



**Alnwick District Council**

Department of Environment & Regeneration

# Rock Conservation Area



## *Character Appraisal and Management Matters*

Produced by

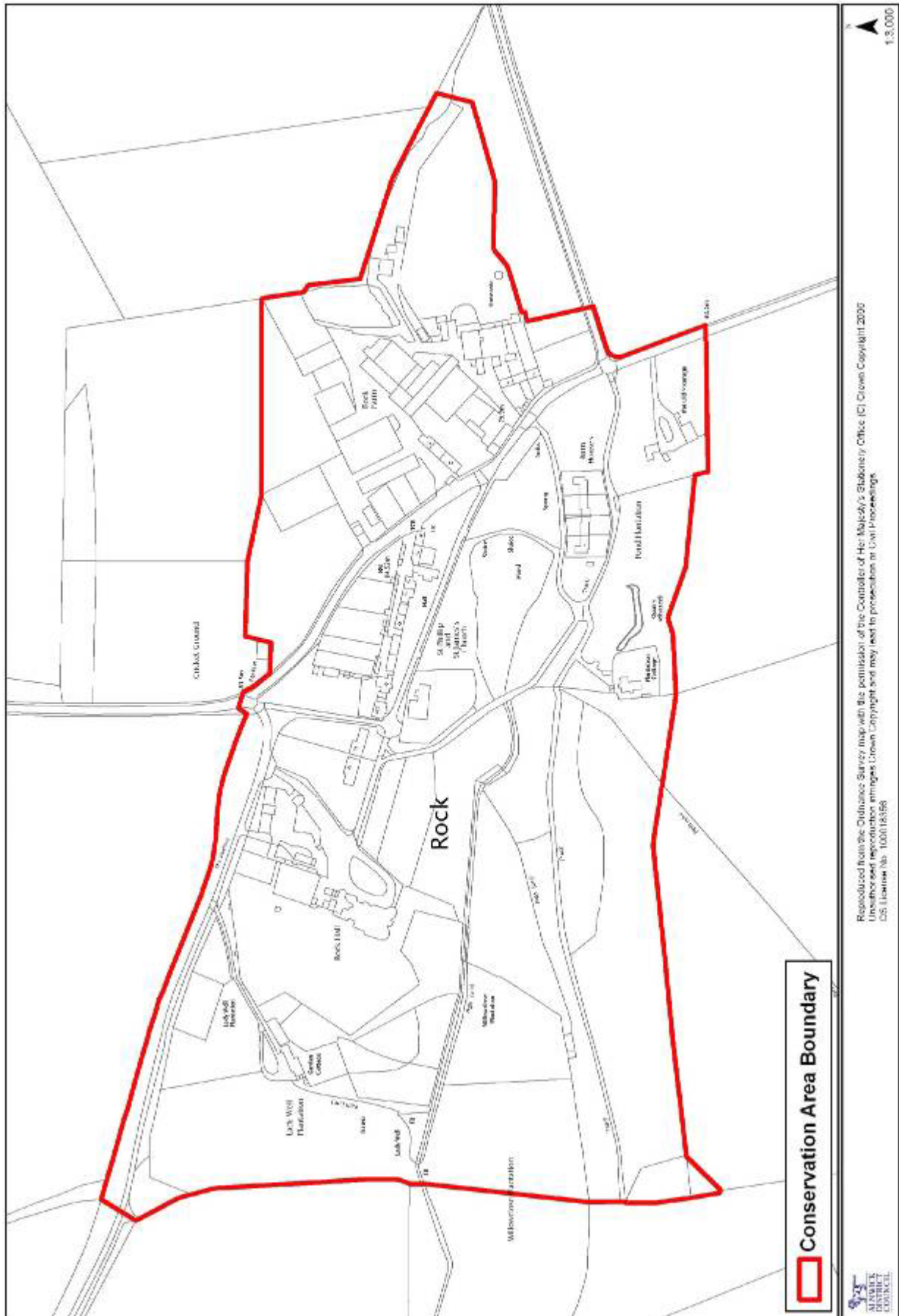


**NORTH of ENGLAND CIVIC TRUST**

**Designation Report  
February 2008**

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Map 1. Rock Conservation Area



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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”<sup>1</sup>. 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 currently 15 in Alnwick district, as set out below:

- Alnmouth
- Alnwick
- Amble
- Eglington
- Embleton
- Felton
- Glanton

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<sup>1</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s69.

- Guyzance
- Lesbury
- Newton on the Moor
- Rock
- Rothbury
- Warkworth
- Whittingham
- Whitton

## 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 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 them<sup>2</sup>. The local planning authority also has extra powers in conservation areas over demolition, minor developments, and tree protection (see page 41). Government policy in PPG15<sup>3</sup> 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 current development plan for the district comprises the Alnwick District Core Strategy (adopted October 2007) and the saved policies of both the Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (September 2007) and the Northumberland County & National Park Joint Structure Plan (February 2008). The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy due to be adopted in 2008 carries significant weight and will, when adopted, supersede the saved policies of the county structure plan.

The Council is working on area development plan documents and topic-specific supplementary planning documents which, with the Core Strategy, will form the district Local Development Framework. Conservation area matters are considered within this framework.

## 1.3 *This Character Appraisal*

This character appraisal is for Rock. Its preparation began during spring 2007 by North of England Civic Trust for Alnwick District Council. Comment and information was invited from local stakeholders during its preparation, and a draft was put out to public consultation. Responses were then considered and a version presented to the Alnwick Operations Executive Committee on 12 June 2007 for decision. **The committee agreed to the designation of Rock Conservation Area.**

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<sup>2</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s72 and s71

<sup>3</sup> Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning & The Historic Environment

By its very nature, this document 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 Rock. Following designation of the conservation area, the character appraisal should be updated every five years or so, taking account of changes in the area and further understanding of the place.

#### 1.4 **Further Information**

For further information on this character appraisal, or conservation in Alnwick in general, please contact:

- Alnwick District Council  
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## 2 Location and Context

### 2.1 Location

Rock is an historic estate village on the North Northumberland coastal plain. It lies 1½ miles from the A1 in the west and 3½ miles to the coast at Craster in the east. The village is still connected to the old A1 road by a private avenue, an early nineteenth century landscape feature put in to provide a grand private approach to Rock Hall. Privileged visitors travelling by coach along the old North Road would arrive at Rock Lodge, which still exists at the A1 end of the avenue, travel the length of this drive, and finally arrive at the Hall itself, suitably impressed by the wealth and style of its occupants. Although a realigned A1 now unfortunately severs the avenue at its western end, it still remains an important landscape feature with its 160 year old beech trees. The main north-south railway line runs between Rock and the coast the closest station being at Alnmouth, 7 miles away.

Rock is 5 miles north east of Alnwick, the district administrative and service centre. The village is 35 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, the regional capital, and 30 miles south of the Scottish border. Rock's centre is at grid reference NU 202 201. The village lies in the parish of Rennington and in the Alnwick District Council ward called Longhoughton With Craster & Rennington. In the 2001 census, the ward had a population of 2089, most of which is in the villages, hamlets or farmsteads that dot this part of the coastal plain of North Northumberland.

### 2.2 Context

#### 2.2.1 Geology

Rock is at the southern end of the North Northumberland Coastal Plain countryside character area (no.1)<sup>4</sup>. The North Northumberland Coastal Plain is underlain by sedimentary limestone, shales and sandstones of the Carboniferous age, including local deposits of thin coal seams. Intruding into the Carboniferous rocks are near horizontal sheets of dense black rocks created by volcanic action deep below the ground. These sheets are collectively known as the Whin Sill. While the

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<sup>4</sup> 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.



sandstones and shales are prone to weathering into bays and headlands, whinstone is especially resistant to erosion by wave and weather, forming shore line cliffs, offshore islands and dramatically unexpected inland escarpments. Although inland outcrops and escarpments of the Sill form distinctive local landmarks, Rock, lying on limestone and sandstone, is not directly associated with such geological features. The natural building material of Rock is the local sandstone, some of which was quarried in the early nineteenth century from the rising ground at the southern edge of the village to build new houses on the north side of Rock. Limestone and sandstone are both close to the surface along the sides of the burn that runs through Rock and this is likely to have been the source of the name of the village.

### 2.2.2 ***Topography and Aspect***

Without the drama of whinstone features, the peaceful village of Rock lies on the banks of a small burn which slope gently to the east. The north bank presents this part of the village to the southern sun whilst the south bank is cooler. With the general slope of the site towards the east, the village was, for much of its life, somewhat exposed to cold winter winds off the sea. This was until it acquired the dense protection of the mature trees that now cover much of the village.

Although the village lies on the banks of a small stream, its topography is generally flat. Dense woodland occupies much of the east and middle of the village but it thins out to the west to form the kind of parkland so often associated with the rural mansions of England.

### 2.2.3 ***Setting and External Relationships***

Although Rock is set in the open, flat, agricultural plain of north Northumberland, it is neither physically linked to nor threatened by the growth of any other settlement. It is surrounded by a soft landscape of the fields and woodlands of the long-established 1,800 acre Rock estate, including several farmsteads.

As an estate village, Rock has always been owned by the owners of the Hall but this has not always been their residence. So, with the changing owners of the Hall, Rock has also been associated with other manors or estates in Northumberland including Scremerston to the north and Shawdon to the west. Although such relationships no longer exist, the common ownership with the Rock Estate is still a reality.

Other external functional relationships are generally limited as the village now has a mainly commuter land use base with limited agriculture. But the use of the Hall as a private school has created many new relationships with pupils coming from elsewhere in the north and across the UK. In term time, the village is very much dominated by the sights and sounds of pupils (in green uniforms) and parents, as they move between Rock Hall, parish church, Village Hall and playing fields for different curricular and celebratory activities.

The village is not tourist orientated, although a Rock Farm Trail is available for visitors and is marked as the only tourist amenity in the village on the latest OS Explorer Map (No.332).

In summary, the setting of the village is a modest agricultural environment and its external relations, except for the school, are very limited.

#### 2.2.4 ***Views out of the Area***

There are no formally composed views out of Rock, not even from Rock Hall as the building is at the heart of Rock Estate. To the east, due to Rock's slight elevation, there are glimpses to the sea, but only briefly between buildings and groups of trees. Views to the south are contained by the ridge just outside the boundary of the village, while those to the north and west are predictably agricultural and open, but extend for only a couple of miles due to the gentle undulations of the coastal plain. These views are also limited by the mature trees of the grand avenue running between the Hall and the Old North Road.

See page 19 a discussion of views within Rock.

## 3 Historical Development

### 3.1 Development History

#### 3.1.1 Name

The name *Rock* is Old English in origin, from which it can be concluded that the place-name originated sometime between the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements in the fifth century AD and about 1100. As the name is derived from the Old French words *roche* and *roke*, it is most likely that it dates from after the Norman Invasion of 1066. The earliest records as *Roche* in 1164 and *Rok* in 1242 confirm that the name is most likely to be post-conquest. The meaning of the name is associated with 'outcrops of limestone'.

#### 3.1.2 Prehistoric & Roman Periods

To date there are no prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon records associated with Rock which may bear out its late origins in the Norman period. This could also mean a lack of archaeological investigation in or around the village. The parish is not without records of such early finds but none have so far been linked with the village of Rock.

#### 3.1.3 Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods

The earliest records of the name as well as its French origin, indicate a Norman foundation. However, many such foundations were often based on earlier settlements so it is possible that evidence of an earlier settlement may come to light in the future.



The story of Rock is the story of the families that owned the estate and developed or improved the village as they needed or could afford. Only what might be called minor gentry have been associated with the Rock Estate over the years from the de Roks in the time of King Henry III to the Bosanquets at the present time.

The church is the oldest building in the village being mid twelfth century, so it predates the de

Rok family, but it is likely that the thirteenth century extensions to the church were carried out by them. After 1288, and probably before the present Hall was begun, the de Rok family had died out. By the mid fourteenth, the estate was in the hands of the de Tuggal family who also had an estate at Scremerston. This family were probably responsible for building the first version of the present Hall in the late



thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries and, in the face of threats from Scotland, for converting its south wing into a tower late in the fourteenth century. The Swinhoes occupied Rock from the early fifteenth century until the late sixteenth century. It was in their time, in 1549, when armed mercenaries, employed against the Scots, were billeted at the Hall.

Although the Lawson family had owned the estate through marriage since 1525, they did not begin to occupy Rock Hall until after the 1550s. It was in the time of the Lawsons that the whole 1,800 acres of the estate were surveyed and mapped to provide the earliest known map of Rock. The survey and mapping was carried out in 1599 and its contents are discussed below.

In 1620, the estate was conveyed to John Salkeld who also had the Hulne Abbey estate. The Salkelds are commemorated in a plaque currently displayed on the village hall. In 1623 the family began the construction of the Mid Hall on this site for the younger Salkeld son (Thomas) so that the older son (John) could occupy the old Rock Hall. Thomas inherited the Mid Hall in 1629 on the death of his father, and his and his wife's initials appear on the plaque (the date on it is of the start of building rather than of inheritance). The Mid Hall was demolished in 1855 to make way for a new Sunday School, this later becoming the village hall.



The Salkelds remodelled the Hall early in the seventeenth century and occupied Rock through the Civil War, first suffering considerable financial loss after the execution of King Charles I for their Royalist loyalties, and regaining much of this loss on the restoration of King Charles II. In the early eighteenth century, the estate was held through marriage to a Salkeld by the Proctors of Shawdon. But family financial problems, which no doubt affected the condition of the Rock Estate too, forced the Proctors to sell Rock on and, in 1732, it became the property of Lord Jersey. In 1752, a disastrous fire in the Hall almost destroyed it and it was left in a ruinous state for over 70 years. In 1794, the estate including the ruined Hall was sold to the Halfords who passed it on through marriage to the family who, after more than 200 years, are still the owners – the Bosanquet family.

Charles Bosanquet, the new owner, set out to restore the fortunes of the Rock Estate. He restored the church in 1806 and then turned his attention to the ruined Hall. In c1820 John Dobson, architect of Newcastle and many Northumberland houses, remodelled the south front and later in the century F R Wilson, an Alnwick architect, restored and extended the north-west wing. After Charles's death in 1850, his son, the Rev R W Bosanquet, continued the work of improvement. He repaired the church in 1855-57 and in 1866 engaged F R Wilson (who may still have been working on the Hall at the time) to add a north aisle, no doubt to accommodate changes in the village itself. It is believed that the architect had the north wall of the old Norman church dismantled stone by stone, and re-erected as the north wall of the new aisle, so it could be said that at least two complete walls and two half walls of the Norman church still survive. He also continued the reconstruction of the village houses that was possibly begun by his father, and in 1855 the Mid Hall, which may have temporarily housed the Bosanquet family while Rock Hall itself was being rescued from ruin, was demolished to make way for a new Sunday School on the same site. Also, in the time of the first two Bosanquets of Rock, the eighteenth century farm and farm cottages at the east end of the village were modernised and extended, a process that continued under subsequent Bosanquets until late in the twentieth century when the changing nature of farming nationally led to the farm's current under-use and vacancy.

#### 3.1.4 ***Post-Map Development History (1599 Onwards)***

The ideal source for any development history is a readily available and continuous sequence of maps from the earliest to the present day. Some fortunate settlements have excellent sequences from the sixteenth century into the twenty-first which enable a continuous development narrative to be established. For example, Berwick upon Tweed's location on a contested international border required good mapping. On the other hand, Rock, being a small estate village like so many throughout the country, had no such distinction. For such estates, maps were often only required for land disputes, when land changed hands or when tithe awards were re-assessed, and many of those hand-drawn plans were poorly produced, have been lost over time or remain hidden in private archives. The map sequence for Rock readily available without lengthy research into public and private archives, is not continuous until the mid nineteenth century, with the usual OS sequence.

Rock has a plan of 1599 and then nothing until the First Edition OS of c1860. This hand-drawn snapshot of the village at the end of the sixteenth century, followed by a gap of about 260 years before the sequence that continues every 30 years until 2007. This is not untypical of such small villages such as Rock.

Rock in 1599 was a very different place than today. To start with, there were more people and more houses surrounding the church outside the gates of the Hall. They were ranged around an open space which had the church in its north-west corner and the burn running along the south edge in front of a southern row of houses continuous except at its centre where converging roads from Alnwick and Rennington entered the village. The two roads from the north also converge before

they enter the village giving, in total, only three access points into the village. This is significant. The fewer the entrances, the easier the village is to defend. So, was the general layout of the Hall and its village at this time determined by the need to defend the place from the Scots? These were the times of threat from the north; nearby Embleton had suffered several sustained attacks from this direction over the years and had finally responded in the sixteenth century by building a defensive ditch around the village. Rock is likely to have suffered similar depredations too, and a defensive circle of houses with limited roads in, protected by a fortified tower with its encircling barmkin at one end, would be a good defensive arrangement to have. Although a ditch is not described in so many words on the 1599 plan, the village does have an encircling band of darker colour which could be representative of defensive arrangements of some kind. Interestingly, across the central open space are the words 'Town gate'. Administrative areas in the past were often called townships, whether rural or urban, so the use of the word 'town' to mean a village was not unusual, and 'gate' could refer to the easternmost point of the village being gated where the road from Stamford entered the village. Furthermore,



of all of the estate's inhabited houses, only the mill was outside the village enclosure. Evidently, all this is speculation but the overall defensive layout seems a logical response to what was a real threat of the times. The Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England just four years after that plan was drawn must have helped to improve the quality of life in the defended village of Rock as well as in the rest of Northumberland.

Two interesting features are shown outside the village bounds in 1599. One large area of 188 acres west of the village is described as 'Towne Moore' which suggests in this pre-enclosure time that an area of common land was still attached to the village. Between the town moor and the village is a large boggy area from which the stream running through the village rises. This is described as 'The great Carr serving Lord and Tennants'.

The north-eastern word for wetland is 'carr' and as such it would be productive of food (especially fish and wildlife), rushes (for thatching), and possibly willow (for baskets), etc. Significantly, it is also communally available for lord and tenant alike.



By c1860, about 260 years later, the village was different. The removal of threat had enabled the Hall to become a grand rural residence rather than a place of retreat. The eighteenth century

walls, with mock battlements and decorative entrance screen seen today, are more for show than defence. The central open space had been replaced by a large landscaped pond which served a functional purpose as a balancing pond for the village mill downstream, and an aesthetic one as part of the garden setting of the Hall. All village defensive works had also gone from the map, as had both north and south ranges of old houses. The south range had not been replaced and the land was a plantation shrouding a quarry. On the other hand, the north range had been replaced, probably around 10 years before, at the same time as the



seventeenth century Mid Hall was replaced by a new Sunday School. Whereas the original range was built to look into a central village space, the replacement range was laid out as a formal residential composition, designed to lead the eye up to the Hall as the terminal feature of a new vista. Such formal vistas focussed on the principle residence are not usual on estates in the north – was this new vista just the product of Victorian patronage or an attempt to introduce an earlier feature of southern estates into the north?

This village pattern of the 1860s has continued remarkably unchanged into the twenty-first century. With the changing uses of Rock Hall, its former pleasure



gardens have become playing fields or rough pasture, incongruous modern houses have been added to the mid nineteenth century

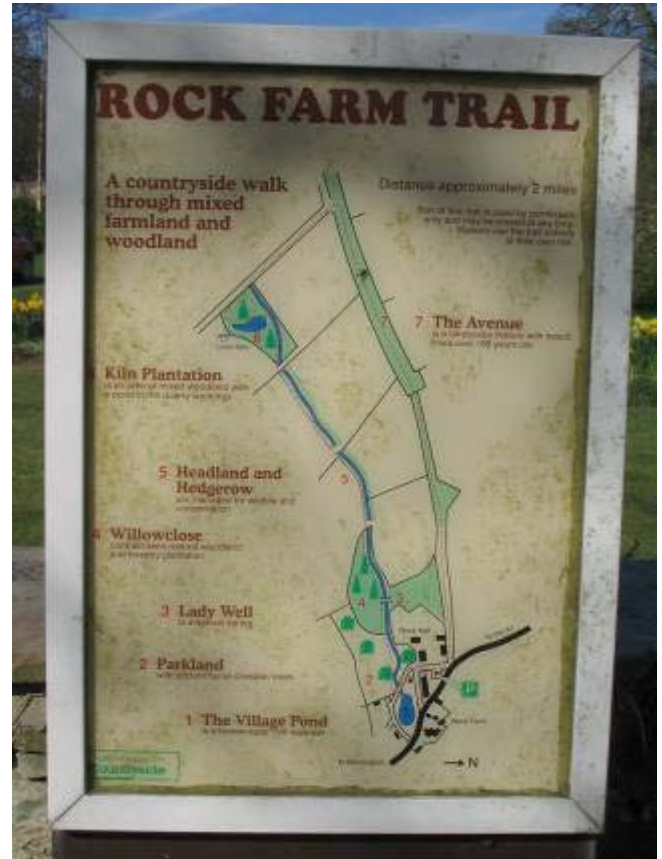


vista and the Sunday School building is now a hall for the village. Many large modern sheds have been added to Rock's traditional farm and a post-World War II vicarage, which calls itself 'The Old Vicarage', was added in the south west corner of the village. Finally, Burn Houses have been built on part of what might, from 1599, have been Rock's southern range of houses.

As an historic village, Rock is somewhat unusual in having a long historical continuity through two separate medieval buildings, but only a relatively short continuity of its overall plan. This makes its historical development special.

### 3.2 *Archaeology*

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Rock and, from the records, there seems to have been little or no archaeological exploration carried out within its bounds. In particular, the 1599 plan poses many questions about the medieval layout and defensive function of the village which only further desk study and archaeological investigation could answer. Earthworks to the south of the church and Hall have already been suggested as the possible site of part of the southern row of houses. There is enough uncertainty about the real history of Rock as an old estate village that such an investigation could be very fruitful and could help in the further presentation of the village to visitors as a compliment to the existing Rock Farm Trail.





## 4 Spatial Analysis

### 4.1 Development Pattern

The development pattern of modern Rock, which clearly owes something to the layout of the medieval village, is very much obscured on the ground by dense tree planting. Well over 40% of the area of the village is covered or dominated by trees. This makes it somewhat difficult to appreciate the village as a totality on the ground. However from plans, the pattern is not too difficult to describe but it still lacks the coherence of medieval Rock.



The oldest item in the village is the ancient church which once visually dominated the large open space at the heart of the medieval village. This open space has since disappeared under a large mill pond and dense tree planting; the church, now obscured on most sides, has very much merged into the landscape. It makes no contribution to the Victorian vista up to the Hall. To the east of the village, at the end of this vista, is the Hall, the second oldest building. Although once a fortified tower surrounded by defensive walls, it was

developed into an extended family house with walled pleasure gardens all around plus parkland to the south. With its use changed to a Youth Hostel and now a private school, the building has changed little but the gardens have become playing fields and rough pasture and outbuildings are decayed and partly removed. At the other end of the village,

the eighteenth century farm and cottages have been hugely extended over the last two centuries so that the modern farm now occupies about 30% of the village area.

The Hall in the east and farm in the west have been linked since the mid nineteenth century by a formal vista contained by cottages of a uniform design on the north and a stone wall and dense tree planting on the south. Later developments such as Burn Houses, Plantation House and the vicarage have been scattered through the dense planting at the centre of the village, with only Burn Houses relating to the layout of medieval Rock.



The development pattern, although with relatively few single features, is somewhat incoherent, mainly because of the density and age of the tree and shrub cover which obscures the centre of the village and makes it difficult to see from one feature to the other. Fortunately, the Victorian vista gives the northern part of the village a positive visual identity and helps to link the western and eastern features, giving them cultural significance despite a lack of appreciation of the overall coherence of the village.

The result is a development pattern coherent in the north and at each end of the vista, with the rest of the village a random series of isolated features in separate clearings in dense woodland, not at all expected in an historic village. It may be that the woodland at the heart of the village, with its individually attractive features set in dense planting, was intended by the early Bosanquets to be a large Victorian extension of the private pleasure gardens of the Hall. This would provide intellectual understanding but, with its open access, incidental housing such as Burn Houses and lack of indicators such as surrounding walls, it no longer reads as such on the ground. Consequently, in spite of an unusually formal development to the north, the village's general development pattern remains difficult to appreciate on the ground. This does not mean that it therefore lacks interest and attraction – far from it – but this ambiguity does confuse, reducing its immediate appeal.



In simple terms, the pattern of the village has somewhat of an identity problem, the resolution of which could bring benefits. This could be considered in relation to the development of Rock Farm into an increased number of residential units (currently under discussion) as this will, in its turn, introduce significant changes into the village.

#### 4.2 *Layout, Grain and Density*

The village contains a linear row of uniform buildings that line one side of a formal vista to the Hall. This is the only formal space in the village. The rest of the open spaces are routes of several kinds, isolated spaces created in the woodland at the centre of the village, open parkland dotted with trees, and residential gardens, some enclosed and some wide open to public view.



Because of the small number of buildings in the village there is no discernable grain in the way the development is laid out, but there is a strong east-west axis of development from the formal vista. Density is therefore generally low in the village, with the greatest concentration of buildings confined to the east farm. A high tree coverage, however, increases the perceived level of density.

#### 4.3 *Views within the Area*

The most contained and composed view in the village is the north vista. All other views are generally random: along roads or tracks, across gardens or parkland.

Everywhere views are influenced by the dense tree and shrub cover throughout the village.



Generally, views are attractive and varied but occasionally confusing and ambiguous, notably regarding containment of views and access from which to enjoy it. Particularly attractive random views of landscape features and buildings in the landscape are available around the mill pond and from the parkland to the south of the Hall.

See page 10 for a discussion of views out of the area.



## 5 Character Analysis

### 5.1 Land Use

The original land uses of Rock are likely to have been the traditional rural estate village mix of residential, grand Hall (or halls), church, farm buildings, common village green, sub-divided outfields and common town moor. By the mid nineteenth century, the hall and church – both with additions – were still present, as was the farm, but the common green and its north and south ranges of houses had gone. The village had an industrial mill pond, a quarry (perhaps opened early in the nineteenth century to provide stone for the re-building of the village), purpose-built estate houses, tree plantations and, possibly, extensions to the pleasure gardens of



the Hall. Since then, there has been little change in land use – the Hall has been a Youth Hostel and is now a school, the farm use has intensified and a little additional housing has been built. The only service to be recorded in the village was a post office which occupied numbers 11 and 27 Rock Village (the village has no street names) at different times in the twentieth century. This has now been reduced to a post box next to the village's public telephone box.

### 5.2 Architectural Qualities

The historic architecture of Rock is of considerable interest, more for its survival and intriguing complexity than for its quality. In addition to its ancient domestic and ecclesiastical architecture, the village is recognised for its mid nineteenth century Tudor revival estate cottages.

#### 5.2.1 Form, Height and Scale

The usual height of residential buildings in Rock, both old and recent, is two-storey, with some of the single-storey nineteenth century estate cottages having been increased in height in the twentieth century. Only the Hall, at three unequal storeys, is taller. The oldest form of housing is terraced, with two pairs of



semis and a detached vicarage being added in the twentieth century, all two-storey and small scale. Of the older farming buildings, small scale and two-storeys is the norm, but some late twentieth century buildings have a large footprint and are over two-storeys in height even if only over one floor. In contrast to the other farm buildings and their small field landscape context, they appear large and out of scale.

### 5.2.2 **Periods and Styles**

The architecture of Rock covers a long development period. The main periods represented are:

- *Medieval*

This period in Northumberland's history was one of threat. There are two medieval buildings in Rock. The church is Norman in style and dates from the mid twelfth century. The chancel may have been extended in the thirteenth and the whole church was restored in 1806. It was restored again in 1855 by Salvin with new bellcote, vestry and apse. The north aisle was added by F R Wilson in 1866 – the original Norman north wall was re-erected as the north wall of the new aisle. The present Hall began as a house in thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries and the south wing converted into a defensive tower late in the fourteenth or early fifteenth. It was re-modelled early in the seventeenth century and almost destroyed by fire in 1752. It remained a ruin for over 70 years before the Bosanquet family rescued it early in the nineteenth century. In c1820, John Dobson remodelled the south front and, later in the century, F R Wilson restored and extended the north-west wing.



- *Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*

The main architectural style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was based on Classical style and proportions. Georgian architecture is simple, often symmetrical and based on 'polite' ideas and designs which could come from style handbooks. The proportions and detailing of Georgian architecture follow set principles, and result in unfussy, straightforward buildings.



Such refined houses which suited the gracious living of the time are not present here but architecture from this time period includes decorative walls to create pleasure gardens around the hall and a new screen at the entrance to the village. A new farmhouse and row of vernacular cottages went in at the east end of the village, and the west end of the new mill pond in the centre of the village, was



graced by a neat little bridge over the burn that fed the pond, with both pond and bridge adding to the attractive setting of the Hall.

- *Mid Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries*

Dating from the mid nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth, Victorian architecture is very varied with many sub-categories, but much is based on showy, confident themes designed to demonstrate the wealth and power of the building owner with splendid, high-class architecture. Rich, traditional materials are used – often brick, stone, timber and iron – with good quality, solid construction and plenty of flare. The three strongest Victorian revival styles were Gothic (defined by verticality, asymmetry, pointed arches, gables and carving) sometimes with a Tudor aesthetic, Italianate (with low roofs, bracketed eaves and some stucco) and Queen Anne (red brick with Dutch gables, white joinery, doorcases and terracotta). There were also other revival styles. In addition, the Arts & Crafts style began in the late nineteenth century.

More of Rock's existing buildings belong to the mid nineteenth century than to any other. In this period the terrace and Sunday School that formed the north vista were built and the farm was hugely extended including new cottages and a dovecote. At the same time, the stock of support buildings for the Hall was increased by addition of Garden Cottage, Plantation Cottage, the coach house to the north and the barn at Willowclose plantation. Little new was added in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, probably because the village had already had its own building boom thanks to the Bosanquet family. There were, however, some farm shed additions, the eighteenth century farm cottages were extended, and the T-junction at the south-east of the village was graced with an elegant cast iron sign-post, still standing over 100 years later.

- *Twentieth Century*

The post-First World War housing boom saw suburban semi-detached houses and bungalows spread throughout many towns to many styles include 'Tudorbeathan', Georgian revival, Moderne and Art Deco. The second half of the century saw a wide range of stylistic approaches develop and merge. Towards the end of the century, mass commercial housing tended to adopt architectural styles in only a cursory way, with generic suburban housing often demonstrating little depth or flare in its design, mixed materials, pale revivals of historic styles and extensive hard surfaces and garages.

Rock completely avoided any early suburban development with only further



additions to the farm and the building of Burn Houses on the south bank of the burn through the village. Later in the century, the farm was hugely extended to the north and for the first time since the 1850s, the terrace row on the north side was extended with three modern houses. Unfortunately, also for the first time, two new houses were built



within the precincts of the Hall, blurring the long established division between Hall and village. A large vicarage was also added to the south-east corner of Rock in the 1970s.



Local traditional architecture which adopts no discernable style is known as vernacular, usually resulting in plain, robust buildings in local materials with little ornamentation.

### 5.2.3 **Features, Detailing and Materials**

The character of Rock comes from a variety of different architectural features, simple detailing and a uniformity of materials. The features are:

- masonry
- doorways
- windows
- roofs, including ridges, eaves and verges
- dormer windows and rooflights
- chimneys
- rainwater goods, such as drainpipes and gutters

The simplicity of most of these features and the limited palette of materials contributes to the appealing plainness of much of the area's architecture. Some details have been altered more than others but a great deal of original material is intact.

### 5.2.4 **Masonry**

The principal walling material throughout Rock is locally sourced sandstone. Although most of the stone walling is roughly coursed rubble, John Dobson used polished ashlar for the south wall of the Hall and the church uses roughly squared



blocks of random sizes. Window and door surrounds and quoins are also of dressed stone, while some window





surrounds in the formal vista buildings have decorative Tudor revival drip-moulds.

Other walling finishes in the village are pebble-dashing over bricks, yellow brick and timber (eg. the Old

Vicarage), painted or unpainted render (eg. the south wall of Rock Farm house and rear walls of new houses next to the Hall).

5.2.5 **Doorways**



Traditional domestic doors in Rock would have been plain wooden plank doors, and a few still survive in nineteenth century buildings. Most modern replacement doors are of an acceptable design in timber while a couple in Burn Houses are plastic, as are the doors in the new houses close to the Hall. Porches are a relatively recent feature in the village and, unfortunately, come in a variety of materials and designs. Fortunately, Rock has been spared plastic door-cases.



Doors to garages and farm buildings are all of traditional timber design, and some at the farm are likely to be original. The most unusual original door in the village is a timber kennel door that utilises a vacant space under an external staircase.



5.2.6 **Windows**

As with Rock's doors, most original windows would have been timber. They would have been simple casements and vertical or horizontal (known as Yorkshires) sliding sashes. Fortunately, under the control of the Rock Estate, many of these original nineteenth century windows survive in the village cottages and farm, with only the occasional modern plastic window added. Timber casements are still the norm in the Hall despite its chequered building past.

In some of the farm buildings, metal frames have been inserted into old or



new openings for functional reasons. Windows in the twentieth century housing and a few old cottages tend to be plastic, usually in original openings, except for Burn Houses where some windows openings have been enlarged. However, one at Burn Houses retains its original metal windows in its front elevation.



**5.2.7 Roofs**

Traditional dual pitch roofs are used almost exclusively throughout Rock, with flat roofs confined to the odd modern porch or rear extension. Modern domestic and farm building roofs are also pitched but usually at a more shallow angle than the traditional ones. There are a few mono-pitched roofs, notably on small traditional nineteenth century additions. There are no other shapes of roof in the village.

Most houses have their original roof structures, and also carry their original roof materials. These are Welsh slates in the main with older red pantiles on two of the eighteenth century farm cottages. Exceptions to these materials are the nave of the church which has Scottish slates, The Old Vicarage which has concrete tiles and many of the old and new farm buildings which have asbestos.



**5.2.8 Dormer Windows and Rooflights**



Wall-head dormers are a characteristic feature of Rock’s nineteenth century cottages and they are handsomely built with stone flanks, water-tabling and slate roofs. Fortunately, the village is without any inserted modern dormers (flat-roofed or otherwise) in any front elevations. Rooflights are occasionally visible from public routes but there are few, and none is over-sized.

**5.2.9 Chimneys**

As heating systems have changed, chimneys have become one of the features of old buildings most vulnerable to removal and loss.





Retaining chimneys, however, retains the intact historic character of older buildings (as well as allowing their re-use for open fires in the future). Unlike many old villages, most of the buildings in Rock retain their chimneys and their pots; the most recently built houses in the village have also been built with single diminutive chimneys as a style accessory. The traditional village chimneys are tall to compliment the revived Tudor style of the cottages, and all made of sandstone. The Hall also carries natural stone chimney stacks but they are more functional than stylistic.

#### 5.2.10 **Rainwater Goods**

Traditional rainwater goods, including gutters and down-pipes were usually of cast-iron as half-round gutters and full round pipes. Gutters will have been supported on spikes driven into the walls rather than the modern way of mounting them on a timber fascia. Fortunately, much of these original cast-iron water systems have survived on Rock's houses and have been properly maintained. The church also has a cast-iron rainwater system but this is large and box-shaped in section, a more fitting design for the character of this special Norman building.



### 5.3 **Contribution of Spaces**

Because the layout of Rock village is the product of Victorian planning, the single formal vista, the grounds of the Hall and the background landscape features are all fundamental to the character of the village. In particular, the Hall and the unusual formal vista contribute most to making the village memorable, while the domestic gardens in general contribute the least. The main spaces in Rock are:

- roads, lanes and verges
- the vista
- the Hall grounds
- domestic gardens
- around the pond
- parkland spaces
- village landscape

#### 5.3.1 **Roads, Lanes & Verges**

Roads, lanes and their edges make a strong contribution to character and appearance. Their meanderings among buildings, their changes of level as they climb and dip, and their loss and gain of visual containment present an endless variety of combinations. They determine how and in what order the place is experienced.



The only road through the village, although a pleasant country lane in itself, is not a traditional village street. In fact, it skirts around the village, missing its principle attractions. Even at the three entrances into the village there is little indication of what might be available within. The north entrance is ambiguous for visitors due to the multiple choice it offers over routes and hierarchy (a change of road surface from tarmac to gravel). The next entrance south, although a single route, appears restricted because of its narrowness and the change of road surface. The southernmost entrance, although with no change of surface, appears inhibiting due to its shroud of trees and steep gradient. However, once inside the village, moving about is a pleasure, by vehicle and particularly on foot. The public realm, although restricted in size, feels safe, rich and comforting in scale and appearance. On the roads and tracks in the village, pavements are replaced by well-kept verges which are appropriate to the character of the village and, appropriate, the through road has a pavement on one side only.



5.3.2 **The Vista**

This is the premier space in the village and its most remarkable feature. The space is kept uncluttered as the cottages fronting onto it have no front garden other than a narrow private border against each house. The height of the enclosing buildings is in proportion to the width of the space which gently tapers towards the west, thus increasing the attractive feeling of a receding perspective. The simple turf

treatment with gravelled road is in keeping with the character of the village, and the village hall set across the space gently divides it without terminating it. It is the battlemented skyline that makes the Hall such a good end-stop to the vista. It is, therefore, unfortunate that two modern houses have been built beyond the Hall



entrance screen as this encroachment blurs the hierarchy of spaces that the entrance screen was intended to establish, creating more ambiguity in the village.

### 5.3.3 *The Hall Grounds*

The Hall, appropriately, is surrounded by private grounds which have been differently defined through the ages. On the 1599 plan, the grounds were defined by high defensive walls or barmkin, designed to shelter retainers and stock in the event of external attack. In the eighteenth century, the grounds were redefined again with new decorative walls to surround extensive pleasure grounds. Whether these walls followed the earlier ones is not known but the second set of walls was



very different than the first. They were hollow and had heated buildings (with mock battlements) set at intervals along the outside to raise the temperature of their south-facing elevations for the better production of exotic fruits throughout the year. As part of the garden scheme, the village burn within the gardens was bridged in several places, first with a stone arched bridge and later several decorative timber bridges, added to aid the elegant perambulations the family enjoyed around the Hall. Produce and pleasure continued to be the principle uses of the grounds well into the twentieth century but, with the change of use to a Youth Hostel in the 1950s, the use of the grounds also began to change. Now that the Hall is a private school, the grounds have become playing fields and adventure playgrounds.

### 5.3.4 *Domestic Gardens*

All terraces of cottages in the village have gardens, but because they are at the rear they make little contribution to the appearance of the village from within it. However, this backland of gardens and



casual open space behind the vista cottages is open to view from the main road through the village. The least congruous gardens which take away from the character of the place are those next to the Hall. They introduce suburban elements such as red gravel parking areas, an approach which is inappropriate to the setting of the Hall and the rural feel of Rock. The gardens (and houses too) are well looked after but their location within the Hall grounds is not entirely comfortable.

### 5.3.5 *Around The Pond*

The pond, built for both practical and aesthetic purposes, is Rock's hidden gem. Hidden as it is amongst the dense woodland in the centre of the village, it is easily



missed, which would be a great pity as its sylvan containment makes wandering along its

east dam and across west bridge a special experience. On a sunny morning, the reflection of Burn Houses in the blue of the pond is one of Rock’s most memorable experiences. However, an improved tree management regime around the pond may have the benefit of removing some dead trees and opening up the pond a little more – but not too much – to view.

**5.3.6 Parkland Spaces**

Parkland is very much an English invention, owing much to the work of Lancelot (Capability) Brown, a home grown son of Northumberland who was born at Kirkharle in 1715. He experimented with the landscape settings of country houses and consequently developed a new school of English landscaped parks which were more romantic than before. The name ‘parkland’ was coined to describe the open fields with clumps of tree planting, all carefully composed to manipulate the views to and from a principle house, a landscape feature common to much of the work of Brown and his many imitators. It is, therefore, no surprise to find that parkland forms part of the southern setting of Rock House, and a particularly attractive part too. Unfortunately, some of the current parkland trees, which could be well over 100 years old, are not just showing their age but are now becoming the victims of high winds. Some much-needed tree surgery is currently in progress in the parkland.



**5.3.7 Village Landscape**

Unusually for a village, the internal green landscape makes a huge contribution to the character of Rock. Over 40% of it is dense tree planting, much as commercial plantation but some as amenity planting to provide an attractive setting for other landscape features in the centre of the village such as the pond and, possibly, the



quarry. Another 20% is given over to romantic parkland, while a further 10% is the immediate grounds of the Hall, formerly pleasure gardens but now school playing fields. This is a unique village landscape made up of a collection of different kinds of landscape features and treatments. As landscapes are more changeable than buildings, the present landscape layout of Rock, which is a legacy of many years of change, development and sometimes inaction, is becoming more and more ambiguous as time goes on – on the ground it is becoming increasingly difficult to comprehend. One option is, of course, to leave the layout as it is left to us and maintain its condition. Alternatively, the history of the landscape of the village, its development through the ages including the changing boundaries of its different features, could be researched as a basis for determining how it should be composed and treated in the future, in accordance with the changing village. Even though this might logically lead to little change, at least some of its current ambiguities could be resolved through understanding and a minimum of action, whilst the environment of the village made more legible from the point of view of, for example, the way changes at the farm have effected the whole village. The result of the research could be a forward-looking landscape masterplan for Rock.

#### 5.4 **Atmosphere**

The area's character is gained not only from the built fabric and the spaces around it, but also the atmosphere they help create. The isolation and the depth of history in the village generate particular types of social use which introduce a gentle rhythm into the general peacefulness of Rock. In the centre of the village there is no heavy through-traffic, parking conflicts or concentration of pedestrians. It is an oasis in an otherwise busy world, welcomed by the locals and (the few) visitors alike. The general paternal control by the Rock Estate has, over the years, produced an unusual rural village which has special qualities of quiet, safety and richness, all within an atmosphere of a long history emanating from the village's ancient hall and church. The enigmatic architecture of the Hall is reflected in the unusual and eccentric nature of the present village layout and the combination of built and landscape features which make it what it is today. All this helps to create the special atmosphere of modern Rock village.

#### 5.5 **Loss, Intrusion & Damage**

##### 5.5.1 **Neutral Parts**

Neutral areas are those which have a balance of positive and negative characteristics but which may still be included within a designated conservation area for their positive characteristics or strategic importance. There are some neutral areas in Rock including some areas of tree planting, especially to the south – they negatively swamp local features such as the quarry and the burn but at the same time, provide positive visual containment for the village and other landscape features within it.

### 5.5.2 **Negative Parts**

Negative parts are those which detract from the overall character and appearance of the place. There are two potentially negative areas of Rock:

- It would be inappropriate to exclude the increasingly vacant farm at the east end of the village as it contains valuable listed buildings and many attractive nineteenth century stone outbuildings. It is particularly unfortunate that Rock should lose its traditional agricultural use which has been a main purpose for the village for many hundreds of years. However, if this use has failed, the way forward is to find new uses and environmental treatments that are in keeping with the character of the village and will give a viable future to the considerable historic asset represented by the farm. This would not be an easy challenge but a start has already been made in terms of planning.
- It is also unfortunate that a housing development was permitted within the grounds of the Hall. Although natural stone has been added to the fronts and gables of the houses (but not to the more visible rears), and they have traditional features like pitched roofs and chimneys in an attempt to help them fit into the village, their location is far from ideal in the setting of one of Northumberland's most interesting and enigmatic country houses. The negative effects, though, could be somewhat mitigated by using tree screening around the development, a device that has been well used elsewhere in the village. It would be important to ensure that the setting of the Hall was protected from such development in the future.

### 5.5.3 **Incremental Change**

Gradual modernisation has seen a few 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. The detailed variety in the architecture means that some change can be readily absorbed without too much harm but, as the architecture is simple, the palette of natural materials limited, and basic architectural features relatively modest, some changes may become particularly prominent. The attractively inconsistent balance this creates can be easily damaged through loss or alteration of those features, materials or design intent. There is not, however, a sufficient accumulation of change to have seriously weakened character and appearance in any part of the area. Most changes in the village are the result of permitted development rights, ie. works which do not require planning permission.

It will be important to continue the good work of the Estate and 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. 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.

#### 5.5.4 ***Loss and Replacement of Original Architectural Details***

A few original architectural features which helped to define the special interest of the area have been lost incrementally over time, mostly windows, doors and rainwater goods. These are changes which have not required planning permission, although some may have received permission as part of a larger approval package. Some original windows have been replaced in the late twentieth century with plastic ones, and a few houses have had their original window openings enlarged to accommodate the replacements.

The effect which fenestration has on a building's character and appearance should not be underestimated. Changes of material and design 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 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. Fortunately, Rock has experienced only a limited use of modern replacement materials, but the character of one or two buildings has been affected by the accumulation of such replacements.

#### 5.5.5 ***Inappropriate Designs, Methods and Materials***

There are a few 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. Some of these would not have required planning permission, but others would have received consent. For example:

- Residential alterations and additions which include design features such as extensions and porches, which are not reflected in the vernacular of Rock's historic architecture.
- New materials and treatments which are not traditional to the place, such as render, pebble-dashing, synthetic modern roofing materials, plastic, parking

areas and red gravel. These can be particularly challenging to the natural stone colour of the rest of Rock, whilst the artificial regularity, colouring and weathering of manufactured wall and roof materials may dilute the feeling of natural quality.

- Of Rock's modern buildings, the most challenging to the character of the village are the large extensions to the farm. These use modern manufactured materials and are out of scale with the village, although they are becoming more and more familiar in the general countryside. The late twentieth century suburban design of the vicarage also provides some challenge to the rural character of the village.

#### 5.5.6 **Condition & Vacancy**

Poor condition and vacancy of historic buildings and land can undermine the character of a place and threaten the sustainability of its future. In Rock, the maintenance of its traditional buildings has mostly been good but the following buildings and sites in the village give some cause for concern:

- The barn/store on the south edge of Willowclose Plantation is under-used and decaying. Its future is also threatened by the huge adjacent dead trees in the plantation. It needs to be repaired, re-used and the threat removed.
- The small boiler buildings around the Hall's eighteenth century walls need to be secure and wind-and-watertight at least and, at best, found a suitable use.
- The quarry on the south side of the village has potential as an interesting feature, which would require it to be made stable and inspected regularly.
- The ambiguity of the use and purpose of the incidental open space through which visitors enter the vista space from the north needs to be resolved. Currently, part of it is lock-up garages and another part is low-key designated parking for Rock Farm Trail.
- The many farm buildings that are currently out of use thankfully are not being allowed to decay by the Estate, which is especially important for the vacant listed cottages and the other attractive stone buildings in the farm complex. Although the best use for them would be their original agricultural ones, if this is no longer viable then suitable uses and treatments that are in character with the village must be found. This search is already underway.
- Garden Cottage is also vacant but not being allowed to decay. It too needs bringing into use.
- Finally, several support buildings close to the entrance of the Hall are under-used and risk falling into decay. Suitable uses should be sought for them.

These concerns will need to be positively addressed to prevent harm to character and appearance in the medium term.

#### 5.5.7 **Damage to Spaces**

The vista space and the roads and lanes of Rock do contribute positively to its character. Rock is no different from most places in that the public and private realms of roads, lanes and incidental spaces tends to evolve over the years in a

piecemeal fashion. A review, therefore, of their contribution would be valuable, such a review considering the following:

- Roads, pavements and tracks: an audit of current materials and surfaces as well as an investigation to determine what original materials may be currently concealed with the intention of establishing an intelligible hierarchy of routes through traditional and uniform treatments and surfaces throughout.
- Overhead wires and poles: these clutter the village and a scheme for re-routing and removal of poles should be explored. Although the vista space is protected from them, they particularly disfigure the main road through the village).
- General street clutter, eg. bollards, signs, post boxes, etc: this needs to be audited and as much of the unnecessary, non-historic clutter as possible removed and the rest imaginatively redesigned or re-sited.
- Trees: both public and private trees make a huge contribution to the character of the village. Tree cover always needs regular survey and attention and maybe a regular review of its aesthetic composition to suit changing needs. As has been noted in several parts of the above text, many trees in the village are reaching maturity or are getting past their best. Their responsible management continues, but an early total audit of condition is suggested, possibly with a view to reviewing the general composition of cover in view of the current uses now made of the woodland areas.



## 6 *Designation & Management Matters*

### 6.1 *Designation*

The 2005 scoping study recommended that Rock be considered for designation as a conservation area because of its special historic, architectural and townscape interest. This special interest, based on factors such as history, quality and integrity, has been assessed in the preceding chapters, and it is on the basis of this assessment that Rock Conservation Area has been designated.

#### 6.1.1 *Summary of Rock's special architectural and historic interest*

Rock's special interest derives from both the length of its history and the story of its evolution. The earliest known record for Rock is 1164 but little is known of what the village was like at that time. The next stage is in the late medieval period when the map of 1599 gives a snapshot of what appears to be a defended settlement with a tower house and barmkin. Three hundred years later, after prosperity and decline, the village was rebuilt according to a new plan as it entered its Victorian golden age lasting late into the twentieth century. Few villages have received such a comprehensive renovation in their time as Rock and its layout now presents such unusual features as a formal Victorian vista and a landscaped centre. The architecture of the Hall is of many periods and its ancient church is a surprisingly pure survival of the Norman period. The cottages and village hall that together make up Rock's special vista, are uniformly nineteenth century Tudor revival in style, and the earliest Rock farm buildings are all eighteenth century. Sufficient of these special interests or qualities survive with an interesting integrity on the ground to give Rock the special character and appearance it needs to be a conservation area.

#### 6.1.2 *The desirable of preserving or enhancing Rock's character and appearance?*

Even before designation, decisions had already been made that certain part of Rock should be preserved and enhanced as Rock has at least 17 buildings and walls spread through the hamlet which are listed and therefore protected, plus individual trees and groups in the vicarage grounds covered by County Council Tree Preservation Orders (see 7.1.2 below).

The whole settlement provides the physical and cultural context for all its protected components and, in addition, it provides huge added value of place and history

which is more than just the sum of its protected parts. The overall integrity of the place makes sense of the history of the components and provides a continuous cultural environment in which they can be experienced. It also has its own existence as the long established and significant settlement of Rock itself, and is therefore more than merely the cultural and environmental glue that holds its precious parts together. Therefore, both as a context for the valued, and as a historically and culturally valuable entity in itself, it is desirable for the character and appearance of Rock to be preserved or enhanced.

## 6.2 *Agreed Boundary*

The drawing of a conservation area boundary for any isolated country or coastal settlement may be complex so it is best to be guided by sound principles. PPG15 suggests the use of consistent local (ie. District-wide) standards to ensure conservation areas are not 'devalued' by drawing boundaries to include areas without special interest. The principles for a boundary for Rock should therefore be the following:

- begin with the minimum area of the core of the settlement,
- extend this by adding additional areas of strategic conservation importance, such as in protecting the settlement from potential future threats from nearby existing development or settlement expansion, or because they are part of the natural landscape context of the area and deserve to be protected with it;
- 'holes' of undesignated parts within a continuous boundary should be avoided,
- avoid taking boundaries along the middle of a road or waterway where character is similar on both sides,
- run boundaries along visible features on the ground, where possible.

Applying these principles – especially the first two – to Rock produces the boundary shown on Map 1. The core settlement has been augmented by strategic additions which include areas of landscape to the west, south and east, and fields to the north that are part of the setting of the village. As Rock is well away from any other settlements, there has been no need to include additional strategic open landscape that may be threatened by development from other nearby settlements.

## 6.3 *Planning Policy*

Now Rock is designated as a conservation area, the current development plan policies as listed in section 7.4 below apply. Guidance should always be sought to identify any newly issued policies or guidance.

The pleasure gardens and associated landscape features in Rock are of such historic quality and survival that they should be considered together for designation as an Historic Parks & Garden, a national designation.

## 6.4 **Suggested Amendments and Additions to Listed Buildings**

### 6.4.1 **Amendments to Existing Listed Building Records**

The GIS map of listed buildings does not identify Nos. 21 and 23 Rock Village as being listed, even though they are (Listing NGR: NU2024620252). They should be added to the GIS map. Also, it was noted on site that a listed section of the eighteenth century wall north of the Hall has been removed. This may have received listed building consent but this should be investigated and, if need be, records updated accordingly.

### 6.4.2 **Suggested Additional Listed Buildings**

The following buildings should be investigated for possible listing:

- Buildings connected with the Hall – Garden Cottage near Ladywell Plantation and the Coach House to the north of the Hall.
- Buildings connected with the farm – the Mill to the east and the arcaded cart house at the western entrance. In addition, the whole farmstead should be investigated by specialists to consider the potential listable qualities of industrial agricultural buildings. There is, however, an approved scheme for conversion of the farm to residential and any proposed listings would need to be considered in that light.

## 6.5 **Possible Enhancement Schemes**

Certain works that would benefit the character and appearance of the village.

These include the following, some already mentioned above:

- A limited pilot campaign and grants scheme to introduce more timber joinery back into the village buildings.
- The surfaces of all the roads, pavements and lanes in the village to be audited to determine what original materials may be concealed, with the intention of establishing a hierarchy of routes through traditional and uniform treatments and surfaces throughout.
- Re-routing or removing unsightly overhead wires and poles, particularly from the through road if possible.
- Removing street clutter, both public and private.
- Audit the condition and life expectancy of trees in the area and prepare a scheme of remedial action as necessary, together with research into the past development of the landscape of Rock to determine its future direction.
- Resolve the use and appearance of the informal open space through which the village is accessed from the north.
- Investigate the quarry for suitability and safety, with the intention of increasing its value as a landscape feature.
- Develop a planting scheme to protect the setting of the Hall from the properties and gardens in the grounds
- Audit the boundary walls in the village for necessary repairs.

- A number of redundant buildings have been identified at the farm, and a scheme has been approved for residential conversion there, but if this is not implemented in the short term, then an audit all farm buildings for retention and re-use should be completed.
- The following vacant or underused buildings in the village should be investigated for re-use and possible repair:
  - the barn/store south of Willowclose Plantation,
  - the small heating/boiler houses around the Hall's eighteenth century walls,
  - the many stone farm buildings in the farm steading,
  - Garden Cottage near Ladywell Plantation,
  - several support buildings, including the coach house, north of the Hall.

## 6.6 *Future 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. In others, 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 Rock Conservation Area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance into the future. New English Heritage guidance suggests the following topics should be considered when addressing the need for a management strategy for the area:

- boundary review
- article 4 directions
- enforcement and monitoring change
- buildings at risk
- site specific design guidance or development briefs
- thematic policy guidance (for example on windows or doors)
- enhancement opportunities
- trees and green spaces
- urban design and/or public realm
- regeneration issues
- decision making and community consultation
- available resources

In addition, development plan policies and Council procedures which relate to all conservation areas in the district will be applied to Rock now that it is a conservation area.

## 7 Additional Information

### 7.1 Other Designations

#### 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 the Council for more advice (see page 7). There are currently 17 listed building entries in and close to Rock village, covering at least 22 buildings.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Entrance screen to Rock Hall	II
Church of St Philip and James	II*
Rock Farmhouse and Estate Office	II
Signpost at junction south of Rock Farm	II
15 and 17 Rock Village	II
21 and 23 Rock Village	II
Lime Kiln at Rock Midstead	II
Dovecote at Rock Farm	II
Village Hall	II
19 Rock Village	II
Rock Hall	II*
Garden Walls to Rock Hall	II
9 Rock Village	II
Bridge south of church	II
10, 12 and 14 Rock Village	II
11 Rock Village	II
The Chapel, Rock Hall	II

#### 7.1.2 Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are made by local authorities to protect visually strategic groups or individual specimens of trees from damage such as felling, lopping or topping. Trees not only soften the environment, they add the colours of



changing seasons, shade and, in a shelter belt, can hide unsightly developments from view. In Alnwick District, some TPOs are made by the District Council (light green on Map 4) and some by the County Council (dark green on Map 4), but both have the same legal status.

<b>Order</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	<i>County Council TPOs</i>
	solid belt of trees south of the entrance drive into The Old Vicarage
	fifteen individual trees along the north side of the entrance drive and north and west of The Old Vicarage
	<i>District Council TPOs</i>
	none

This means that at present, significant groups of mature trees around the pond, the farm, the Hall and in the parkland south of the Hall are unprotected. Designation as a conservation area would provide the whole of Rock with added protection over works to trees (see 7.3 below).

## 7.2 *Archaeological Records*

Northumberland County Council's record of archaeological sites, whether they are scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings or neither, are accessed through the national archaeological data base, Archaeological Data Services (ADS). This website, which also includes entries from English Heritage, National Trust and Defence of Britain, can be accessed via [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk).

There are 18 entries for the Rock area. They include all the 17 listed building entries above but also make reference to a deserted medieval village at Rock. This deserted village is the earthworks south of the church and Hall which could be the remains of the south range of buildings shown on the 1599 map.

The same 18 entries are also included on the 'Keys to the Past' web site ([www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)) which carries historic information on many sites in Northumberland (and in County Durham too). This site is aimed at a more general audience.

## 7.3 *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

### 7.3.1 *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 Alnwick District Council or, on appeal or call-in, to the Secretary of State. Procedures are basically the same as for listed building consent applications. Generally, there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

### 7.3.2 **Minor Developments**

Within in a conservation area, legislation<sup>5</sup> 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 50m<sup>3</sup>.

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'. These measures, called Article 4 Directions, can be selective in the buildings they cover within the conservation area, and the types of restriction they impose depending on how they might affect key building elements and so character and appearance. These Directions 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. Examples might be putting up porches, painting a house a different colour, or changing distinctive doors, windows or other architectural details. 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 pleasure they derive from living in such an area.

### 7.3.3 **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.

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<sup>5</sup> Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1997

#### 7.4 **Current Development Plan Policies**

The following policies would be generally applicable to development in settlements within Alnwick District and will apply to Rock Conservation Area now it is designated.

- Core Strategy Policies
  - S1-S23
- Saved Policies from Alnwick District Wide Local Plan
  - BE2, BE8, BE12, BE13, H19

#### 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 asked<sup>6</sup>:

- 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?

Alnwick 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.

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, 2006

## 7.6 Sources

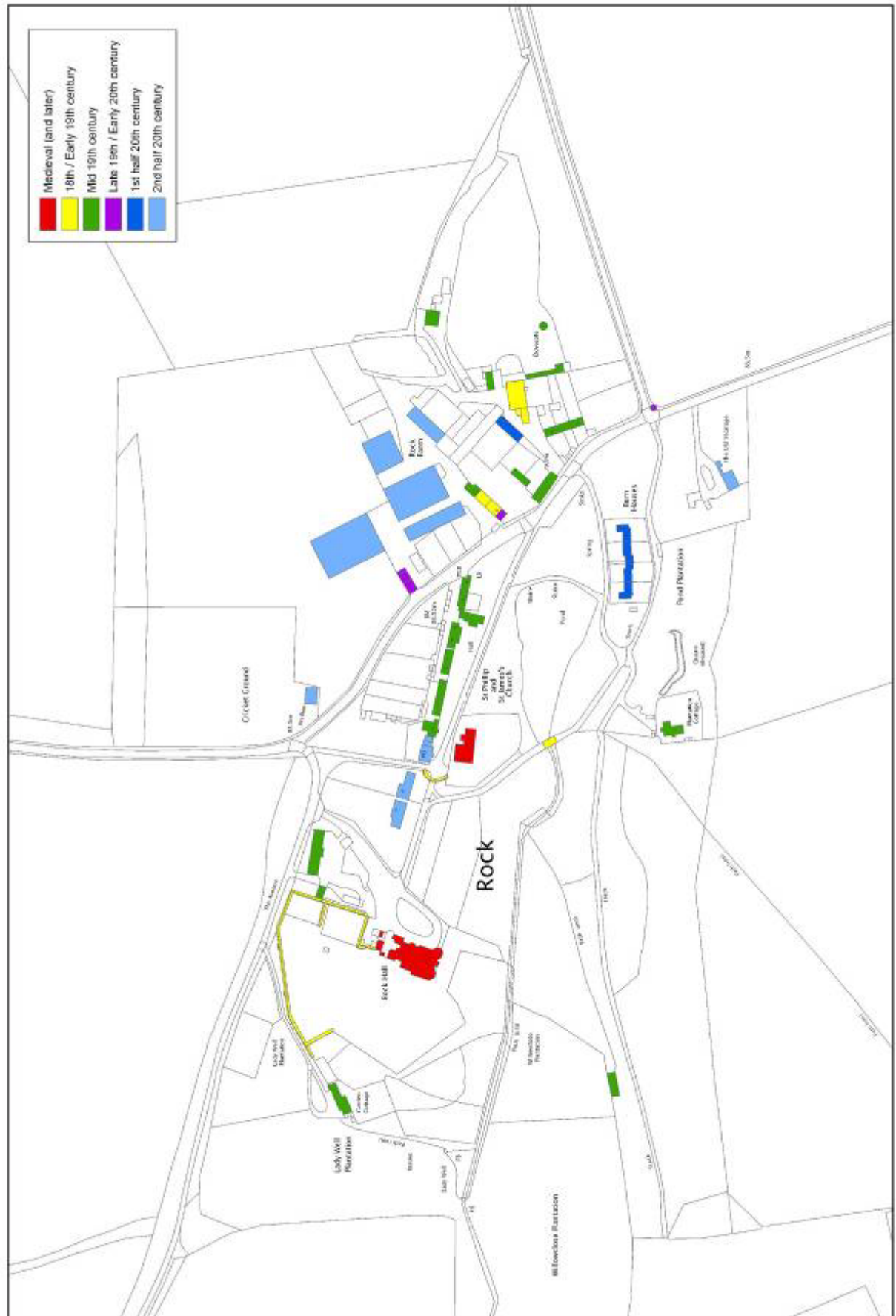
The following sources were used in production of this appraisal:

- *Alnwick District Wide Local Plan*, Alnwick District Council, 1997
- *Northumberland Place-Names*, Stan Beckensall, Butler Publishing, 2004
- *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*, John Grundy et al, 1992
- *Medieval Castle, Towers, Peles & Bastles of Northumberland*, T H Rowland, Sandhill Press, 1987
- *Victoria County History: Northumberland*, Volume 2, 1895
- Northumberland County Archives, Woodhorn
- [www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)
- [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

## 7.7 Photographic Record

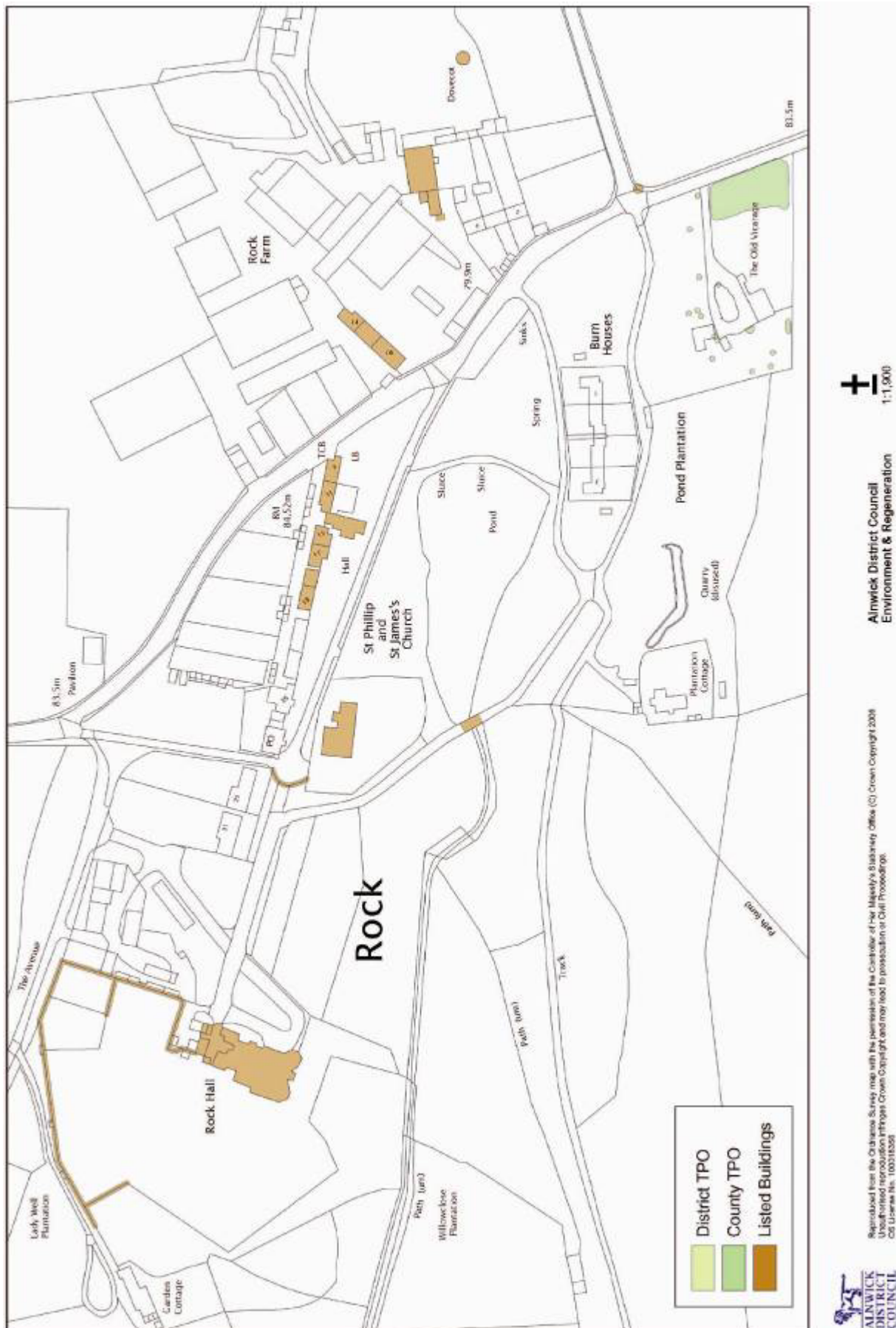
Photographs taken during site survey for this report are contained in a digital archive held by Alnwick District Council.

**Map 2. Approximate Age of Buildings**



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**Map 3. Other Designations**



1:1,000

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