of that decade, which was clearly becoming a boom time in the growth of Newbiggin.

3.1.6 **Second Edition OS Map of c.1897 (25" Scale)**

The settlement was rapidly becoming a very different place than 40 years earlier. The old fishing and service village was little changed but it would now have been much busier with an increase in residents and a huge increase in visitors. Newbiggin had become a popular beach resort for both the industrial workers and the growing middle classes of Tyneside and south east Northumberland. Several wealthy families would have also had summer residences here too.



2nd Edition OS Map, c.1897.

Although the fishing quarter had changed little (doubtless part of the attraction of the resort) the bridge at the centre had been removed, the nameless stream culverted, and the whole area paved out to better accommodate the hordes of visitors as well as local shoppers.

Much more permanent change could now be seen in the southern coast road area – now called Front Street – to cater for the new role of the village. There was a new school of 1868 on Woodhorn Road, next to the new gas works of 1865. The railway station of 1870 was now in full operation, providing a gateway to the

pleasures and bracing climate of Newbiggin, as well as allowing commuter development. Along the east side of the road, a new Wesleyan chapel (St Andrew's) went in amongst new terraces in 1876 and front gardens were carved out of the previously generous road-side spaces, encroaching even up to the edge of the ponds and becoming huge in length at the southern end of the village.

Aqua, Windsor and Gibson Terraces had been built in stone, the latter named after the stone mason who built it, Thomas Gibson. He was also responsible for the new Presbyterian Church of St Mark opposite in 1898. The Haven, a new large summer residence, had appeared overlooking the sea which was to be occupied for some time by the famous Trevelyan family of Wallington, their splendid eighteenth century country mansion being west of Morpeth. The southern end of Newbiggin was now fast becoming a respectable quarter of elite stone terraces and seasonal residences, while the commercial, trading and industrial activities that gave life to Newbiggin were now almost entirely confined to the old village quarter.

A sea wall had been completed in 1877 from the south end of the bay to terminate at Skeleton Walls, with access to the beach by sets of stone steps. This left the beach and foreshore at the north end of the bay available for the unimpeded use of the fishing industry, but protected the rest of the bay for better enjoyment by the crowds of visitors which now flooded in during the summer and on newly acquired bank holidays.

This influx encouraged the inns and pubs to develop their hotel accommodation. Sea View, a new hostelry, was added to the list of busy Newbiggin establishments. From 1884/5, golf was available for both working and middle-class members and visitors, with the opening of golf courses on Newbiggin Moor (shown on the 6" scale Second Edition OS map of 1897).

3.1.7 *Third Edition OS Map of c.1920 (25" Scale)*

The major new development that added a whole new industrial dimension to Newbiggin was the colliery and associated housing to the west of the village, opened in 1910. In its heyday in the 1940s, Newbiggin Colliery employed 1400 men. It closed in 1967 and during its 59 years, 41 men lost their lives there. Although the colliery offered employment and prosperity, its location at the main road and rail gateways in to the village and its associated air pollution, must have had a major impact on the image of Newbiggin as a beach resort. There is a picturesqueness about the fishing industry which is not shared by the grime and 'lunar' landscapes of the coal industry.

New housing had been built all along the south-west and north-west edges of the village. Fortunately, the ancient church of St Bartholomew still enjoyed its splendid isolation, uncluttered by any residential, recreational or industrial development – even the golf club house was tucked out of the way behind Prospect Place (shown on the 6" scale Second Edition OS map of 1897).



3rd Edition OS Map, c.1920.

The old village had acquired a Mechanics Institute on the corner of Bridge Street. Although it had been first built in 1881, it was hugely extended in 1914 to offer a library of 2,000 books plus billiard and smoking rooms to the growing industrial workforce in the village and terraces around. Competition was provided by the Picture Theatre, a large, unlovely brick shed further up High Street, which opened around 1900 and earlier called The Empire but later becoming the Wallaw Cinema.

The newer part of the town to the south along Front Street, acquired a new school near the Presbyterian Church, and the ponds along the east roadside had made way for a small public park opposite the station in memory of the local people who lost their lives in World War I.

The conversion of Bank House from residence to social club was an early sign of the times that were to witness the progressive

decline of the visitor industry in Newbiggin as the twentieth century continued.

3.1.8 **Modern Map c.2000**

Extensive residential developments in the twentieth century have blurred the inland edges of Newbiggin. Only at Church Point and the site of the railway station is the historic openness retained. The first is mercifully clear of permanent buildings but the rugged bleakness of the church and churchyard is marred somewhat by the caravan park that surrounds them, whilst the site of the station and the line of the tracks is still open land and, despite being somewhat eroded by housing and a recent health centre, remains protected as a potential future new road into the town.

A handsome new school from the mid twentieth century was provided close to the Presbyterian Church at the south end of Front Street. Retail development on the old village has begun to cover more and more of the rear plots, resulting in the creation of building footprints which are out of scale with the fine grain of the rest of

the old village. The Co-operative Store on the east side is probably the largest. On plan, Bank House has been hugely extended as the club membership has grown but, fortunately, the charming lodge to Front Street is relatively unharmed and in use by the District Council.

The largest single development of the century, though, was the building of a splendid promenade with bandstand and shelters between 1929 and 1932, some of which is still very much with us today. Following a storm in 1984 which destroyed part of the promenade, repairs and improvements were put in hand. Storms, combined with extreme sea erosion and dropping of land through collapsed mine workings, have progressively robbed the bay of much of its fine sandy beach and caused flooding in the village. The raising of the sea walls in the improvement scheme of 1993 reduced the flooding in the old village but at the cost of views out to sea from places such as Bridge Street. In 2007, the beach was recharged with sand, and a series of platforms created to allow views over the sea wall out towards the bay and the new breakwater.

In addition to the raised sea walls, the 1993 improvements involved a new block paving and bollard scheme for Front Street in the town centre and the conversion of historic Bridge Street into a piazza, complete with bandstand and screened sitting areas. Despite this, the quality of Bertorelli's 1930s period Café Riviera, the presence of The Coble PH and the variety of the former Mechanics Institute help to retain something of the historic appearance of Bridge Street.

3.1.9 **Conclusions**

Newbiggin's history is much more fascinating than may first appear. The plan of the medieval village is still much in evidence and its modifications and developments are not too difficult to chronicle, even if its earliest origins are unresolved. Its spiritual, maritime and trading pasts are still recognisable on the ground, as is the location of and survivals from its fishing industry quarter. Although the railway and colliery buildings of its coal period have gone, land and housing associated with them still remain recognisable. The village is worthy of much closer historic scrutiny to fully expose the fascination of its latent secrets.

3.2 **Archaeology**

There are no scheduled ancient monuments in the existing or proposed conservation area. The Sites & Monuments Record for Northumberland (SMR) has 18 entries for Newbiggin and the area immediately around it. In the settlement itself, only the parish church and medieval burgrave plots are mentioned as being of archaeological significance.

In terms of archaeological potential, the old village has potential for excavation should the opportunity arise. In addition, it could be interesting to research the following statements made by Dr J C Reid in the 1874 annual report of the old Newbiggin Urban District Council:

"The village is built on the ruins of at least four previous Newbiggins, the first of which had been of a very meagre character, the second and third were more substantial, nay even elegant. ...When the present Newbiggin was built, the walls of the houses were thick enough, but they used slime from Maud's Pool for mortar"

This seems an extraordinary statement, with no records of any archaeological evidence to support it, but presents interesting speculation which might be worthy of further research.

4 *Spatial Analysis*

4.1 *Development Pattern*

The development pattern of the existing and proposed conservation area can be broken into three sections:

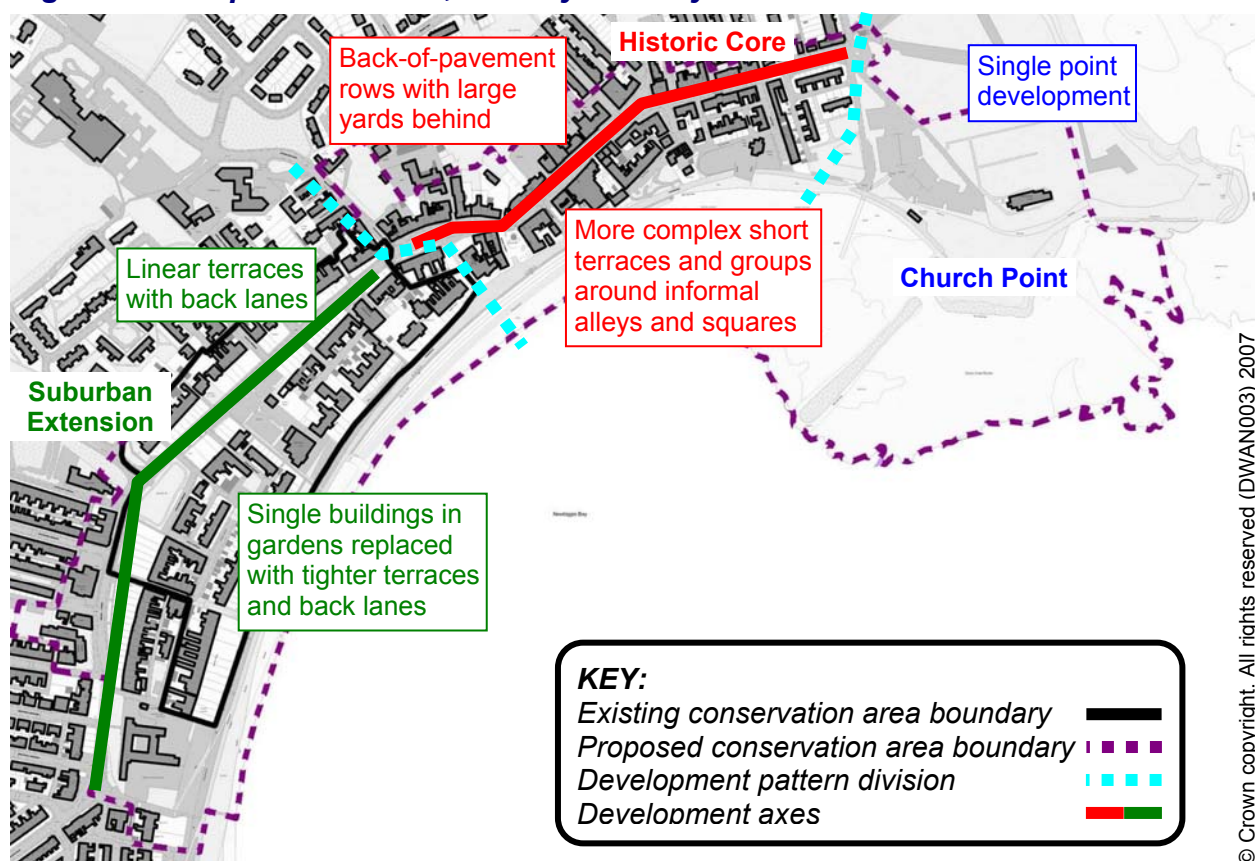
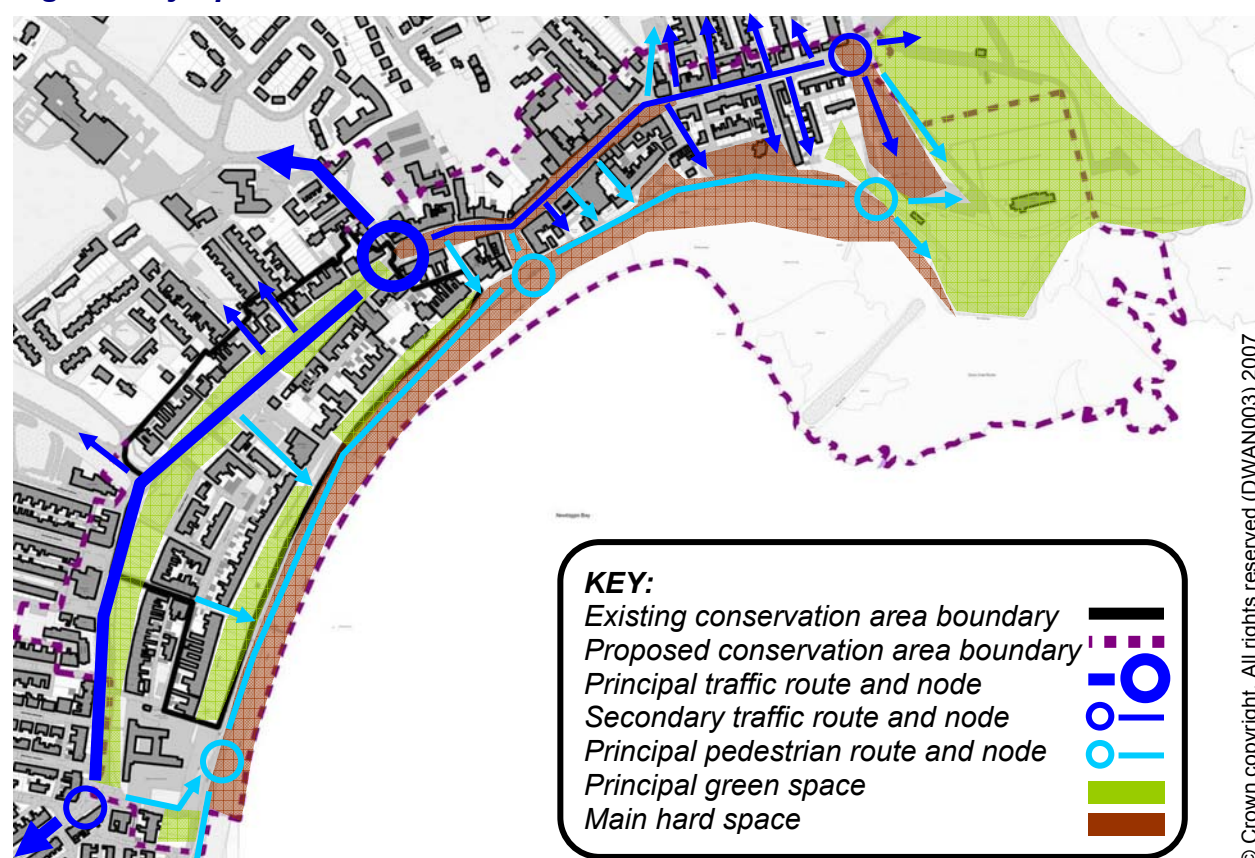
- **Historic Core:** towards the top of the bay with a Front / High Street spine,
- **Suburban Extension:** the later growth of the town with Front Street and Gibson Street as its spine, in the middle of the bay and raised up from it.
- **Church Point** at the northern tip the bay,

The third section has always been distinctly separate from the linear development pattern of the other two, which link into one long, sinuous strip. Each has grown incrementally with individual buildings and groups of buildings developed side by side over the decades. Despite this, the whole is very legible.

The basic origin of the **Historic Core** is much like other huddled, inward looking fishing villages on the north east coast. It is broadly defined by the shape of the bay it lines with Front Street / High Street snaking through it. This spine has two distinct kinks which divide it into three parts of varying widths. The southern kink, at Bridge Street, is the historic crossing point of the now culverted stream through the village, marked by a tight pinch-point where the road narrows. The northern kink is the junction of an historic coastal route from the north which, in contrast, arrives at a wider splay. So, at the north-east end, High Street is quite straight with a uniform width, whereas the south-western section of Front Street is gently bowed, opening out into a wider space between Bridge Street and Woodhorn Lane.

Also in the **Historic Core** is a secondary axis perpendicular to Front and High Streets, as a result of lower-lying land by the beach and the fishing activity it allowed. Development to the east therefore follows a more complex pattern of short terraces and groups around informal alleys and squares, down to the beach. Some later development has reflected this pattern, such as the Café Riviera building and mid twentieth century housing around Atlee Terrace.

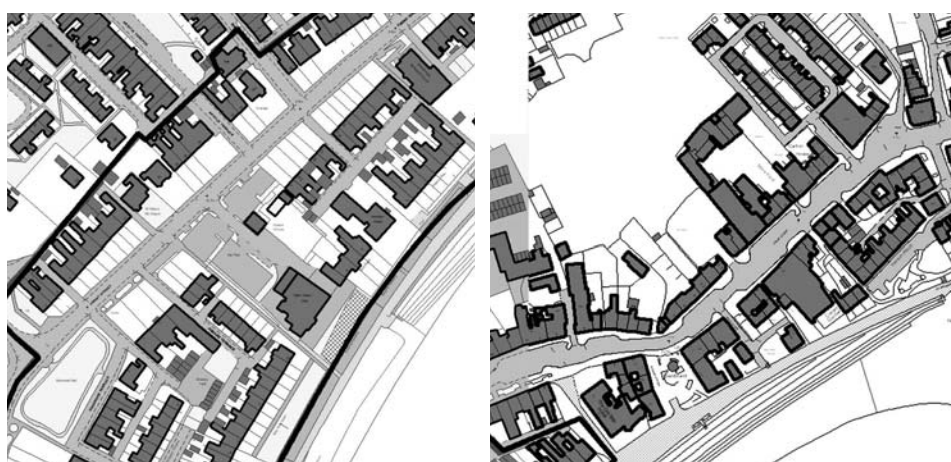
The **Suburban Extension** also has a single main development axis, here in two parts – straight Front Street and slightly curved Gibson Street – which meet at the site of the cleared railway station and form a distinct arc following the bay. Again,

Fig 3a: Development Pattern, Density and Layout**Fig 3b: Key Spaces and Routes**

the development pattern on the landward side is more uniform and linear, while the seaward side is more complex. Here, original development comprised single buildings in large grounds developed in fields lining a road verged with a thick green corridor. Comprehensive later infill added row upon row of terraces between the main road and the edge of the ridge, with perpendicular cross streets and parallel back lanes between them.

4.2 *Layout, Grain and Density*

The layout of the existing and proposed conservation area follows general themes, but because the area developed incrementally over time, there are parts with relatively complex arrangements as new developments have been inserted amongst old ones.



The layout and grain of the Suburban Extension, left, is more regular than that of the Historic Core, right, which demonstrates the latter's unplanned, incremental growth. The south-east side of the Historic Core is dense and tightly packed, whilst the Suburban Extension has long front gardens to the street and bay.

Most of the existing and proposed conservation area is characterised by rows of long, narrow plots laid out perpendicular to the street and stretching back from it. The layout of these plots is strongly linear with neighbouring buildings joined in

planned terraces or informal strings. This is not, however, always consistent and parts have a fragmented layout, particularly at the north end off the Promenade.

On the north-west side of the **Historic Core**, buildings are pushed right to the front of plots, creating a sharp back-of-pavement urban edge, but one which snakes with the street rather than being forced and rectilinear. As there are few back lanes, the edge is broken in several places by access to alleys and yards (sometimes through carriage arches) and, at the north-east end, by inserted nineteenth century streets



The Historic Core has a back-of-pavement urban edge, broken in places on the south-east side by routes to the beach.

opening onto High Street. The same edge is seen on the south side of the street, but here it is more irregular (eg. the set back Nos.99-105)

and is broken more often by the alleys and yards heading down to the bay. In those alleys and yards, buildings are also pushed to the front of plots, but the plots are smaller and more irregularly grouped, creating a much tighter layout with ad hoc access to fronts and backs. Early to mid twentieth century development at the north-east end, around Bay View East and Atlee Terrace, has inserted into this irregular, fragmented plan more regular layouts with small front gardens.

The grain of the **Historic Core** is tight with narrow plots packed in, particularly on the south-east side, but many plots are different sizes, showing the unplanned incremental growth of the sub-area. A few adjoining plots on Front Street have been combined to create larger development sites (eg. the Co-op and No.116), although not in sufficient numbers to destroy this historic grain. The Black Pearl PH (formerly the Old Ship Hotel) is the only single plot in the Historic Core to stretch between Front Street and the Promenade, with a double-fronted building. Only a handful of houses are sited confidently against the Promenade looking out to sea (eg. Sea View House, Covent Garden), with a few terraces set further back and more sheltered. On the north-west side of the Historic Core, plot density is quite low with only one main building on each plot and large areas of yard behind – density was once much higher but outbuildings and cottages have been cleared from some of these larger plots since the mid twentieth century. On the south-east side, higher density prevails, with little unbuilt space on each plot.

In the **Suburban Extension**, the layout of plots is quite different. On Front Street and Gibson Street, buildings are almost at the back of their plots, with deep gardens in front and small domestic back yards. The length of these front gardens is very generous, creating a hidden, secluded layout and a very thick green corridor for the main street to travel through. But the area's layout was not always like this. Originally, the street ran through a wide strip of open land – essentially a linear

village green – with large field plots on either side (see the 1st Ed OS Map) and many early buildings were, as elsewhere, pushed right to the front of their plots. It was only when the open land in front was subdivided into a garden for each house that the current generous front garden layout was created. As well as the original plot layout being obvious on plan, several small fragments of it do survive on the ground – Bank House's garden lodge marks the original gateway off the street, whilst an original boundary wall dividing its car-parks is crucial surviving evidence of the original plot line – this



The Southern Extension's main route once ran through a wide open space – essentially a linear village green – that was later subdivided and given over as front gardens for each of the houses that faced the street.

layout was created. As well as the original plot layout being obvious on plan, several small fragments of it do survive on the ground – Bank House's garden lodge marks the original gateway off the street, whilst an original boundary wall dividing its car-parks is crucial surviving evidence of the original plot line – this

should protected. In addition, Grassmere Terrace (No.7 in particular) has the original plot boundary line because Memorial Park (and the pond before it) prevented the open land in front from becoming front gardens. Most other terraces in the **Suburban Extension** also have long front gardens, those facing across the bay being steeply sloped or artificially terraced. Only those few streets squeezed in the middle have much smaller or no front gardens – Marine Cottages, Windsor Road, Aqua Terrace and Thirlmere Terrace.

This generous green layout to the front is only possible because of the use of planned back lanes to access each property, not seen in the more ad hoc Historic Core. In the tightly packed layout of the east side, the high number

The Suburban Extension is characterised by deep front gardens and buildings almost at the back of plots. Unbroken terraces are made possible by the use of planned back lanes.



of back lanes means they are often quite conspicuous – in some terraces, back doors are more prominent than front doors, which are either shrouded in deep front gardens or visible only from the Promenade below. Back lanes are not however prominent from the main public parts of the conservation area.

The grain of the **Suburban Extension** is more regular than the Historic Core, with only a few plots being wider than the rest. The largest are the earliest residential ones – Brewery House, Bank House, Homelyn House, The Haven, etc – plus the later institutional plots for schools and churches at the south end. Windsor County First School continues the thick green edge to the street, whereas those on the west side present a tighter urban edge. Because of the generous front gardens, plot density in this sub-area feels relatively low, apart from in the middle of the east side where the lack of large gardens makes buildings feel packed-in.

4.3 **Views within the Area**

There are two main types of view inside the existing and proposed conservation area:

- from inside the town,
- from the bay and Church Point.

Views inside the town are strongly linear and enlivened by topography, creating a varied, visually contained sequence of enclosed historic building pictures, seen at



an attractive oblique angle. In the **Suburban Extension**, the impact which trees and gardens have in these views is crucial, generating rich, mature scenes enhanced by the regular rhythm of bay windows along parts of the street. Elevated views down into the Historic Core from the Suburban Extension present a fascinating jumble of roofs so descriptive of a tightly packed historic town centre. In the **Historic Core**, views are shortened by topography and the snaking nature of Front Street. They are always lively, with the end of each view defined by confident historic buildings (notably the Engineering Institute and the Queen Victoria PH). In the tighter layouts east of the main streets, views are shorter still, those in the Historic Core more interesting than those in the Suburban Extension which can be dominated by back lanes.

However, some of the most exciting views are the anticipatory glimpses eastwards from the main streets, through back lanes, paths and squares, where deep, blank sky or a distant ocean horizon create potent tell-tales of the seaside location. Breaking out of the enclosure of High Street at the far north-east end is a dramatic experience.



Because of the inward-looking nature of the town's layout, these are the only visual hints of the seaside location from inside the town, and they characterise the **Historic Core** in particular.



By contrast, views within the proposed conservation area from outside the main streets are extensive and dramatic. The wide panoramic scene created by the huge sweeping arc of the bay, the range of rooftops which line it and the memorable climax of St Bartholomew's Church is one of the definitive pictures of the Northumberland Coast – perhaps not as dramatic as Bamburgh Castle or the Tweed estuary, but every bit as distinctive as Alnmouth or Seaton Sluice. The rows of historic terraces lining the sandy bay are also definitive of Victorian and early twentieth century seaside resorts, and the Newbiggin scene is far more spectacular than, say, Whitley Bay, and closer to the celebrated distinction of Tynemouth's Long and Short Sands. The town's roofscape is crucial to the success of these views, defined by a relatively regular



array of traditional pitched roofs and chimneys, and crested in two places – by St Mark's huge stone bell cote at one end and the powerful twin turrets of the Mechanic's Institute at the other, their soaring flagpoles so important to the picture. Several tall trees also poke above the rooftops, rare in a seaside bay view and adding considerably to it.



Wide expansive views across the bay and along the Promenade define the visual experience of the area.

Closer to, views along the bay are mostly detailed and interesting, particularly around the Lifeboat Station and boatyard, where it is worth pausing to study the lively scene. In contrast, the harsh engineering of embankments below the gardens at the south end are harder on the eye. It is unfortunate that the height of the recent sea wall has obscured long seaward views from many parts of the Promenade, but a series of viewing

platforms has been built in 2007, helping to recapture that. Wide views of the sea are still possible from higher land, and this was capitalised upon by the insertion of a mid-twentieth century coastguard hut in the embankment beneath Ocean View.

The composition and protection of all these views is critical to the character of the conservation area as they define its experience.

A broken panorama of the buildings and roofscape lining the bay. 1: Spittal Point. 2: approximate start of the proposed conservation area extension. 3: St Mark's bell cote. 4: trees above the rooftops. 5: twin blue turrets of the Mechanics Institute. 6: boat yard.



5 Character Analysis

5.1 Sub-Areas

Although the existing and proposed conservation area forms one spatial whole, it does have four distinct sub-areas in terms of detailed character, with notable differences due to the nature, age and quality of development:

- **Historic Core:** the historic town centre and old fishing village,
- **Suburban Extension:** the later growth of the town with high quality nineteenth century holiday and commuter residences,
- **Church Point:** the landscape at the northern tip of the bay, virtually blank but for St Bartholomew's Church,
- **The Promenade:** a character sub-area in its own right, running parallel to but visually different from the first two.

Despite the distinct differences between them, all are firmly linked by their development history as set out above. These sub-area names are used in the discussion below to highlight character differences in the various parts of the existing and proposed conservation area.

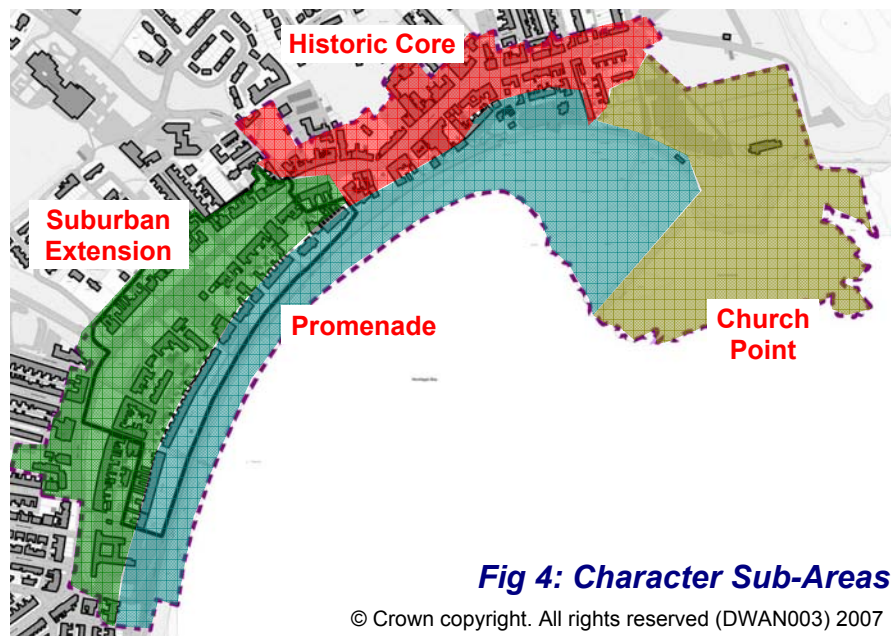


Fig 4: Character Sub-Areas

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5.2 Land Use

The **Historic Core** has always accommodated Newbiggin's main town centre and the mix of uses remains historic. The fishing industry, now much reduced, created the tightly packed small-scale groups of buildings and spaces on the south-east side. The legacy of this is now the remnants of fishermen's houses and cottages,



Pubs, clubs, shops and services create a compact, linear town centre. Land uses linked to fishing have left a legacy of buildings and spaces.



the 1851 Lifeboat Station and the sheds, cobbles and tractors still associated with working the sea. There were probably once many more cottages north of Front St, and much of the large beach-side group marked with 'Smithy' on the 2nd Ed OS Map has also gone. Although this land use was regarded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as romantic, what survives today is more practical than charming, not having gained the quaint picturesqueness of other fisher villages on the east coast. Nonetheless, the land use is key to understanding Newbiggin's special interest and more could be made in presentation of what survives to locals and visitors alike.

Other land uses – residential, pubs, clubs, shops, services and some light industrial – are typical of many small town centres, and give it the feel of a real, coherent community despite the obvious effects of the last few decades' economic struggles. The original residential use of many of the properties has determined the domestic scale of much of the town centre and the mix has introduced

an interesting variety of developments and changes over the years. Some have waned, for example the use of the Mechanics Institute would once have been as dominant as the building itself, whilst the town's cinema was demolished in the late twentieth century, and No.116 contains a former hall. Other uses continue – nearly all the shops are converted from what would originally have been houses, whilst a few others are purpose built, such as the Co-operative Store. The mix of flats above shops at the Café Riviera building is redolent of the later days of the town as a seaside resort. The Black Pearl and The Coble pubs are evidently early inn buildings while the others are nineteenth and early twentieth century rebuilds of earlier ones. This range of land uses has provided a sense of permanence and continuity in the area's layout and fabric.

Residential use dominates the Suburban Extension, plus services like the library.



The **Suburban Extension** is almost entirely residential, complemented by a couple of pubs and local shops, plus some local suburban institutions including churches, halls, school and library. This mix is much the same now as it was when the sub-area was developed but today there are also a few service uses in converted houses, such as solicitors, dental practice and most notably a social club at Bank House. There is now no trace of the former railway land use bar the corridor of open land it once occupied heading north from Front Street. A small library was demolished from behind Brewery House in the late twentieth century.

Religious use has characterised **Church Point** for centuries, now with recreational use and car-parking alongside.



St Bartholomew's Church, Church Point.

5.3 **Architectural Qualities**

In the **Suburban Extension**, most of the buildings and terraces share a unity of period, style and materials despite being built incrementally. In the main, the residences are stoutly built Victorian buildings with little architectural decoration or pretension – more serviceable and competent than elegant – but of some quality nonetheless. The churches too are modest and solid rather than fine and elaborate, typical of the Victorian non-conformist type. Within this general background of robust quality, there are nonetheless some groups of particular interest.



Stoutly built Victorian and later terraced houses in the Suburban Ext'n.



For example, the sweep of terraces overlooking the bay, seen from the **Promenade** sub-area, are solid against the elements and give the place its enduring image as a Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort. Individually, the buildings may not be of the highest architectural significance but gathered together in formidable terraces in such a high, exposed location, they present a strong face, four-square to the North Sea winds. Gibson Terrace is also worthy of mention. It is named after William Gibson, an evidently above-average local stone mason of the mid nineteenth century, its qualities of uniform care and attention have survived



More varied building stock in the Historic Core, some older than they look



surprisingly well, especially compared to today's lower architectural aspirations.

The **Historic Core's** mixed uses and longer development history have created a more varied building stock with greater variety in form, materials and plan. There is still a general conformity to a domestic scale but there are also buildings which look out-of-place because of their height or bulk. Most are still contained within medieval burgrave plots and could therefore be archaeologically promising – first impressions can sometimes be misleading and buildings apparently from the nineteenth century might reveal much older fabric incorporated during later re-fronting or extension. This might be true of pretty much any building in the Historic Core, but particularly the older cottages on the south-east side linked to the fishing industry, and the row on the north side of Front Street between Bridge Street and Woodhorn Lane.

Overall, the architecture has a sturdiness and lack of compromise common in buildings designed to withhold the elements, whilst newer buildings have more flare. Individual buildings worthy of mention include the following:

- the ancient church of St Bartholomew (thirteenth century or earlier, and listed Grade I) is an unusually interesting church in an extraordinarily prominent coastal location – it is as much a landmark for sailors as for the town.
- the Lifeboat House of 1851 near Robinson Square is the oldest working lifeboat house in the country, having been in continuous operation since it first opened.
- the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Robinson Square (dated 1844 and listed Grade II) is one of the most characterful buildings in the south-east side of the Historic Core.
- the Queen Victoria PH of 1928 and the New Dolphin PH of 1908 have great architectural integrity as well as good townscape presence on Front and High Streets



Top: Lifeboat House. Above: Methodist chapel. Below: New Dolphin, Q Victoria



- No.116 Front St once employed John Braine as librarian while he wrote his seminal novel *Room at the Top*, published to such controversy and acclaim in 1957.
- the 1920s Café Riviera building, Bridge Street, demonstrates how long the seaside resort phase of Newbiggin's life lasted. Its streamlined design and surviving period character represent the faded glory-days of bank holiday Newbiggin.
- the Mechanics Institute (1881, rebuilt 1914), Bridge Street, has important historical and social associations for the miners and fishermen of Newbiggin, as well as being an interesting building at a significant corner in the Front Street townscape.
- the White House at the junction of Woodhorn Road and Front Street, a former farm of 1708, and the short string of stone buildings behind it heading up Woodhorn Lane. This was once a farm.

The individual buildings of note in the **Suburban Extension** are less prominent because the sub-area's intended design was a shared, coherent group value. Amongst them, the following are of note:

- St Andrew's and St Mark's churches, and the library (former school) on Front Street provide solid and smart townscape relief from the residential environment.
- Bank House and some of the other larger original residences.
- Bank House's small garden lodge is a fine remnant of the polite, grand residential character that the Suburban Extension first had, once surrounded by pleasure gardens.
- Brewery House at Nos.1, 3 and 5 Front Street as the oldest property in the Suburban Extension.
- others tucked away include the tall stone outbuilding at Marine Cottages, perhaps with a maritime past.



Historic Core. Above: Café Riviera Building. Below: Mechanics Institute. Bottom: White House.

Suburban Extension. Far left: library. Left: St Mark's Church. Below left and right: early large houses. Bottom: Bank Houses's former garden lodge.

5.4 **Form, Height and Scale**

The dominant built form in the area is the two storey domestic scale building with a dual-pitched roof.



Straightforward two-storey dual-pitched forms, with some wider ones near Woodhorn Ln.

Such buildings in the fishing village part of the **Historic Core** are plain narrow boxes, sturdy and not too tall, such as Robinson Square, Vernon Place and Sandridge. Some of the earliest buildings at the



more rural end, where the **Historic Core** meets the **Suburban Extension**, have more farmhouse-like qualities, wider than they are tall, sometimes symmetrical, and with shallow footprints, such as the White House, and Nos.33 and 54-64 Front Street (altered). These plain basic forms, originally without offshots, generate a very straightforward, boxy appearance to the built form of the area's earliest buildings.

The Suburban Extension has taller, more animated forms, with original offshots.

Further up the **Suburban Extension**, newer mid to late nineteenth century buildings often have deeper footprints (eg. on Gibson Street), a taller scale (eg. Nos.2-20 Front Street) and a more animated form with bay windows (eg. Windsor Terrace). Unlike the earlier buildings, they also have original rear offshots, half the width of and lower than the main building. The form of some of the larger houses is broken up with side ranges, bays, gable and offshots (eg. Beach End/Beachville, and Bank House (original part)). Early to mid twentieth century houses are similar to the remainder in basic form, though often shorter than their Victorian neighbours.



Many of the earliest buildings in the historic village would have been single storey, and the survival of a handful of single storey buildings is an important reminder of the area's modest early origins, such as No.80 Front Street and behind No.3 Sandridge. A few domestic scale buildings



have a third storey in the attic with only a small handful being fully three storeys plus pitched roof.



Though altered, single storey buildings such as these are important to understanding the place's early vernacular origins.



Most buildings in the **Suburban Extension** are in short terraces and groups, with the unity of the roofline significant to each group and the overall scene. Many in the **Historic Core**, however, are individual buildings which happen to be built up against one another, creating informal conjoined 'strings' of buildings with variations in height, width and scale. This creates an attractive inconsistency to the scene which is key to its visual appeal. The coherent terraces at the far north-east end tend to work against this fragmented form, although some are broken up by stepping along the topography.

Overall, these simple limits on domestic-scale design create a scene defined by plain bold, grouped shapes with modest variety. The enclosure the terraces and strings of buildings provide is crucial to the scene inside the town, and also to the sweep of the bay from the **Promenade** sub-area. However, some of the fragmented forms in the **Historic Core** are part of its attractively jumbled appeal.



Sweeping terraced forms in the Suburban Extension.

In amongst these domestic-scale buildings are buildings with more landmark qualities and more distinctive forms. These tend to be religious, public or commercial buildings including churches, chapels, pubs, library, school, clubs and some of the later shops. Unlike their residential neighbours, they often have large gables or parapets to the street, eg. Windsor County First School, library, St Andrew's Church, New Dolphin PH, Queen Victoria PH, N0.116 Front Street, both Co-ops, and the Lifeboat House. The Mechanics Institute is rightly the strongest landmark building in the area, at three tall storeys plus a mansard roof with turrets. This scale is the exception in Newbiggin and the only other building to come close is that opposite, the Café Riviera building, which is a blocky three storeys with a flat roof (typical of the era not the area). Because of the location, its rare and stimulating authentic architectural style, and its distinctive visual character so associated with period seaside towns, is an arrogance which can be forgiven.

In all sub-areas, the vast majority of the historic built form survives in three-dimensions – the detailed form of rears and sides appears to survive intact, in places demonstrating a modest incremental growth of offshots and outbuildings.



Original rear forms remain intact to quite a high degree, with offshots and outbuildings, though altered, in place behind the frontage buildings.

Later offshots and extensions are not uncommon, varying in form, scale and height, but few are obviously intrusive in basic form, and some groups have attractively cascading rooflines. Building backs can be quite visible on the eastern side of the **Suburban Extension** and the **Historic Core**, where the form of rears is almost as important as the fronts. Backs and 'internal' courtyards will have a certain integrity which is important to the depth and historic substance of the area's built form, whether highly visible or not, so disembowelling them to leave only frontages should be avoided. Good examples include Brewery House, behind Nos.116-128 Front Street and behind the Mechanics Institute, The Coble and the Black Pearl PH.



Bank House extension and a long, low late twentieth century house.

The harshest addition to these basic forms has been the intrusive flat-roofed extension to Bank House which obscures the original architectural and historic character from Front Street. Other out-of-place forms include No.34a Front Street, a low detached house with strong horizontality at odds with its narrow, vertical neighbours, and the bulk of the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front Street which, despite its pitched roof, tends to overpower the attractive jumble of forms in the **Historic Core** seen from Church Point. Recent new housing at No.24 Front Street and behind Brewery House, have well-considered forms.

5.5 **Features, Detailing and Materials**

The existing and proposed conservation area's architecture relies on a handful of recurring features and detailing, treated in different ways in the different sub-areas and influenced by development history and type of use. The features are:

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

Many of these details have been altered over time, and the most negative alterations are discussed from page 74. Control over harmful changes to these elements will be important to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area in the future, whilst opportunities for reinstating lost features should be pursued.

5.5.1 **Masonry**



There is a mix of walling materials in the existing and proposed conservation area, but the most common is local yellow Carboniferous sandstone. Early and much of the later stone would have been quarried locally. This is still visually dominant in the **Suburban Extension** but that in the **Historic Core** has suffered greater from being covered in render or pebbledash. There is also greater use of brick there.

In the earlier buildings in both the **Historic Core** and the **Suburban Extension**, front elevations use squared sandstone blocks with rough surfaces

and random rounded edges laid in regular courses. (For example, masonry at Nos.54-64 Front Street might suggest they are some of the earliest buildings in the Suburban Extension, later modified.)

Later historic buildings – the majority in the **Suburban Extension** – are usually smarter with finer, more crisp blocks in tighter courses. It



is generally the case that the later the building, the more square and crisp the blocks, but very smooth dressed ashlar is rarely found. There is little decoration on earlier buildings, but later ones often have plinths, strings, cornices, quoins, window and door surrounds and bay windows, detailing which is more smoothly finished yet still modest and chunky in character. Stone buildings nearly all use courser rubble or brick to the rear and unseen sides, where presentation was historically less important. The churches are similar in their use of masonry and here too detailing such as window tracery is evident but not abundant.



Above: examples of stonework: random rubble; more regular rounded blocks in courses; finer, squarer blocks with window decoration. Left: smart stone front with brick sides.

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

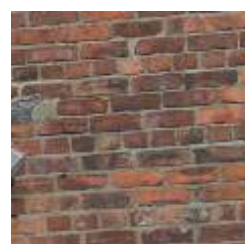
Although natural sandstone has been specified in some modern schemes, not all of it has been appropriately dressed or laid: some is mechanically cut leaving lifeless elevations with no texture; some has artificial texturing which looks too regular to truly reflect random blocks; some uses squared blocks in irregular interlocking patterns rather than in uneven coursing. The weakest interpretation of these general themes is Carlton House, Front Street, which use materials arbitrarily, with a poor choice of brick colour, texture and pointing (it most closely matches the very intrusive extension at Bank House), and sandstone which, though well chosen and reclaimed, is laid as a random 'skin' rather than in obvious structural courses.



Top: machine cut and artificially textured stone. Above: reclaimed stone but laid as an ad hoc skin and with little historic accuracy.



There is more variety in the **Historic Core** with greater use of red brick on Victorian, Edwardian and early to mid twentieth century buildings as a principal walling material. This contributes to the area's warm, well-matured visual appearance, and it is nearly always married with sandstone detailing to add interest (eg. the Mechanics Institute, No.116 Front Street, the Co-op, and the Queen's Head PH). There is timber cladding in places, mostly notably the Mechanics Institute where the blue timber turrets are very important to the



Top: earlier, rougher, mottled bricks. Above: later, crisper, brighter red bricks. Below left: Brickwork has a stronger visual impact in the Historic Core.



building's appearance and its contribution to bay views. Red brick is used on the front of one or two Victorian houses in the **Suburban Extension**, but this is the exception.

The bricks vary. Older ones are small, hand-made and have a rough texture and mottled appearance; later ones tend to be larger and more smooth. Most are mottled purple-brown or red-brown in late

Georgian and Victorian buildings, with smoother, brighter red bricks in later Victorian, Edwardian and twentieth century buildings. Earlier mottled bricks have attractively stained and weathered with warm, uneven tones. Most brick is laid in English garden wall bond (usually 5 rows of stretchers to 1 of headers) or, in later buildings, in less visually interesting stretcher bond.

Most of the early to mid twentieth century buildings are in smooth dark red brick, but some use the typical period characteristic of roughcast upper floors, with sandstone dressings to the ground floor and brick dressings to the first. Other buildings to do the same include the library on Gibson Street, and later additions at Nos.30 and 34a Front Street (here above stone), sometimes with mock half-timbering for effect. Houses from this period also often use decorative tile hanging or leadwork on the masonry part of bay windows.



Left: original smooth 1930s render (Café Riviera). Right: original roughcast render above brick plinth (Library, Gibson Street).

There are significant amounts of added render and artificial cladding in the **Historic Core**. Only in a few cases is it used as an original design feature, such as at the Café Riviera building where it is characteristic of the sleek Art Deco architectural style adopted there. Generally, added render harms the visual appearance of a townscape characterised by sandstone and brick buildings with natural variations in tone, and should be minimised.



Later applied render can deaden the appearance of an area characterised by stone and brick, and harm the group value of terraces and building groups.

It is often a modern expediency and is rarely used in an historically accurate way. Some of the earliest random rubble stone buildings may well have been covered in a variety of rough or smooth renders, lime-rich to allow the building to 'breathe'. But such finishes do not survive, and exposed stone has been the preferred aesthetic since the mid-nineteenth century, shown by the amount of it in the **Suburban Extension**. Where render is used today, it tends to be modern cement-based (thick, hard and smooth) or pebbledash, both of which iron-out the visible texture of



Render can flatten out architectural features. It is sometimes best left unpainted. Whitish tones seem artificial against richly textured sandstone. Modest use of pastel colours and muted, earthy tones can be suitable for this seaside location.

masonry beneath and result in a much flatter, bulkier character to walls and mouldings. It also tends to obliterate sills, lintels and other features which visually enliven elevations, even if only subtly. Render can therefore create a bland scene of chunky overcoats shrouding historic character beneath. Such an appearance can harm not only the individual building but the terrace or group of which it is part, harming visual harmony in the townscape. These effects are most profoundly seen at the south-east side of the **Historic Core**, where the historic character of some of the sub-area's oldest buildings has been lost beneath concrete skins, notably Robinson Square and Vernon Place. Other prominent locations include next to the Railway Inn, the Apostolic Church on Front Street, and many of Nos.3-17 High Street.



Render should be avoided but, where it is used, it might be left unpainted or might be painted in muted, flat, earthy tones. Modest pastels might also be appropriate for a seaside location, but chosen with care to avoid colour clashes or too much prominence of any one building within building groups or views of the bay. The prominent yellowy house on Sandridge 'works' visually only because it is part of the setting to the already colourful boat yard scene, and because the yellow itself is a very earthy, ochre tone. Bold colours tend not to marry well with natural materials, and very light, white tones stand out to the detriment of the group. Bright modern colours would not be appropriate for this area. Picking out architectural detail such as lintels and sills in contrasting colours is rarely historically accurate but, again, if carefully chosen, and the contrast is not too bold, this can add to the cheerful seaside feel of small spaces such as the side return of Vernon Place. These treatments should be used in moderation.

Masonry paint over bare stone and brick can have a similar effect to that of render, flattening out texture and removing the visual patina of time. Often used in a

misguided effort to 'smarten up' a building, masonry paint almost inevitably ends up looking shabby over time rather than attractively seasoned like natural materials. As with render, issues of colour also apply here. Masonry paint should be avoided.

Artificial cladding is worse than render in visual terms, harming the historic integrity of the townscape and always failing to mimic successfully the sandstone it tries to replicate – in colour, texture, variation of tone, coursing and detailing. Character and appearance will almost always be harmed by artificial cladding, and opportunities to investigate removal of existing cladding should be taken wherever they arise. Both heavy render and cladding can put the long term condition of the building at risk by preventing it from 'breathing', trapping moisture behind the applied skin and causing damp.



Artificial cladding harms historic and architectural character in many ways.

5.5.2 Doorways



Traditional doorways in the **Historic Core** and **Suburban Extension** sub-areas are set back in a deep reveal but many of the early ones have no decoration, just a stone lintel and step. Late ones have decorative doorways similar to the windows, with raised or stepped stone mouldings. Grander ones have a stone hood or canopy on brackets, some quite prominent and decorative. Porches tend to detract from the **Suburban Extension's** terraces, causing harm to unity, and should be avoided, particularly large modern features in plastic or stained timber. There are one or two early decorative timber porches which are high quality (eg. No.36 Front Street). A few of the early to mid twentieth century terraces have flat timber hoods typical of the period. The dainty pitched roof hood at the Endeavour is a delight.

Of the doors themselves, some original ones survive, mostly panelled, but with a few earlier plainer plank doors. Many doors have now been replaced with modern reproduction styles in stained hardwood or plastic, many with glazing which does



Many characterful doorways survive, but only a few original doors are in place, the replacements often in plastic and with glass, not historically accurate.

not reflect the authentic architectural history of the area. Original domestic doorways tend to incorporate an overlight above the door rather than glass in the door itself, although some mid-twentieth century ones have original leaded and coloured glass.

Many of the larger buildings have much stronger emphasis to doorways, such as the churches (St Mary's in particular has a strong porch), the pubs, No.116 Front Street and the Mechanics Institute, which includes the building name decoratively carved above the door. High quality doorways are key to understanding the once prosperous nature of the area and the high quality



Below: doorways on landmark buildings like pubs, clubs and churches are more emphasised.

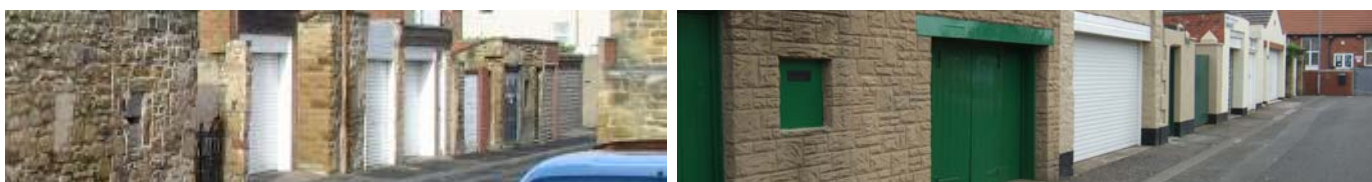


architecture it produced, spending money where passers-by and visitors would see it best. In contrast the late twentieth century doorway to the Newbiggin Central Club is weak and uninspiring.

Large arched commercial openings with plank timber gates, or large sliding garage doors are not uncommon in the **Historic Core** (and also at Marine Cottages), and are distinctive of the area's working commercial past to be protected. A few early domestic garage doors are also of interest, but most are visually intrusive up-and-over or roller shutter types. Pedestrian rear and side gates are mostly simple ledged and braced plank features.



Above: large commercial openings are common in the Historic Core, some with sliding doors. Below: Suburban Extension back lanes have garage doors.



5.5.3 **Windows**



Most window openings are strongly vertical, one of the defining features of the area's architectural character. They are mostly used singly but in later buildings, and those with more landmark qualities, are often seen in pairs or groups, but still strongly subdivided vertically (eg. New Dolphin PH). Like doorways, some are emphasised, but many are plain with only stone lintels and sills. Several of the later nineteenth century terraces have variations on a common window (and door) treatment comprising a raised surround with either large quoin blocks, or vertical stone jambs with large blocks at the top and bottom. The openings then often have a continuous chamfer all the

way round. These are distinctive window opening features for these buildings.



Widened openings harm character.

Where openings have been widened, this key 'vertical opening' characteristic is destroyed, harming the visual appearance of the area. This is often the case in rendered buildings, where the render is used to mask the scarring left by the change in window shape. This is an outmoded fashion, recognised as harming the character and built integrity of historic buildings. Large horizontal window openings which are original to the mid and late twentieth century buildings are equally out of place. The full wall of first floor windows in



Above and below: Many windows are slightly stressed with raised surrounds, eg. with large quoins, or vertical jambs with large blocks top and bottom.



Below: Café Riviera's original curved windows, below, are a key part of its Art Deco style, but its replacement windows, left, are poorly designed 'faceted' bays, not curved.



the late twentieth century extension to the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front Street is out of scale with the street. In contrast, curved window openings at the Café Riviera building are a key part of its strong Art Deco architectural style, and the few surviving curved glass windows with horizontal glazing bars are rare and important to retain. It is very unfortunate that replacement windows here are faceted, not curved as this significantly detracts from the building's character.



Examples of windows in landmark and commercial buildings: library, St Mark's ch, Co-op (No.9 Front St), Queen's Head PH, and the hall on Simonside Tce.

More is made of windows in the larger buildings, defining their public or commercial use. These include the churches, original windows at the library, and the distinctive windows at No.116 Front Street and both Co-op buildings.



Above: Bay windows enhance the Suburban Extension including overlooking the bay. Below: oriel windows are not uncommon in the Historic Core.

Bay windows are common in much of the **Suburban Extension**, enhancing its Victorian suburban appeal, particularly in houses overlooking the sea. Bays are also key to most early to mid twentieth century buildings. There are several first floor oriel windows on public and commercial buildings in the **Historic Core**, distinctive features often from the early twentieth century.





Relatively few historic windows survive, giving those that do a higher significance. Many are not in good repair.

Of the windows themselves, relatively few historic ones now survive, making those which do all the more important to the architectural character of the area, eg. in the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front Street. Some historic windows are early replacements, still in themselves of significance. Traditionally, all windows would be set back from the face of the building in a reveal, adding life and character to elevations – this is harmed where modern windows are pulled forward to be more flush with the building's face.

The simplicity of the area's architecture would have been carried through to its windows. Original windows would be double-hung vertical sliding timber sashes with glazing bars, and these have influenced all the later windows in the area – as Victorians produced larger panes of glass, glazing bars were used



Replacement windows with modern sub-divisions in PVCu significantly harm the appearance of historic buildings in the Suburban Extension and Historic Core

less but, by the Edwardian period and later, glazing bars were reintroduced as decorative features, usually only in the top sash which was often smaller than the bottom sash. Early to mid twentieth century buildings began to use side and top-hung casements instead of sliding sashes, still with smaller toplights sometimes containing leaded, painted or textured glass. The many styles and materials of late twentieth century replacement windows have harmed the character of the area and of individual buildings, particularly those in PVCu and where opening arrangements and glazing bars do not follow traditional patterns. These are now pervasive of both built-up sub-areas and one of the greatest disappointments of the area.

5.5.4 **Shopfronts**

Shopfronts are a key element of the experience of the **Historic Core**, it being a traditional town centre with the legacy of a prosperous period of trading.

Shopfronts are found throughout the sub-area with the highest concentrations on Front Street between Woodhorn Lane and the Queen Victoria PH. A good stock of traditional nineteenth and early twentieth century shopfronts, or elements from

them, survive, together with several modern ones. Some of the town's shops have been converted from what were originally houses, but many are purpose-built early twentieth century buildings, indicating the late prosperity of the place. The best shopfronts are those designed in harmony with the rest of the building (sometimes with an integral side door to upstairs accommodation) and which respect the proportions of good neighbouring shopfronts as well.

There are essentially two types of shopfront in Newbiggin: the traditional timber feature along Classical lines, and the hole-in-the-wall type which is, essentially, an enlarged domestic window opening. Many from the first type have been modernised over the years whilst, in the second type, dealing with signage and shopfront security can be visually challenging.



Most of Newbiggin's shopfronts are of the first type, the traditional timber (or stone) shopfront comprising tall shop windows above masonry or timber stall-risers, framed by pilasters and carved brackets, and topped with an entablature comprising architrave, fascia (containing signage and often relatively narrow) and cornice on top.

Doorways are often recessed. Some shopfronts are simply detailed, but many have particularly decorative moulded corbels, evidence of an attention to detail. Several such



Examples of original or largely intact traditional shopfronts in the Historic Core, many quite simple, some more decorative.

shopfronts survive virtually intact, eg. 'The Endeavour' (with delicate leaded toplights), and most of Nos.45-59 Front Street, a very important collection at the Woodhorn Lane gateway to the area, and a very special pair of shopfronts at Nos.95-97 Front Street, part of the historic Vernon Place block. Several others are substantially intact including



Special pair of shopfronts at Nos.95-97 Front Street, in the Vernon Place block.



'Chelsea Lily', plus 'Norma' and the adjoining hairdressers. Others with a few surviving components have been incrementally modernised, eg. the Front Street Co-op, No.65 Front Street, Nos.116-120 Front Street. There are also one or two sensible replica shopfronts (eg. 'Chisholms' in the Mechanics Institute), whilst that



at 'Newbiggin Discount Food Store' is too weak to act as a template for the future. The plain shopfronts of the Café Riviera building are a part of its sleek design,



Nos.45-59 Front Street have an important collection of shopfronts at a very prominent location, a mixture of traditional and altered hole-in-the-wall types.

including the patterned glass in the toplights.

The key characteristic of the second type, of which there are a few, is a lack of

pilasters and entablature, meaning the shopfront is essentially only a window above a masonry stallriser. Some, however, use applied pilasters and fascia to give the impression of a more complete joinery feature, such as at No.45 Front Street.

The change back and forth over the decades between retail and non-retail uses has created problems with Newbiggin's ground floor elevations. For example, several nineteenth century timber shopfronts have been removed and replaced with domestic windows, such as at No.105 Front Street. The principle of this is bad

because, where good shopfronts exist, they should be protected even if the use behind them changes, not only to protect its positive contribution to the street scene but also to avoid poorly matched replacement masonry and domestic windows which leave prominent visual scarring. The opposite is also true – if a good domestic masonry ground floor exists, then it is preferable for any retail use behind it to trade from those domestic windows and doors, avoiding the irreversible removal of historic masonry and the insertion of a modern shopfront.



Above: Later additions can harm the appearance of traditional shopfronts. Corbels must be expertly designed and crafted or they will look clumsy against originals. Below: Many shopfronts are altered, with unsympathetic designs and materials, weak detailing, and visual scarring. Bottom: Deep, wide plastic fascia signs unnecessarily dominate the street scene in several places.

Several shopfronts have been altered and modernised, particularly by deepening the fascia to increase signage, widening windows, removing timber subdivision, lowering or removing



stallrisers, or replacing traditional materials with metal, plastic and concrete. Such works distort the proportions of stallriser, window and fascia, disjoint the shopfront from the rest of the building above, and often use weak detailing that cannot match the quality of the original. Many are also in poor repair. Over-sized signage often in plastic, and external shutter boxes, whether 'concealed' by additional timber fascias or not, detract from traditionally designed shopfronts. These are a pervasive feature in Newbiggin and would benefit from comprehensive

enhancement by reducing the impact of signage and incorporating shutter boxes behind fascias. Such work, along with replacement traditional shopfronts where lost, could dramatically improve the appearance of the area in key places, such as between Woodhorn Lane and the Railway Inn (for which there is good historic photographic evidence), and the main section of Front Street in the town centre.

Most of the pubs have enlarged domestic scale windows but two have particularly special pub fronts – the New Dolphin's impressive brown faience is rare and illustrative of the past prosperity of the town, whilst the Queen's Head's stone ground floor is the highest quality townscape feature on High Street.



The New Dolphins brown faience pub front is a real gem

More guidance and policy on shopfronts in Newbiggin (and Bedlington) can be found in the *Shopfront Design Guide* published by the Council in 2007.

5.5.5 **Roofs and Rainwater Goods**



Simple dual pitched roof forms dominate, most with gable ends, some with hips.



Varied roof heights add life to the scene and illustrate the place's incremental growth



Most roofs are unaltered, apart from a change in materials, and the generally simple dual pitched shape is a key part of the area's architectural character. Slight variations in form and pitch add variety to groupings, whilst a change in pitch on offshot roofs adds variety to form at the rear. Blank gable ends are a key characteristic but a few hipped returns are found on some later buildings. The flat roofs of both the Café Riviera building and the extension to Bank House are out of character to the area, but the first is part of its sleek, 1920s architectural style, whereas the latter is a construction expediency which intrudes on its pitched roof host. The turret roofs to the Mechanics Institute are definitive of the significance of the building and wider views the whole area; its flagpoles are crucial to that significance. The tall shaped front

gable to the former bank at No.86 Front Street adds considerably to the group at this point. Windsor County First School's cascading roof form is distinctive at the southern gateway to the area. The pitch of the roof on the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front St, with its blank rear wall, is quite intrusive in long views from Church Point.

Distinctive roofs: Dominant turrets (Mechanics Institute), delicate swept veranda roof (Bank House Lodge), tall cascading roof (Windsor Co First School)

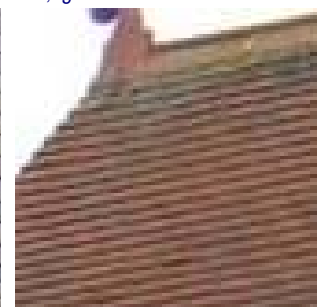


Left: The way the roofs are treated over the splayed corners of No.112 Front Street and No.1 Windsor Road illustrate the difference between the no-fuss architecture of the Historic Core and the more refined designs of the Suburban Extension – the former uses a huge bracket to support a simple roof, the latter shapes the roof itself. Each is distinctive of its part of the area.

As the corner of No.112 Front Street is splayed to ease access to the rear of the plot, a huge corner bracket is used to support the roof. This was evidently cheaper and easier than shaping the roof with the building, demonstrating the straightforward, no-fuss character to the **Historic Core's** architecture compared to the shaped roof above the splay at No.1 Windsor Road in the **Suburban Extension**.

Natural Welsh slate is the common traditional roofing material in the area. Welsh slate is rough-looking with slightly uneven edges and subtle variations in shade and tone – often with blue or purple hints – helping define the richness and texture of the area's character. It produces a visually recessive yet deeply textured appearance. One or two slate roofs include patterns (eg. the White House). Westmorland slate is also in the area, mainly on landmark buildings including the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front St (?) and the library. Westmorland slates are thicker and more uneven than Welsh, with distinct green hues. They are often laid in diminishing courses (large at the bottom small at the top), as at the Mechanics Institute, but this does not always seem to be the case in this area.

Below, clockwise from top left: 'purple' Welsh slate, plain red clay tiles, a good modern interpretation of pantiles, 'green' Westmorland slate



There are several prominent cases of red clay plain tiles (flat and much smaller than pantiles), such as the New Dolphin PH, the Queen Victoria PH and many of the early to mid twentieth century houses in the **Suburban Extension**. Single lap s-shaped clay pantiles are not as common as might have been expected (they would surely have been the earliest vernacular material in the **Historic Core**) but one or two examples survive, including Brewery House. These are a natural, traditionally hand-made product with colours varying from deep browny-orange through warm terracotta. Windsor County First School modern ones are original.

Ridges vary considerably. Many Welsh and Westmoreland slate roofs have red clay ridges or blue-black angled clay tiles. Red or grey clay half-pipes and lead rolls are also used. Decorative punched tiles or finials are not common. Valleys and flashings are traditionally lead lined but modern synthetic replacements or cement have encroached in places.



Most eaves are plain but some have simple cornices Bottom: the parapet to No.116 Front Street.

Eaves are simplest on the oldest buildings – some have no detail to the eaves, with only a minimal or no overhang, while narrow flat timber boards are used on others. Later nineteenth century buildings often have more decorative moulded stone or brick cornices (eg. the smart, taller part of The Endeavour) or decorative timber eaves with a much deeper overhang (eg. the library, the Queens Head PH). Bank House's garden

lodge has prominent dentilled eaves, swept over a large veranda on three side supported on fluted iron columns, giving it a very distinctive, delicate look. Modern deep timber fascia boards are not traditional features but have been used on several late twentieth century buildings.

Verges are mostly plain. Large triangular stone verge blocks are used on the White House, a feature found across Northumberland. Several terraces in the **Suburban Extension** have flat stone watertabling, some with shaped kneeler blocks (eg. Brewery House).

Rainwater goods are not prominent features of the architectural design and many have been modernised. Downcomers add to the vertical rhythm of some of the terraces in the **Suburban Extension**, and there are a few decorative hopper heads and brackets which survive, eg. No.26 Front Street. Most gutters are attached to spikes into the masonry, others are on boards. A few are concealed behind eaves or parapets. The main characteristic of rainwater goods is that most would have



Most verges are plain, some have stone watertabling, some have timber bargeboards. The White House has distinctive triangular stone verge blocks.

been cast iron (with some in timber), but most are now modern replacements, some in metal, many in plastic. This harms the architectural integrity of the building and degrades the overall quality and character of the area with man-made materials which easily fade or break. Most should be black although some could be part of a building's colour scheme. Rainwater goods at the Queen Victoria are square section, typical of the period, whilst the lack of visible downcomers on the Café Riviera building is part of its design.

The number of roofs where historic natural materials have been changed to modern

concrete ones is high. These include artificial slate and, more intrusively, concrete tiles, discussed below under *Loss, Intrusion & Damage*.



Very few historic cast iron rainwater goods survive, most being poor quality metal or plastic.

5.5.6 **Dormer Windows, Rooflights**



The Suburban Extension has a few traditional timber dormers, vertically proportioned with pitched roofs.



Ornate dormers to Brewery House are important despite plastic windows



Attic space with daylight was generally not part of the original design of most of the area's buildings, most being designed with – and still having – 'clean' roofscapes, particularly to the front. Consequently, dormers are not a common feature but several original ones are found in the **Suburban Extension** where they are narrow vertical timber features with pitched roofs and decorative verges. The low number of added dormers is significant – new dormers should be avoided unless carefully designed, modest in scale, well proportioned, positioned and detailed, and preferably on rear or less visible roof slopes.

This is not, however, the case in the **Promenade** sub-area where inserted dormers exploit the sea views. Some are quite modest but many are intrusive, horizontal flat-roofed features with little aesthetic appeal and harming the balance of the roofscape of the building and the group of which it is part. Large boxy dormers to No.70 Front Street and No.3 Covent Garden are particularly visually

Some dormers added to houses overlooking the Promenade sub-area are modest but many are oversized, flat roofed and visually intrusive. Below: similar dormer added to No.70 Front Street.



damaging. The Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front Street has original flat roof dormers as part of its design, whilst added dormers at Brewery House have ornate plasterwork and are of interest in their own right.

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

5.5.7 **Chimneys**

Chimneys are recurrent traditional features, enlivening the roofscape considerably and adding to the authentic built scene. However, many have been removed or shortened which blunts the liveliness of the horizon and harms the integrity of the historic building. Others have been poorly rendered, over-pointed, or rebuilt in

modern brick to smaller proportions, also harmful. Surviving ones have sizeable proportions, most in brick with moulded tops; some have stone plinths left in place.



Chimneys are prominent recurring features enlivening the roofscape of the area.



More typical chimneys are smaller, plainer and stretch across the ridge. Those in the early to mid twentieth century housing often have shaped brick tops. Most chimneys have round pots. Surviving stone chimneys are particularly important to character and should be protected. All chimneys benefit from good maintenance, even if redundant, to avoid pressure for shortening or removal, and allowing them to be re-used in the future. That on the Bank House garden lodge is crucial to its symmetry. Huge swept stone chimney pots at

No.64 Front Street are distinctive and prominent at the gateway to the area from Woodhorn Lane. No.86 Front Street also has large shaped pots. Tall shaped chimneys at the Queen Victoria and Queen's Head pubs are prominent on the skyline from within the town centre.

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

One or two Victorian and Edwardian roofs have large ridge-top cowl vents, rare features important to understanding age and use (eg. the Front Street Co-op). No.33 Front Street has an ambiguous lead-covered ridge-top feature, possible the remains of a lantern. Outbuildings behind Nos.116-128 Front Street seem to include a remnant smokehouse roof form with tall slatted vent which could be crucial to the fishing history of the area. Modern roof vent tiles are often used in replacement roof coverings, a poor detail which goes against the uncluttered nature of roofs in the area.

Huge chimneys at Queen Victoria & Queen's Head PHs are key to views along Front Street.



Many chimneys have been removed or are over-pointed or rendered. Some have been rebuilt to smaller proportions.



Left: possible remnant fish industry smoke-house roof vent. Below: roof vent to Co-op.



The dramatic roof forms of the two churches speak for themselves.



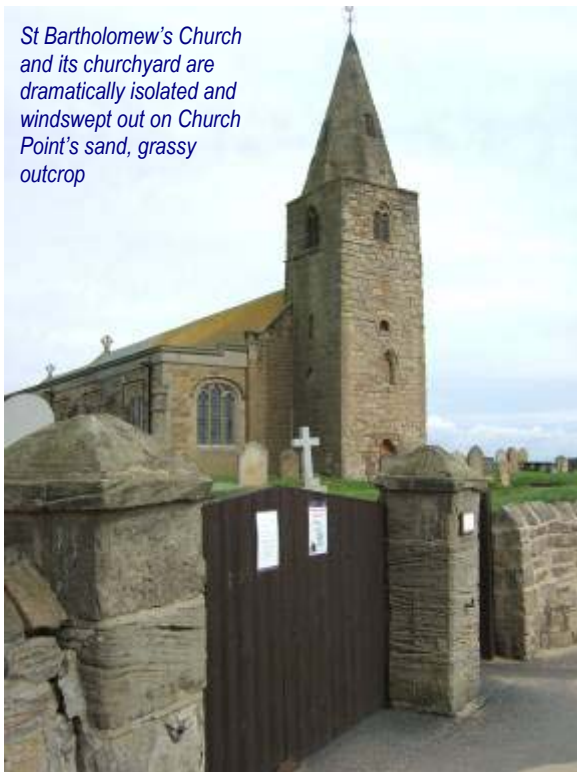
5.6 **Contribution of Spaces**

Open spaces make strong contributions to the character and appearance of the existing and proposed conservation area. The main spaces in the area are:

- Church Point
- Promenade
- Memorial Park
- streets, pavements, verges and back lanes
- front gardens
- rear yards

Generally, the **Historic Core** has hard spaces with little greenery and no trees, the **Suburban Extension** is very green with copious trees, and **Church Point** has no trees but a wild grassy character.

5.6.1 **Church Point**



St Bartholomew's Church and its churchyard are dramatically isolated and windswept out on Church Point's sand, grassy outcrop

Church Point would be much like any other rocky, grassy, outcrop on the Northumberland coast were it not for the gaunt, isolated presence of St Bartholomew's Church, turning the commonplace into a remarkably memorable piece of landscape. The relatively large Grade I listed sandstone and Westmorland slate church (an extension with Welsh slate) is sturdy and not too decorated, its stout tower and distinctive octagonal stone spire brooding and weather beaten. Celtic cross finials are locally distinctive. Like the church, the large church-



yard, which gently rolls with the topography, is plain and simple – a local rubble stone boundary wall with sandy mown grass. It is filled with a wide variety of headstones of differing ages and materials, some weathered, laid out around neat tarmac paths. Three are listed Grade II.



Outside, the large mown grass headland turns to pinky yellow rocks in the east and dunes towards the bay. Raised up above the bay and the North Sea, the space is



The size and tarmac surface of the car-park, as well as the lampposts, can dominate views. The time capsule rock and several unique 'bird' bollards enliven the scene.

bracing and atmospheric with wide, long views down to Blyth, its wind farm and beyond. A large standing stone marking a 100-year time capsule buried in 2000 does not challenge the church's supremacy, but its large black plinth tends to overpower the stone itself. The nearby tarmac car-park is very large but serves the whole town and, from the bay, is virtually hidden from view by dunes. The adjoining play area is also large.

Lampposts can be dominant, as are one or two signs, whilst some of the railings are very functional. Several curious bollards near the church gate are topped shaped and painted birds, including a pelican, pieces of street furniture so unusual that they must have a story worth telling.



Below are wide stretches of mud and sand out into the bay. Through these runs a large breakwater, a rounded spit of black jagged stones, adding to the rough character of the scene at this point.

5.6.2 **Promenade**

Despite the dominance of sea defence engineering, the Promenade is a pleasant and stimulating place to be. It stretches from Church Point to below Beach Terrace



and is the work of several phases, mostly that of the original 1929 works, plus those of the 1980s and 1990s. Works to strengthen sea defences again, this time by recharging the beach, were completed in 2007. The concrete arc is widest at the north end where it is stepped into the beach. The height was considerably increased in 1993 by adding a scooped concrete flood defence wall, so high that it obscures views of the beach along most of the Prom's length. Steps climb over it at regular intervals to reach the beach, recently joined by raised viewing platforms. The Prom is in tarmac along most of its length apart from the widest central section where modern interlocking block paviors are used. Bright blue metal benches and bins have a cheerful seaside feel, but many of the railings are functional pipework with little character.



Flood defence wall on the Promenade

The Promenade provides a very different experience to the town's streets. It is invigorating and exposed, but character does vary along its length. To the far north, a small single storey building is inventively re-used as a Heritage Centre. Its Welsh slate roof is prominent from above and, being tucked in below the dunes, the building also acts as a modest counterfoil to the church in long views northwards.



Heritage Centre



Further along is the operational boat yard, a sloping space surrounded by historic and more recent buildings, containing a lively collection of boats, tractors and fishing paraphernalia. The interesting scene is dominated by the Lifeboat House, extended from the original 1851 building and with several features important to its character – Welsh slate roof, lead oriel window, huge red



The Boat Yard and Lifeboat House are an exciting and lively cameo along the Prom, rugged and characterful, but (overleaf) concrete tends to dominate over historic features.



boathouse doors, flagpole and antennae. The various walls, banks and surfaces are mostly concrete and seem over-engineered in places, harshly dominating pedestrian areas. There are, however, a few stone elements, plus a characterful timber breakwater stretching down the boat ramp to the beach.



Further south, at Vernon Place and Skeleton Walls, are a series of incidental open spaces which illustrate the unplanned, incremental development of this part of the **Historic Core**. Due to the various fronts, sides and rears of buildings edging them, and the chunky concrete and brick engineering, they struggle to hang together as a coherent series of Promenade spaces. Vernon Place is the most attractive, enhanced as part of the 2007 beach recharge works, whilst that behind the Co-op is just a characterless gap. Seasonal planting enhances some of the spaces, and prominent front gardens at this point also make a contribution (discussed below).



Some of the Prom's incidental open spaces are harshly engineered gaps without a positive appearance. Vernon Place, recently re-designed, is now enhanced by a small version of 'Couple', the sculpture out on the new breakwater in the Bay.

At Bridge Street, functional pipework railings dominate ramps and steps down to the piazza (discussed below). This is the busiest part of the Prom and the first point of contact with the beach and sea for many visitors. Outdoor activity at The Coble and Black Pearl pubs enliven it. A thin sliver of land between No.6 Victoria Terrace and the Black Pearl PH contains the boat yard for Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Sailing Club. Its stone retaining walls with triangular copes add historic character, and it is a shame the characterful boats and masts are not more prominent in the seaside scene.



The widest, central part of the Prom is surfaced in modern blocks, and has prominent engineering works and railings run from the Bridge Street piazza



The remainder of the Promenade is a single curved walk lined by steep embankments below the sloping or stepped domestic gardens of the **Suburban Extension**. These embankments vary along their length, some grassy, many chunky blockwork which is visually dominant at the Prom level, masking the gardens above. The sheer quantity of concrete here is unfortunate, particularly as the flood wall prevents the eye being drawn to beach and sea instead. Most of the pipework railings are in poor condition. The Coastguard Station's flat-roofed brick box is out of character but relatively unobtrusive. 2007 enhancements include a new set of horse-shoe steps near the middle. The Promenade peters out below Beach Tce where grassy banks and rocks strongly contribute to the area's setting.



The rest of the Prom is a wide concrete-dominated arc below the Suburban Extension' above. Top right: Newbiggin Sailing Club boat yard.



The beach itself has been widened considerably by the recharge works, echoing its size in the town's holiday heydays. In doing so, a large rock on the beach, and much-loved local landmark, the Hunkleton Stone, has again been made accessible.

Overall, the Promenade is an attractive space definitive of the town's seaside history and with a series of characterful cameos along its length. Enhancements could improve its contribution and reduce the visual impact of concrete and railings.



Left: the beach (pre-recharge). Above: 'Couple', the new sculpture out on a new breakwater in Newbiggin Bay.

5.6.3 **Memorial Park**



Memorial Park was laid out to honour those who gave their lives in World War I. It is an integral part of the thick



green corridor which defines the **Suburb Extension**, and has recently been conserved and enhanced. It is a distinctive and highly attractive place with interesting period features and

Memorial Park is an attractive Art Deco design recently conserved and enhanced



plenty of colour. It was laid out over a pond near Brewery House, and would have been the ideal scene to greet visitors from the railway station, the site of which is opposite. It has a strong Art Deco feel to its boundary walls, railings and gates, and dramatic stone gateway with restrained relief-work and copper lettering. Mown grass, ornamental trees and simple paths and flower beds combine to create a restful place with a feeling of enclosure from the traffic outside.



A large wreath sculpture, recently added as a war memorial, makes a dramatic but well-scaled statement in the centre. New benches incorporate a Celtic cross motif.

5.6.4 **Streets, Pavements, Verges and Back Lanes**

Because of the tight inward-looking nature of the two built-up sub-areas, streets and pavements make a strong contribution to the area's character. Few historic



surfaces survive and, overall, there is a sense of long term patched repair to the

The wide junction splay on Front Street leaves large areas of grass, whilst the modern geometry not found elsewhere in the exiting or proposed conservation area leaves large areas of tarmac.



junction splay, very alien to the area's tight development pattern.

Suburban Extension, and rather over-designed new treatments in the **Historic Core**. Most roads retain an historic tight layout but the new road on following the former railway line has introduced a wide



Black tarmac, concrete flags kerbs, scoria block gulleys (far right) and relatively unobtrusive road markings and speed camera.

Main roads are tarmac, some red, found in many parts of Northumberland but mostly repaired in black leaving a patchy appearance in places. There are only a few places where road marking are prominent; the speed camera on Front Street is quite unobtrusive. Kerbs are mostly concrete so surviving stone kerbs are important remnants to be protected. Other historic surfaces, particularly scoria block gulleys, are also important. Pavements are an ad hoc mix of patched concrete, tarmac and concrete flags, the latter the most appropriate option for the **Suburban Extension** as they are slightly smarter.



Recent road, pavement, parking and street furniture design, Front Street

In the **Historic Core**, a new design of pavements and parking bay build-outs was laid out in the 1990s and, although comprehensive, is typical of the period



Small matrix paviors, several different types of materials and lots of black and gold street furniture leads to a smart but somewhat over-fussy appearance.

in being somewhat over-fussy with a high number of different materials, over-use of small-matrix brick paviors, and lots of detailed patterning. This tends to dominate the street rather than blend into the background, and is a poor foil for well-weathered historic buildings (eg. on Woodhorn Lane). A more restrained scheme, such as the simple flags used outside Nos.69-45 Front Street, or the block paviors in the splay at the Queen Victoria PH, might better reflect the town's functional past without detracting from its seaside character. There is also a glut of pastiche street furniture. Lighting columns with fish-motif brackets are fun (similar fittings are seen in other nearby coastal conservation areas, eg. N Shields Fish Quay).



Bridge Street is overly full to work as a space, but has some interesting features



Also in the 1990s came a new layout for Bridge Street, its role as the notional centre of the town reinforced with a bandstand, screened seating structures, planters, benches, bollards, bike rack and lighting columns, plus a lively surface of shaped and coloured brick paviors, mosaics and planting. Add in the phone boxes, pillar box and large double-sided noticeboard, and it is too cluttered and busy to work as an open space (not helped by ad hoc parking), whilst most human activity seems pushed to the edges around the pub and Café Riviera. Rising up from Bridge Street to the Promenade provides the first point of contact for most visitors with the beach and sea.





The raised and planted area outside Nos.45-59 Front Street is attractive but convoluted. Modern pavement materials can clash with old buildings.

The bowed part of Front Street between Bridge Street and Woodhorn Lane, is also included in the recent street scheme, surfaces too modern for this evidently historic spot. The raised and planted area outside shops at Nos.45-59 Front Street is convoluted (it was once simply paved steps) but is a welcoming green feature at the Woodhorn Lane arrival point. A large CCTV camera and box is a very intrusive addition to the White House, one of the oldest buildings at this point.



The attractive wide verge in the Suburban Extension complements nearby gardens & trees.

A wide verge is a distinctive feature of the **Suburban Extension**, apparently created in the 1970s by slightly cropping back front gardens on the south-east side (following 1967 proposals by then Civic Trust for the North East). A long, good-looking series of grass mounds and seasonal planting lines the south side of Gibson Street and the top of Front Street. These are considerably enhanced by the trees and mature foliage of adjoining front gardens, but the low brick retaining walls are a little too twentieth-century-municipal for what is a nineteenth century suburb. The seasonal bedding, though,



is a delight and a big part of the town's summer seaside attraction (a large planted tablet by No.2 Front Street currently reads "Newbiggin in Bloom 2006 Silver Gilt"), whilst cordylines and yuccas are redolent of traditional seaside planting schemes. Further down Front Street, this verge is unfortunately lost to blank tarmac and brick boundary walls outside Bank House (see discussion of gardens below).

Back lanes dominate movement around the eastern half of the **Suburban Extension**. Most are lined with a random series of garages, boundary walls, gates and doors. In many places, however, historic stone outbuildings and boundary walls make strong contributions, such as behind Brewery House, at Marine Cottages, behind Nos.2-20 Front Street and behind The Haven, Creswell House and Victoria Terrace. All back lanes seem to be tarmac; some might have historic setts beneath. As with main roads, surviving stone kerbs should be protected, as well as other features such as gulleys and rare iron corner bumpers (glinters).



Historic alleys in the Historic Core have no traditional surfaces but a boundary walls. Their coherence as a group and as part of the wider public realm could be improved.

A more random collection of alleys and routes dominates the eastern half of the **Historic Core**. Here, only the routes themselves survive, not the historic surfaces or edges. Many would once have been simple rammed earth, and did not become formalised until the mid twentieth century – when quality and context were rarely watch-words for designs and materials. The lane south of the Black Pearl PH is one of the best, enhanced by stone boundary walls and a clear horizon, but it has a modern pavior and tarmac surface. Demolition has widened Watt's Lane out and although enhanced with seasonal bedding, modern surfaces do dominate. So too on the





*Above: Robinson Square and Watt's Lane are also somewhat weak as inviting routes between the town centre and Promenade despite attractive planting.
Below: In the Suburban Extension, steps, many with natural stone walls and treads, characterise the routes between the town and the bay.*

narrow alley south of the Co-op, which does, though, have stone boundary walls. The stepped route along the side return of Vernon Place is the most atmospheric of these little alleys, tightly packed with prominent sandstone boundary walls and historic changes in level. Modern surfaces are still used but the cheerful yet restrained masonry paint on the cottages creates a welcoming route. Robinson Square has always been as wide as it is and, although distinctive, here too modern surfaces, planters and street furniture dominate. Two further alleys at the north-east end are also tarmac with concrete kerbs. This collection of alleys and squares, together with the adjoining 'operational' parts of the Promenade, could be considerably enhanced with natural surfaces and edges, and rationalisation of signs, furniture, lighting and site works, capitalising on the obvious fishing village history 'just below the surface' in this little quarter of the town. This chain of alleys is continued in the **Suburban Extension** with three straight stepped routes running between Front Street and the Promenade, and a fourth ramped footpath up to Windsor County First School. That by Bank House benefits from its overhanging trees, and several have historic sandstone boundary walls and steps.



At the far eastern end of High Street, the bus turning circle generates a very wide expanse of red tarmac, relieved only by patches in black. This a rather unceremonious point of arrival not enhanced by the functional concrete bus shelter and WC block. The visual coordination of the space with the holiday park and the nearby Church Point car-park could be improved.



Bus turning circle at the east end of High Street with public WCs, holiday park entrance and bus shelter

5.6.5 **Front Gardens**



Front Gardens in the Suburban Extension tend to be very mature and green



Boundary treatments include picket fences, stone walls with rounded or standing-stone copes (see overleaf), and usually with hedges between the gardens. Trees in gardens make a strong contribution to the street scene.

The **Suburban Extension** is defined by its domestic front gardens. The spine of Gibson Street and Front Street is lined on both sides by tight rows of long, rich, mature front gardens with trees, creating a thick green corridor down to the town centre. This arrangement is very distinctive of its Victorian suburban character and is key to the sub-area's quality, not only in their collective public impact but also the private individuality of each garden and the quality and status it adds as the setting of each house. The gardens were created from a linear village green after some of the earliest houses were already in place (see page 27 above). Some gardens were subsequently cropped back in the 1970s to create the wide verge on the south-east side (see page 66).

The gardens are mostly mature, well kept and brimming with cottagey shrubs, perennials, borders and seasonal bedding around neat lawns. Tall trees in the gardens are also key to the scene, several of which are protected by TPOs including at St Mary's Church, Nos.20, 28 and 30 Front Street, and Elderside on Front Street. The gardens' display in the summer is colourful and inviting (complemented by public verge bedding outside, see above), and enough foliage survives en masse in winter to keep the heavy green character.

Boundary treatments have a consistency. On the south-east side, where they were cropped back in the 1970s to create the street verge, they have stained picket fences to the street



Above: Standing stone wall copes. Below: retaining boundary walls.

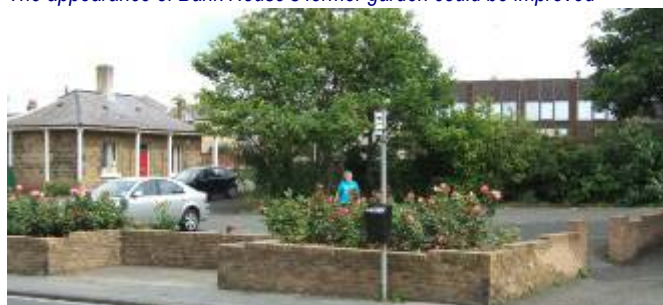


and are divided by hedges, appropriate for the 'cottageyness' of the many of the gardens. No.38 at the far south end apparently still has its original front boundary wall. Most at the north end on both sides also have intact historic rubble sandstone boundary walls, the best with distinctive regular standing-stone copes (a few have rounded or triangular copes). Further south, many of the walls become retaining walls as the road is notably lower than the gardens. Many are topped with hedges, adding to the thick seclusion of the gardens. Harm is caused where brick or blockwork walls, metal railings or other timber fences have been inserted in place of picket fences, hedges or sandstone walls, although some of the early twentieth century terraces were built with red-brick boundary walls with shaped stone copes typical of the period and linked to the houses' architecture.

Bank House's garden is the largest in the

area and was once one of the most grand, indicated by old photographs and the surviving lodge, now marooned in patchy tarmac. The loss of greenness to this prominent front garden has had a profound effect on the appearance of the sub-area, leaving meagre grass strips lined with trees and ad hoc concrete-edged beds. One group of trees along the southwest side and 10 other individual trees are protected by TPOs (see page 83). Three car-parks exist here, defined by the original and later alignment of Front Street – the large area closest to the house was the lawned garden, and it is divided from the smaller areas at the street by remnant stone boundary walls. This is crucial evidence of the original plot line in the sub-area (see page 27). Much more could be made of these spaces by rationalising parking and reintroducing grass and planting at the street.

The appearance of Bank House's former garden could be improved



The other set of front gardens in the **Suburban Extension** are those overlooking the bay. Their combined length is as long as those on the main street but they are quite different in character, open, exposed, and steeply sloping or terraced.



Front gardens overlooking the bay make a strong contribution to its public appearance.

Many have rubble sandstone dividing and boundary walls, and most are well tended with colourful and varied seasonal displays adding considerably to the appearance of the Promenade. (However, this is overpowered in places by the visual impact of the Prom's concrete embankments, discussed above.)



Windsor County First School's grounds and trees strongly mark the start of the thick green corridor running through the suburban Extension

Other much smaller front gardens make a contribution in localised places, eg. Marine Cottages and on Woodhorn Lane where historic sandstone walls also survive (including copes), together with rare remnants of railings and gates. The loss of the front garden at the New Ship PH (No.42 Gibson Street) has notably harmed the street scene at the southern gateway to the area. Next door, the front grounds of Windsor County First School are very important as they mark the start the thick green corridor, whilst the mature trees, intact sandstone boundary walls and neat grass with flower beds make a positive contribution at the southern gateway to the area.

Grounds to St Mark's Church also have original walls and green planting, but are smaller and not as prominent. Small street trees add to its setting here, but the solid bus shelter, concrete planters and wide expanse of tarmac do not. The library is surrounded by its former school playgrounds and a brick boundary wall, cut back for a highway splay at the corner of Cleveland Terrace. Works in front of St Andrew's Church to provide level access have not harmed the contribution its large rose beds and historic sandstone boundary walls to Front Street.

The **Historic Core** is not characterised by front gardens but a handful have been incorporated over the years. The most prominent are at Seaview House and Covent Garden. The latter have some historic sandstone boundary walls and are mostly green, but Seaview's walls have been replaced with concrete Promenade works and the garden is a hard-paved forecourt. A large hidden garden at Fairwinds (south of Henderson's Buildings) is bound by tall historic sandstone and brick boundary walls. This is the site of the early building group in the fishing village which contained a smithy, so the garden and walls could contain interesting evidence of this earlier development. Small front gardens at Bay View East and around Atlee Terrace make an attractive but generally neutral contribution, most with brick boundaries intact. Tiny gardens in front of the listed Methodist Chapel in Robinson Square could be improved with stone boundary walls and greenery.



Altered front garden to Seaview House (Promenade); hidden garden at Fairwinds; altered front garden to Methodist Chapel (Robinson Square).

5.6.6 **Rear Yards**



Rear yards in the Historic Core are often under-used but many will contain historic features and buildings



The **Historic Core** is characterised by large rear yards behind properties on the north-west side of Front Street and smaller ones in amongst the tighter layout of the south-east side.

The larger yards are enigmatic, mostly hidden from view and with access only through or around the main building. Long oblique views from side streets



reveal many might be under-used or contain modern buildings, but there are also obvious historic buildings and offshots which could contribute to the area's special interest. Maps show most follow the historic development pattern and some will contain important historic reminders of former uses and layout, such as outhouses and other incidental buildings. Many might also have historic boundary walls, or fragments thereof, which are crucial to understanding the place's history and defining character to the rear, particularly against the proximity of modern developments. Where historic character and development history evidence survives, its protection is important. Many of the smaller rear yards on the south-east side do not have the same impact, but might have the same potential for historic survivals, eg. around Robinson Square or Vernon Place.

Back yards in the **Suburban Extension** are small and domestic but do characterise the period and form of development. Rear boundary walls vary and many have been much altered for garages (the tightness of the road layout reduces on-street parking). A few show signs of their original design, such as the shaped stone gate piers behind Windsor Gardens and The Haven. Such posts would have characterised the grandeur of the largest early back yards and gardens – similar posts stood at the entrance to Bank House's garden. Many yards will contain important historic reminders of former uses and layout, such as outhouses and other incidental buildings; several evidently have large stone outbuildings inside, including the Brewery House yard.



Back yards in the suburban Extension can also have interesting outbuildings and remnant boundary walls and gate piers, although many yards and walls are altered.



5.7 **Loss, Intrusion and Damage**

In the existing conservation area, mainly the **Suburban Extension**, the biggest losses and intrusions took place before it was designated, mainly the loss of the railway station and the various additions and losses at Bank House as a result of its change of use from residential to club. There was also a general erosion of details and materials to leave man-made materials and ill-informed methods prevalent in many parts. This is likely to have continued to some degree after conservation area status in 1986, although undoubtedly much harm has been prevented since designation.

In the proposed extension, mainly the **Historic Core**, conservation area status has not been available to help control a slide in quality and authenticity in works to historic buildings and spaces. So, although there is very good integrity to the overall historic and architectural structure of the place, much needs to be done to enhance the detailed character and appearance in the face of losses and harm.

5.7.1 **Neutral Parts**

Neutral parts are those which have a balance of positive and negative characteristics which neither detract strongly nor make a great contribution. In the existing conservation area, many of the back lanes between terraces in the **Suburban Extension** are neutral, where alterations to rear boundary walls and street surfaces have left concentrations of man-made materials with little visual character despite the integrity of the layout and structure. This is not the case in all back lanes, however, and even where it is there are other features which lift the scene from being totally negative (eg. the presence of Marine Cottages in the back lane to Windsor Terrace, as well as several stone boundary walls).

In the proposed extension, a similar situation is seen in many public areas of the **Historic Core**, mainly in the public realm between Front Street / High Street and the Promenade where historic routes and spaces have lost much of their visual appeal to man-made surfaces and boundaries. The amount of change to some of the buildings along the eastern end of High Street is also high, including added render and altered window openings. Although harmful, High Street's layout is key to understanding the growth of Newbiggin, and spatially it is an integral part of the development pattern around the bay, between the town centre and Church Point.

All of these neutral parts can be rescued through long term conservation action. They all the potential to make a much more positive contribution to character and appearance and should not be 'discarded' – investment and policy control would improve their appearance over time to match their surviving spatial integrity.



5.7.2 **Negative Parts**

There are relatively few negative parts in either the existing or proposed conservation area – much of the harm has lead to generally neutral parts rather than wholesale negativity. Those negative parts that do exist can be enhanced to improve their contribution to the local scene, but would require concerted policy and investment decisions to do so, together with considerable public and private support. They include:

- the wide modern junction splay at the site of the railway station where the tight development pattern is blown open,
- the long, low, flat roofed building at this junction which bears no relation to the architectural character of the area and is not of any merit in its own right,
- the large flat roofed extensions at Bank House which mask the historic building from the street and have significantly harmed its integrity as one of the largest and most important villa houses in the town.
- loss and alteration at Bank House's gardens which, although with some features intact such as the lodge and boundary walls, is sparsely and grey amid the thick green wedge running along Front Street's length,
- the modern extensions to the Co-op at Nos.85-87 Front Street which are too visible n long views from Church Point and present functional backs to the Promenade.



From the top: wide junction splay on Front Street, modern flat roofed building alongside, Bank House extensions, bank House car-park and loss of verge, prominent and heavy Co-op roofscape, Nos.85-87 front Street.

However, most harm to the conservation area has come from disfiguring change to detail and materials of the historic buildings over time.

5.7.3 **Incremental Change**

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

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

Much of this has involved lower quality work, synthetic materials, and ill-informed or now-discredited approaches. As the architecture is simple, the palette of natural materials limited, and basic architectural features relatively modest, some changes can become particularly prominent. Harm can easily result from loss or alteration of those features, materials or design intent, and, in one or two locations, there is sufficient accumulation of change to have weakened character and appearance. In the proposed extensions to the conservation area such changes have not had the benefit of greater scrutiny and control that conservation area status brings. Within the existing conservation area, many changes took place before it was designated in 1986, and some will have taken place in the last few decades, having been given consent in less conservation-minded times, or – more likely – the result of permitted development rights, ie. works which do not require planning permission.

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

5.7.4 **Loss and Replacement of Original Architectural Details**

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

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



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



Altered openings, box shutters, and plastic and metal for windows, doors and shopfronts harms character



5.7.5 ***Inappropriate Designs, Methods and Materials***

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

- Some added and enlarged offshots with widths, heights, forms, materials and detailing that do not reflect the main building and which harm the historic integrity of the built scene, and can erode the three-dimensional relationship between building, plot and street.
- Many cases of cement render, pebbledash or paint to main elevations, which conceals the historic stone or brickwork that defines the character of the area's buildings, and which can make individual buildings stand out visually to the detriment of a group (as well as possibly harming the fabric of the building in the long term).
- Masonry repairs and alterations which use modern brick instead of stone or which use stone poorly matched in colour, size, texture or bond, leaving visual scarring on elevations.
- Poorly finished, badly matched or cement-heavy pointing which can significantly alter the appearance of masonry by making the pointing more visually prominent, as well as harming the fabric of the building in the long term.
- Some cases of painted stone detailing, particularly door and window surrounds, which destroys the rich historic patina of time that characterises mature unpainted stone, and which, depending on the use of colour, can make buildings stand out visually to the detriment of a group.
- Many cases of replacing natural slate with artificial slate (which are usually thinner with a flat, shiny appearance at odds with the rich texture of natural Welsh slate), of replacing slate with modern pantiles (which are often less visually textured and brighter in colour than historic ones) or replacing with concrete tiles (which are almost always wholly different in shape, size, texture, pattern and colour as well as often being heavier and so causing the roof structure to sag in the long term).
- Several added dormer windows in wide, boxy designs with flat roofs, often placed eccentrically on the roof slope interrupting the simplicity of the area's roof forms.



Render and masonry paint dull the scene compared with mature brick and stone. Cement pointing causes historic stonework to erode





- Several added Velux-style rooflights on front and other prominent roof slopes which are larger and greater in number than traditional small metal rooflights, and which are often placed eccentrically on the roof slope with no reference to the fenestration below, and which sit proud of the roof plain interrupting the simplicity of the roofscape.
- Several satellite dishes added in arbitrary positions on principal elevations rather than trying to site them more discreetly away from prominent view.



Roofscape can be harmed by modern materials, poorly designed and sited dormers and rooflights, and loss of chimneys

5.7.6 **Condition & Vacancy**

The general condition of the public realm in the conservation area is reasonable, but some parts are of concern, particular on the Prom and routes to the town centre where aging concrete and man-made materials can dominate. The condition of many buildings is also an on-going cause for concern, where investment and repairs have not kept apace with demand. These tend to be in the **Historic Core** and are mainly commercial or retail, but some houses are also apparently needing investment in repairs and maintenance.

5.7.7 **Other Pressures for Change**

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



Poor condition and vacancy are problematic in the Historic Core



6 *Management*

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

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

Proactively managing Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance into the future. In accordance with English Heritage guidance, the Council has prepared a Conservation Area Management Strategy (CAMS) for the existing and proposed conservation area at Newbiggin.



Management topics addressed in the CAMS include the following⁶:

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

Some of these are briefly discussed below. For further information and to find out how you could become involved, use the contact information on page 7.

6.1 **Boundary Review**

The conservation area was designated in 1986 and the boundary has not been reviewed since. National guidance suggests boundaries should be reviewed at regular intervals, in particular where there is pressure for change and where original designation took place many years ago. A review of the boundary is overdue.

6.2 **Regeneration**

The significance and needs of the existing and proposed conservation area make it ideal for a comprehensive partnership-led restoration initiative based on capital grant aid and public realm improvements. These would restore the area's architectural and historic character at key locations, improve the condition of the built fabric, capitalise on civic pride, and improve business conditions. Several aspects would be integral parts of that initiative, particularly site specific development briefs, enhancement opportunities, and a revitalised public realm. To start this, the Council has created Go Build On Your Heritage, a grant scheme to enhance the fabric and character of historic town centre commercial properties in the proposed extension to the conservation area during 2007-10. It is part of Go-Wansbeck, a 3 year programme to spend £11.8m of government funds across Wansbeck to boost business and encourage people to be more enterprising.

6.3 **Site Specific Design or Development Briefs**

Site specific briefs should be prepared for the St Mark's Church, Gibson Street, the site adjacent to Café Riviera, Promenade, the collection of historic industrial and commercial buildings behind 116-124 Front Street, and other sites where proactive

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

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

6.4 ***Thematic Policy Guidance***

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

7 Further Information & Guidance

7.1 Other Designations

The following heritage designations are found within the existing and proposed conservation area (*Fig 5*). For information on what these designations mean, go to www.english-heritage.org.uk.

5	Listed Building entries
2	Tree Preservation Orders (covering around 27 trees)

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

7.1.1 Listed Buildings

Entries on the 'Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' cover the whole building (including the interior), may cover more than one building, and may also include other buildings, walls and structures in the building's curtilage. Contact us for more advice (see page 7).

No.	Name (by street)	Grade	GV
<i>Robinson Square</i>			
3/92	Methodist Chapel	II	-
<i>High Street (east end of)</i>			
3/88	Church of St Bartholomew	I	-
3/89	Grave Slab outside east wall of Church of St Bart.	II	GV
3/90	Lipton Headstone 8m SE of porch of Church Of St Bart.	II	GV
3/91	Redford Headstone 10m S of porch of Church of St Bart.	II	GV

7.1.2 Tree Preservation Orders

TPOs are made on trees which make a significant contribution to their surroundings, whether in a conservation area or not. The tree's visual, historic and amenity contribution are taken into consideration. Consent is needed for works to trees covered by a TPO. Contact us for more advice (see page 7).

Order	Location	Trees	Species
1983	Front Street, Newbiggin	7 individual trees; 1 group of trees	Various including cherry, elm, sycamore and weeping ash
1997	Bank House Social Club, Newbiggin	10 individual trees	(see TPO schedule)

7.2 **County Historic Environment Record Entries**

The following entries from the Northumberland Historic Environment Record (HER) are within, or partly within, the conservation area boundary (existing and proposed). The HER is accessed on-line at www.keystothepast.info.

No.	Site Name	Period	Site Type
N12048	Nbgn. Point mesolithic site	prehistoric	weapon, flint object, tool
N12051	Church of St Bartholomew	medieval	church / chapel
N12061	Newbiggin	medieval	settlement
N12062	Newbiggin Railway Station	post-med.	railway building
N18054	Well at Newbiggin	unknown	well
N18056	Village Pond	unknown	pond
N18057	Well	unknown	well
N18058	The Coble Inn	unknown	inn
N18059	The Pant	unknown	fountain
N19055	Well	unknown	well

Notes: 'No.' = HER / SMR number. 'Period' = broad archaeological periods, not architectural periods

7.3 **Local Plan Policies**

The following are relevant policies from the Wansbeck Local Plan, adopted in July 2007. Other policies will also be relevant. See page 6.

Conservation Areas	
GP17	<i>Conservation Area designations in the District will be kept under review. Only areas which are judged to be of special architectural or historic interest and whose character and appearance it is considered desirable to preserve or enhance will be designated, or continue to be designated, as Conservation Areas. Character appraisals and management plans will be prepared for those areas where they do not already exist and they will be kept up-to-date.</i>
GP18	<i>The special architectural or historic interest of the District's Conservation Areas will be preserved and enhanced. Special regard will be paid to the impact of proposed development on the special architectural or historic interest of a Conservation Area and its setting. Development within, or otherwise affecting, a Conservation Area must be in sympathy with the character and appearance of the Area. Development likely to have an adverse impact will not be permitted. Demolition of a building, feature or structure which makes</i>

	<i>a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless there is conclusive evidence that it is beyond reasonable economic repair.</i>
GP19	<i>If it appears to the authority that permitted development is having, or is likely to have, an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, the authority will bring the development under planning control by seeking to make an Article 4 direction.</i>
Town Centre Uses	
RTC8	<i>The conversion to flats of vacant or underused upper floors above shops and other commercial premises in the District's town centres will be encouraged where satisfactory living accommodation can be created. Development at ground floor level which would result in the loss of existing independent access to upper floors capable of being used as residential accommodation will not be permitted.</i>
Shopfronts	
RTC9	<i>Planning applications for new or replacement shop fronts will be permitted if the design of the shop front relates well in terms of architectural style, scale, proportions, materials and colour to both the building of which it forms part and the surrounding streetscene.</i>
Outdoor Advertisements	
RTC11	<i>Consent will be granted for the display of outdoor signs and advertisements provided that:</i> <i>a) the character or appearance of the building or area will not be adversely affected; and</i> <i>b) public safety will not be compromised.</i>
Cultural and tourism opportunities	
REC12	<i>Development which improves tourism and cultural interest in the District will be encouraged and supported.</i> <i>Focus for the improvement of tourist attractions and facilities will be:</i> <i>a) the continued development of the Woodhorn project (see Proposals Map); and</i> <i>b) the improvement of existing recreational assets including the country parks and coast; and</i> <i>c) public realm improvements in towns such as Ashington, Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea.</i>

7.4 **The Implications Of Conservation Area Status**

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

- demolition
- minor developments

- the protection of trees

7.4.1 **Demolition**

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

7.4.2 **Minor Developments**

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

Under Article 4 of the same legislation, there can be further measures to restrict other kinds of alteration which are normally allowed under so-called 'permitted development rights'. Called Article 4 Directions, these measures effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance over time.

Development is not precluded, but selected alterations would require planning permission and special attention would be paid to the potential effect of proposals when permission was sought. The local authority has to give good reason for making these restrictions, and must take account of public views before doing so. To many owners, any tighter restrictions or additional costs, such as for special building materials, are more than outweighed by the attraction of living or running a business in such an area. There are two types of Article 4 Direction, 4(1) or 4(2).

7.4.3 **Trees**

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

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

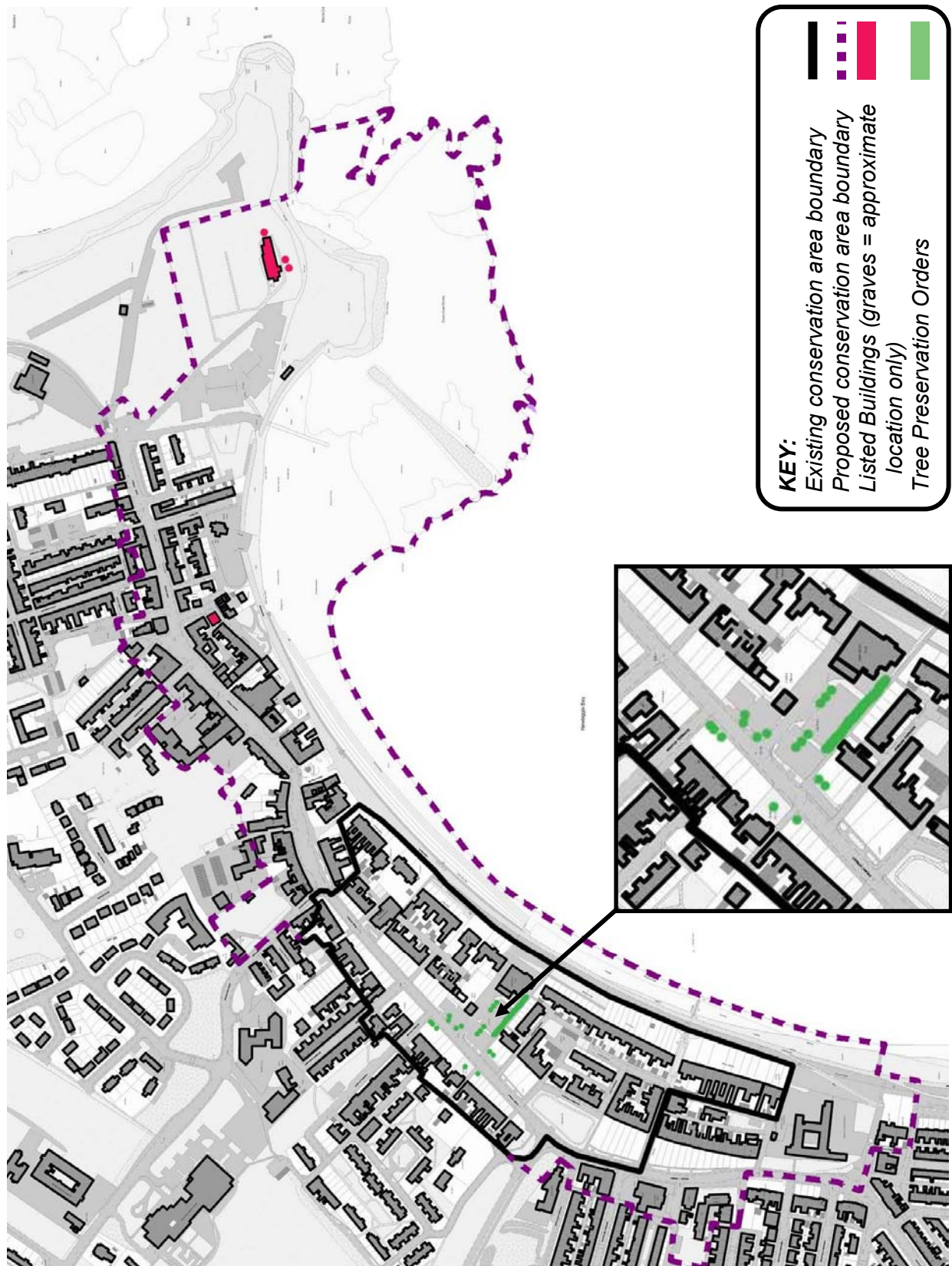
7.5 ***Unlisted Buildings In A Conservation Area***

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

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

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

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

Fig 5: Other Designations

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