

# People and Planning Northumberland Local Development Framework

## Bedlington Conservation Area Management Strategy Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted May 2011





## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
	Conservation Areas	3
	Why Manage Conservation Areas?	3
	This Management Strategy	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Context and Objectives</b>	<b>5</b>
	Introduction	5
	Context	5
	Objectives	8
<b>3</b>	<b>Identification &amp; Protection</b>	<b>9</b>
	Introduction	9
	Boundary Review	9
	Local List	10
	Demolition	13
	Permitted Development Rights	17
	Enforcement & Monitoring	19
	Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity	22
<b>4</b>	<b>Managing Change &amp; Enhancement</b>	<b>25</b>
	Introduction	25
	Design	25
	Building Maintenance & Repair	28
	Regeneration	30
	Enhancement Opportunities	33
	Development Briefs	37
	Public Realm, Green Spaces & Trees	38
	Research & Interpretation	41
<b>5</b>	<b>Resources &amp; Community Involvement</b>	<b>44</b>
	Introduction	44
	Community Involvement	44
	Conservation Area Advisory Group	46
	Council Resource & Corporate Working	47

# Contents

---

Design Review Panel .....	49
External Funding .....	51

## Appendices

<b>A - Boundary Review .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>B - Initial Local List Suggestions .....</b>	<b>55</b>

Figure 1 Bedlington Conservation Area .....	4
Figure 2 Listed Buildings .....	11
Figure 3 Pre-1918 Buildings .....	12
Figure 4 Buildings making a positive contribution to character and appearance .....	16
Figure 5 Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity .....	23
Figure 6 Summary of regeneration and enhancement opportunities .....	36
Figure 7 Boundary Modifications & Clarification of Existing Boundary .....	54

## 1 Introduction

### Conservation Areas

- 1.1** 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 about character and appearance, which can derive from many factors including individual buildings, building groups and their relationship with open spaces, architectural detail, materials, views, colours, landscape, streets and so on. These things combine to create a locally distinctive sense of place worthy of protection.
- 1.2** 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. The first conservation areas were created in 1967 and now over 9,100 have been designated, varying greatly in character and size.
- 1.3** For each conservation area, local authorities should adopt a Character Appraisal to describe character and appearance and evaluate its special interest, and a Management Strategy to set out how the place should be preserved and enhanced into the future. This strategy therefore complements the area’s character appraisal.

### Why Manage Conservation Areas?

- 1.4** Change is inevitable in conservation areas. The challenge is to manage change in ways which maintain and, if possible, strengthen the area’s special qualities. Character 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 the area appealing also 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 controlled. Proactively managing Bedlington Conservation Area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance.

### This Management Strategy

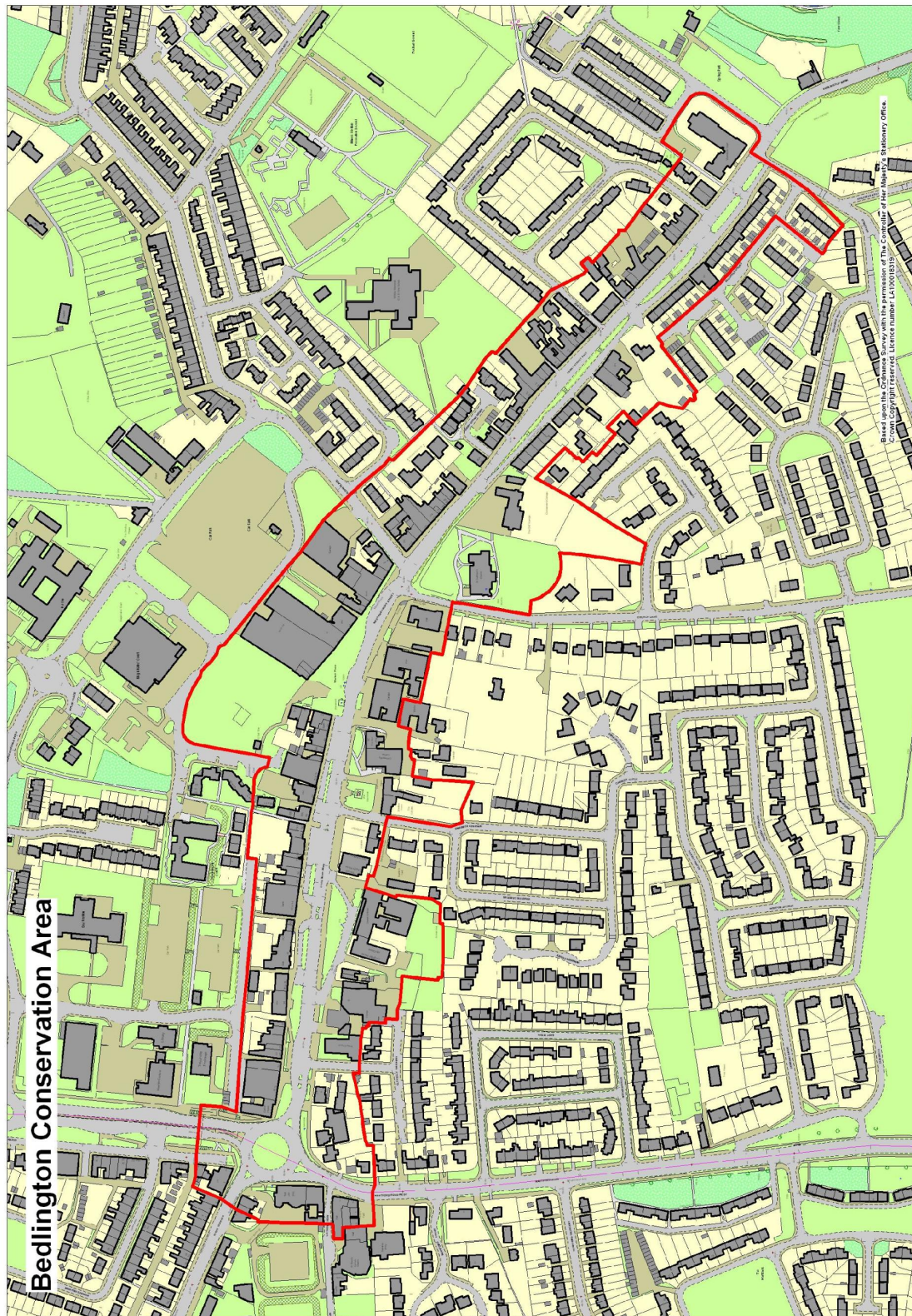
- 1.5** This management strategy has been prepared by North of England Civic Trust and the County Historic Buildings Advisor. This strategy has been adopted as a supplementary planning document to expand on Policy GP17 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan. There is also a conservation area character appraisal which forms evidence for this strategy’s policies and proposals.
- 1.6** The strategy is a guide to preserving and enhancing the area over the next 5-10 years. Each topic is addressed under the following headings:
- the background context,
  - the current position,
  - how management of these issues can be implemented.

---

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



# 1 Introduction



**Figure 1 Bedlington Conservation Area**

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A.

## 2 Context and Objectives

### Introduction

- 2.1** This section discusses the policy and guidance context for Bedlington Conservation Area, and sets out the objectives to be achieved through area management.

### Context

#### Legislation

- 2.2** The Council has a statutory 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>

#### Government Guidance

- 2.3** Government guidance is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPS5 *Planning for the Historic Environment*<sup>(3)</sup> and the associated *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*<sup>(4)</sup> provide a comprehensive and essential reference on the historic environment. Other relevant guidance may include: PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable Development*, PPS3 *Housing*, PPS4 *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth*, PPS12 *Local Spatial Planning*, PPG18 *Enforcing Planning Control* and PPG19 *Outdoor Advertisement Control*.

#### Conservation Area Management Guidance

- 2.4** English Heritage's 2006 guidance on conservation area management sets out key good practice, recognising that resources are limited<sup>(5)</sup>. Other conservation area guidance, notably from the English Historic Towns Forum, is also relevant.

#### Regional and Sub-Regional Planning and Strategies

- 2.5** *Regional Spatial Strategy* (RSS) which previously set out a spatial vision for the north east was revoked by the Government on 6 July 2010. A later high court ruling quashed the revocation of the RSS, therefore the RSS still forms part of the statutory development plan however it is the Government's intention to abolish the RSS through the Localism bill. A number of other relevant regional or sub-regional strategies remain however including:

- Regional Economic Strategy and Integrated Regional Framework<sup>(6)</sup>,
- Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy<sup>(7)</sup>

---

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

3 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010

4 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, DCLG, English Heritage & DCMS, March 2010

5 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006

6 Leading The Way, One NorthEast, 2006; Achieving A Better Quality Of Life, North East Assembly, 2004

7 Resilient for the Future, NSP, 2011

## 2 Context and Objectives

- Northumberland Local Area Agreement <sup>(8)</sup>.
- Regional Cultural Strategy and Northumberland Cultural Strategy<sup>(9)</sup>,

### Development Plan

- 2.6** The Wansbeck District Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2007, replacing that adopted in 1994. The Local Plan will continue as the principle planning policy document for the former Wansbeck area until its policies are replaced by local development plan documents to be prepared as part of the new Northumberland Local Development Framework.
- 2.7** Relevant policies in the Wansbeck District Local Plan include GP17-19 *Conservation Areas*, GP6 *Trees*, GP10,11,13 *Nature Conservation*, GP14-16 *Listed Buildings*, GP20-21 *Archaeology*, GP30 *Visual Impact*, GP31 *Urban Design*, GP32 *Landscaping & Public Realm*, H5 *Housing Design*, RTC1 & 6-11 *Town Centres*, and REC12 *Tourism*.

### Supplementary Planning Documents and Other Guidance

- 2.8** More specific local planning guidance for Bedlington is contained in the following :
- *Bedlington Conservation Area Character Appraisal*, January 2011
  - *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*
- 2.9** The *Wansbeck Design Guide* is an adopted supplementary planning document (SPD). Other evidence is referred to where relevant.

### Street Pride

- 2.10** Street Pride was an initiative in 2005-7 by the former West Bedlington CAP and Wansbeck District Council to improve the town centre's public realm. An audit produced an action plan overseen by a steering group using Council and government funds. Projects include lighting, street furniture and an interpretation board. The action plan contained three major projects plus other recommendations including pedestrian crossings, road signs and enhancement of Market Place and the alleyways in to the town from the north.

### Go-Wansbeck

- 2.11** Go-Wansbeck is the name of the Wansbeck Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI). This is a government backed initiative commencing in 2007 and designed to create more enterprising culture; support local business growth and attract new investment

---

8 Northumberland Local Area Agreement 2008/11, NSP, 2008; Northumberland Local Area Agreement Refresh, NSP, March 2010

9 Regional Cultural Strategy, Culture North East, 2005; Linkage & Leverage, NSP 2002-08



and employment opportunities for the benefit of local people. The 5 year programme (2007-12) has £11.8m of LEGL funds to boost business and encourage people to be enterprising, working with partners from all sectors.

### Townscape Heritage Initiative

- 2.12** The Bedlington Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Northumberland County Council with funding of £1,984,000. The THI will run until December 2013 and will support conservation-led regeneration in Bedlington Conservation Area by distributing funding for building conservation projects, Market Place public realm improvement and community involvement activities. THI guidance requires an adopted conservation area management strategy to include measures to protect the public investment for at least 10 years<sup>(10)</sup>. The strategy should include a commitment to use planning policies, design standards and, where necessary, statutory powers. It should also consider education, training and involvement.

### Stakeholders

- 2.13** The following stakeholders are relevant to the conservation area:

- Northumberland County Council
- South East Northumberland Area Partnership
- West Bedlington Town Council
- West Bedlington Community Forum
- Bedlington Forum (an informal local forum to promote Bedlington town centre)
- Bedlington Chamber of Trade
- local businesses in the conservation area
- local residents in and around the conservation area
- local amenity, history and other interest groups, including Bedlington Local History Group and Six Townships Community History Group
- shoppers and visitors to the conservation area
- English Heritage, which has a statutory role in some planning matters
- other amenity groups, such as the Northumberland & Newcastle Society

- 2.14** The conservation area is in Bedlington Central ward bar that part west of Hartford Road / Glebe Road which is in Bedlington South ward.

---

10 THI Monitoring Documents ... & Guidance For THI Stage 2 Submissions, HLF, 2004, pp24-27

## 2 Context and Objectives

### Objectives

#### Objective A: Vision & Objectives

The Council will:

- i. adopt the following vision and objectives to steer management of the conservation area throughout the life of this strategy;
- ii. adopt and promote the basic principles of informed conservation management planning to all those who make or influence decisions affecting the area.

**2.15** The vision set out in the THI bid is for Bedlington Conservation Area to become:

- *A distinctive and healthy town centre with revived interest from the resident population and visitors, a retail market where local independents can successfully operate, and an historic environment which capitalises on its traditional architectural character to create an attractive place to run a business.*

**2.16** Proactive conservation area management will be needed to help achieve this. The objectives of this strategy are:

- to revitalise Bedlington Conservation Area through proactive and coordinated conservation, planning, regeneration and management action,
- to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and to increase understanding and enjoyment of the heritage,
- to secure public funds to boost economic viability and social wellbeing,
- to encourage private investment in restoration, repair and maintenance of historic buildings, and in sustainable new development,
- to enhance and manage the public realm and protect views and setting,
- to work in partnership with the local strategic partnership, local people, businesses, agencies and other interested organisations.

**2.17** The vision and objectives accord with the context documents set out above.

**2.18** The overriding theme of work in this strategy will be 'informed conservation'. The basic principles of conservation management planning will be promoted to all who make or influence decisions affecting the conservation area<sup>(11)</sup>. They are:

- understand the heritage affected by the decision first,
- assess its significance,
- analyse how it is vulnerable to (or can be enhanced by) the decision,
- make the decision in a way which protects (or maximises enhancement of) the heritage's significance.

**2.19** There should be a broad, collective understanding of this approach.

---

11 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, p3

### 3 Identification & Protection

#### Introduction

**3.1** This section sets out issues and actions to identify and protect the heritage in the conservation area. It deals with:

- reviewing the boundary of the conservation area,
- identifying and protecting individual buildings with special local significance,
- dealing with the impact of permitted development rights on the area,
- a strategy for enforcing unauthorised planning works,
- understanding and dealing with archaeological issues.

#### Boundary Review

##### Context

**3.2** Legislation places a duty on the Council to regularly review the coverage of conservation areas in its boundaries<sup>(12)</sup>. The Council commits to this in Policy GP17 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan. Guidance suggests review should take place where there is pressure for change and where the original designation took place many years ago.

##### Position

**3.3** The conservation area was designated in 1971 and the boundary has not been reviewed since. Investment has been secured from the THI, plus anticipated development on the Market Place gap site. A boundary review is therefore needed now. There are a handful of minor discrepancies in the exact route of the boundary on various existing versions which need to be ironed-out.

#### Implementation

##### **Objective B: Boundary Review**

*The Council will review the conservation area boundary, using relevant guidance, and thereafter seek to review the boundary every 5 years. Where needed, it will revise the boundary as soon as possible after review. The review process will include public consultation.*

**3.4** The standards for conservation areas set in Policy GP17 repeat the legislation's requirement for areas to have special architectural or historic interest with a character and appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Guidance suggests the following should be considered on boundary review<sup>(13)</sup>. The boundary:

- should be coherent and, wherever possible, follow features on the ground,

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

13 Conservation Area Management: A Practical Guide, English Historic Towns Forum, 1998, p13

## 3 Identification & Protection

- should not be drawn too tightly, so excluding integral parts on the periphery,
- should ensure the setting is adequately protected, including landscape features such as open spaces or roads (in such cases, the test should be whether the wider area justifies the controls that conservation areas bring),
- should ensure all relevant legislation is used, including in relation to trees,
- should consider more recent architecture and history which might now be regarded as having special interest.

**3.5** Boundary review does not always lead to extension. The boundary might remain the same or, in some cases, might even be reduced (eg. where there has been severe uncontrolled incremental erosion of character over time)<sup>(14)</sup>.

**3.6** There is no legislative procedure for modifying boundaries but guidance suggests the same process as for designation should be followed, ie. A committee decision, an advertisement in a local newspaper and the *London Gazette*, and other statutory notifications. Involving the local community is good practice and helps people understand the change. This would involve promoting the review process, consulting on a proposed revised boundary, and taking feedback into account.

**3.7** A boundary review has been carried out as part of this strategy – see Appendix A.

### Local List

#### Context

**3.8** RSS encourages local authorities to consider preparing lists of locally important buildings, supported by LDF policies to seek protection<sup>(15)</sup>. The PPS5 Practice Guide also advises authorities to consider compiling a 'local list' of heritage assets in partnership with the local community and on the basis of objective criteria of heritage interest that have been tested through public consultation<sup>(16)</sup>. This is supported in English Heritage guidance on assessing conservation area character<sup>(17)</sup>.

#### Position

**3.9** The Council does not have a Local List, but the character appraisal does identify a number of unlisted buildings of note. The area has 17 entries in the statutory list (13 being monuments, memorials and walls), a relatively low number compared to the quantity of historic buildings – see Figures 2 and 3. This suggests there may be many buildings falling short of national criteria but which might be of local interest.

---

14 Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning & The Historic Environment, 1994, para 4.3

15 Regional Spatial Strategy for the NE, Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, Feb 2008, policy 34

16 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, DCLG, English Heritage & DCMS, March 2010, Policy HE2

17 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2006, para 4.16



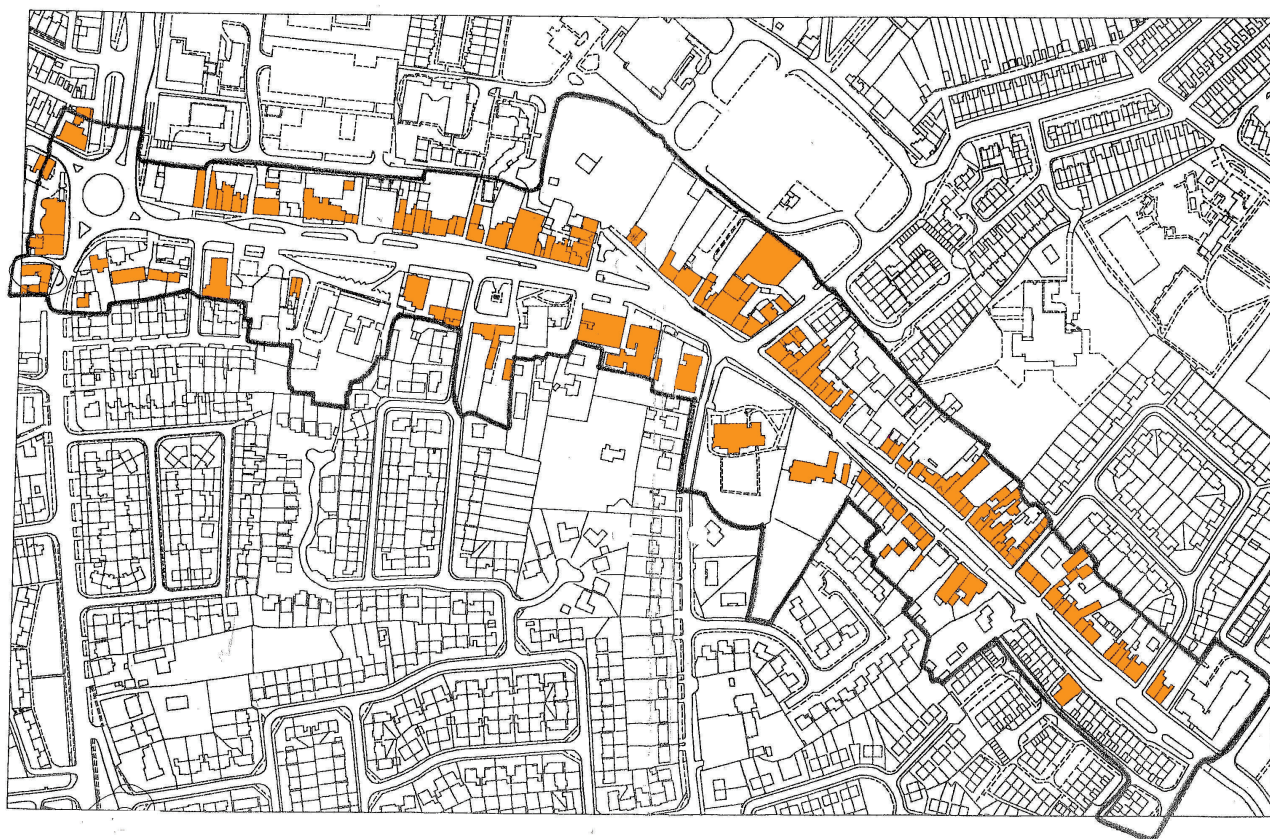
**Figure 2 Listed Buildings**

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

NB. The conservation area boundary shown in this figure is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A.



### 3 Identification & Protection



**Figure 3 Pre-1918 Buildings**

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

NB. The conservation area boundary shown in this figure is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A.

### Implementation

#### Objective C: Local List

*The Council will in the future compile, consult on and adopt a list of buildings of special local architectural or historic interest in the conservation area (Local List). It will develop an LDF policy and supporting guidance to seek, as far as possible, their protection against demolition and inappropriate change and, in the meantime, adopt an interim policy and supporting guidance.*

- 3.10** A Local List will be prepared in the future. It will identify buildings with special local interest to be taken into consideration when development plans are put forward. There is no statutory basis for local lists, but good practice has been used, including:
- preparing criteria for inclusion in the Local List,
  - a procedure for nominating and confirming buildings which involves the public,
  - a policy and supporting guidance.
- 3.11** Criteria formulated will be similar to those for national listing but, as they will be of local interest, standards will be lower. For example, a building may be too altered for national listing but may still have enough architectural interest for a Local List.
- 3.12** The procedure for compiling the List will involve inviting members of the public and special interest groups to nominate buildings. These will be assessed by a panel of independent experts, the recommendations of which will be the subject of consultation with the public and building owners. The Council will then make a final decision on which buildings to include in the List, and will inform the owners.
- 3.13** The Council will develop a policy and guidance on the Local List as part of the LDF but, in advance of this, it will develop and adopt informal policy and guidance to provide protection for the Local List in this conservation area only. The policy will address demolition, alteration, permitted development and setting. Guidance will address design, methods, materials, setting, repairs, maintenance and research.
- 3.14** An initial set of possible nominations for a future Local List is included in Appendix B, although this should not pre-judge the process to create a list set out above.

### Demolition

#### Context

- 3.15** Demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas requires Conservation Area Consent<sup>(18)</sup>. PPS5 advises that there should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing

---

18 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s74

### 3 Identification & Protection

justification<sup>(19)</sup>. Local Plan Policy GP18 protects unlisted buildings or features which makes a positive contribution to character or appearance, unless conclusive evidence shows economic repair is not reasonable.

#### Position

- 3.16** The Local Plan does not provide guidance on how the Council would assess a building's contribution to the area, nor on assessing repair costs in support of demolition. Also, supporting text on page 29 of the Local Plan only requires a replacement scheme to have approval, not for a contract for its implementation to have been let. This risks a replacement approved scheme not being implemented after demolition.

#### Implementation

##### **Objective D: Demolition**

In applying Local Plan Policy GP18 in relation to demolition of unlisted buildings, the Council will:

- i. have regard to relevant guidance in PPS5 and the associated practice guide;
- ii. discourage applications for conservation area consent without the parallel submission of full proposals for a replacement scheme;
- iii. in deciding whether an unlisted building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, have regard to the Character Appraisal, Local List, and criteria set by English Heritage;
- iv. in deciding whether a building is beyond reasonable economic repair, take into account any evidence that there has been deliberate neglect or damage to the building in the hope of obtaining consent or that economic repair has been made unreasonable because the building was acquired at a price which reflected its perceived redevelopment potential rather than its condition or constraints. The case for demolition of a building will not simply be that demolition is more economically attractive than repair.
- v. condition conservation area consent approvals to allow demolition only after a contract for a replacement scheme with approval has been let, unless demolition without implementation of a replacement scheme would leave the character and appearance of the area unharmed.

- 3.17** Extra guidance on demolition will strengthen Local Plan policy. The contribution made by unlisted buildings to the area will be determined by using the Character Appraisal, the Local List (page 10) and criteria published by English Heritage<sup>(20)</sup>:

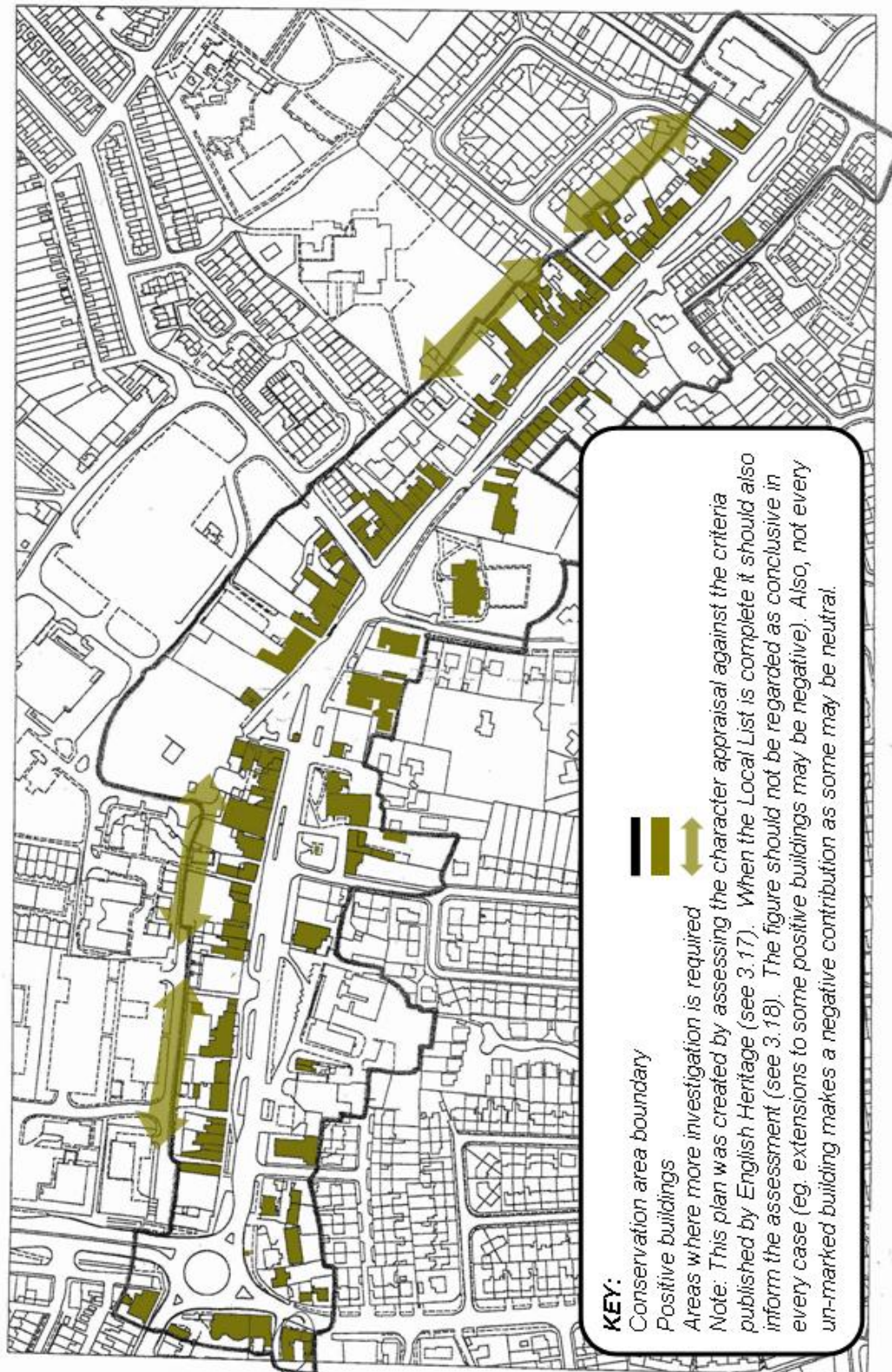
19 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010, Policy HE9

20 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2006, appendix 2

- 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 area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or 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 it is in, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have a significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it 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 in the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the 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?



### 3 Identification & Protection



**Figure 4 Buildings making a positive contribution to character and appearance**

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A.



- 3.18** Figure 4 is an assessment of buildings making a positive contribution. It was created by assessing the character appraisal against the criteria published by English Heritage shown above. Some parts require further investigation, e.g. where there may be early buildings in gardens and yards on the north side. In individual cases, however, a full assessment of a building should be made in line with the above guidance. When the Local List is complete it should also inform the assessment (page 10). In particular it will be important not to judge a building solely on appearance. The character appraisal sets out that poor appearance of historic buildings is a notable problem, often disguising other historic and architectural qualities they may have. It will be important to make a full assessment of a building's contribution rather than one based on how it looks.
- 3.19** Any economic case made for demolition will be determined using best practice, including that set out in PPS5 which stresses that where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of or damage to a building in the hope of obtaining consent, the resultant deteriorated state of the building should not be a factor taken into account in any decision<sup>(21)</sup>. The Council may seek independent assessment of any economic case made for the demolition of an unlisted building. PPS5 also stresses the importance of seeking new uses for redundant historic buildings, possibly by seeking grant funding or finding charitable or public authorities willing to take on the asset<sup>(22)</sup>.
- 3.20** In all proposals, the presence of protected species must be taken into account with mitigation measures proposed where needed. Such matters operate outside the planning system and works must comply with the relevant law including obtaining and complying with the terms and conditions of any licences required<sup>(23)</sup>.

### Permitted Development Rights

#### Context

- 3.21** The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) automatically grants planning permission for a range of minor developments to householders<sup>(24)</sup>. These permitted development rights are slightly more restricted in conservation areas for some types of development, but this does not prevent various alterations to houses being carried out without the need for permission, which might spoil the special interest or local distinctiveness of the area over time. (Flats, non-residential properties and listed buildings do not have permitted development rights in the same way.)
- 3.22** Article 4 of the GPDO allows the Council the power to restrict permitted development rights to bring certain types of development back under their control so that they may consider potentially harmful proposals and decide whether or not to grant consent<sup>(25)</sup>. They are normally used to control a proliferation of often minor alterations to conservation area buildings which, over time, can cumulatively erode character.

---

21 PPS5 : Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 , Policy HE7.6

22 PPS5 : Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 , Policy HE9.3

23 Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, and ODPM Circular 06/2005 (Part IV B)

24 Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, Article 3

25 Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2010

## 3 Identification & Protection

- 3.23** PPS5 suggests that local planning authorities should consider the use of an Article 4 Direction where the exercise of permitted development rights would undermine the aims of the historic environment<sup>(26)</sup>. English Heritage says to use them to control damaging cumulative change<sup>(27)</sup>. Local Plan Policy GP19 commits to Article 4 Directions if character is threatened. THI guidance suggests their use where they can protect the HLF's investment.

### Position

- 3.24** There is currently no Article 4 Direction in Bedlington, but there is evidence of cumulative harm to character from a series of relatively minor alterations which would not have needed consent, including demolition of chimneys, replacing Welsh slate or pantile roofs with concrete tiles, and replacing traditional timber sliding sash windows with plastic casements and solid doors with glazed ones. The impact on the conservation area of permitted development rights needs to be assessed.

### Implementation

#### **Objective E: Permitted Development Rights & Article 4 Directions**

The Council will:

- i. in the future seek to make an Article 4 Direction to control the impact of permitted development rights on dwelling houses in the conservation area;
- ii. prepare guidance on development likely to receive consent in applications for permission made as a result of the Article 4 direction;
- iii. continually assess the impact of permitted development rights on the character and appearance of the area, paying special attention to sites where works have been funded by the THI or another public source;
- iv. offer advice, guidance and encouragement to developers in order to influence the impact of permitted development rights in the interests of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area;
- v. on publication of any proposed amendment to the GPDO, assess its potential impact on the conservation area, and determine what measures, if any, would be needed were the GPDO to be amended.

- 3.25** The PPS5 Practice Guide explains that rights should not be withdrawn without full and proper justification in accordance with national policy<sup>(28)</sup>. Here there is evidence in the character appraisal that an Article 4 Direction is needed to curtail the impact of rights over time. Evidence will need to be collated to back up a future Direction.

26 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE4

27 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, paras 5.13-5.22

28 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, DCLG, English Heritage & DCMS, March 2010, Policy HE4

The Direction should be explained in a positive light, demonstrating how it will protect special interest for the future and help maintain the character and appearance of the area which makes it a distinctive place to live, work or shop.

- 3.26** The intention is not to stop changes to houses; rather it is to ensure changes are in keeping with the special character of the area. A Direction does not automatically prevent development; instead it means permission must be sought so that any negative impacts can be assessed before a decision is made. To this end, the Council will prepare guidance on development affected by the Direction to clarify what would be likely to receive consent. Applications required as a result of the Direction are free, and decisions will normally be delegated to officers, allowing a quicker response.
- 3.27** The Direction would mean certain works to a dwelling house (or within its curtilage) would need planning permission, if the works would front onto a highway, waterway or open space. The following is a summary of those types of works:
- enlargement, improvement or alteration to a dwelling house, including re-pointing, cladding, and alteration to windows and doors,
  - erection or alteration of an outbuilding, enclosure or pool,
  - erection of a porch,
  - alteration of a roof including rooflights, dormers, or changes to the material,
  - erection, alteration or removal of a chimney,
  - painting of exterior walls,
  - installation or replacement of a satellite dish,
  - erection, alteration or removal of gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure,
  - making a hard-standing.
- 3.28** The GPDO, and the related circular and guidance, set out the procedure<sup>(29)</sup>. An explanatory leaflet will be prepared. An Article 4 Direction comes into effect as it is served, but must be confirmed by the Council within a certain time-frame or it will lapse. Public representations must be considered before it is confirmed.
- 3.29** The Council will also engage proactively with householders and other developers to help reduce the potential negative impact of permitted development rights. Advice and encouragement to carry out works in a way which respects character and appearance can, over time, reduce the cumulative negative impact of permitted development rights on the area.

## Enforcement & Monitoring

### Context

- 3.30** Planning controls are the principal means of ensuring that the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area is protected. Breaches of, or failure to comply with, planning requirements must be dealt with quickly and fairly if public confidence in, and support for, planning and conservation are to be maintained. Enforcement against unauthorised works must be started within four years of the

---

29 DoE Circular 9/95; Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, EH, 2006, paras 5.13-5.22

## 3 Identification & Protection

date of substantial completion of the development. English Heritage guidance suggests using a comprehensive dated photographic record to aid enforcement in conservation areas, listed buildings and Article 4 Directions<sup>(30)</sup>.

### Position

**3.31** The Council operates proactive monitoring and enforcement. Within the area, in summary, the Council must deal with:

- planning permission, needed for most types of development,
- conservation area consent, for proposals to demolish unlisted buildings,
- listed building consent, for works affecting the character of a listed building,
- advertisement consent, for some types of outdoor advertising,
- notifications for works to trees, including topping, lopping or cutting down,
- planning applications arising from Article 4 Directions (see above).

### Implementation

#### **Objective F: Enforcement & Monitoring**

The Council will

- i. apply its emerging enforcement policy to the conservation area, recognising the duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character and appearance;
- ii. prepare and keep up to date a comprehensive dated photographic record of the conservation area, and use it to regularly monitor the conservation area, listed buildings, tree preservation orders and, if confirmed, the Article 4 Direction;
- iii. in extreme cases, consider using statutory powers including Urgent Works Notices, Section 215 Notices, Repairs Notices and Compulsory Purchase Orders to deal with the effects of poor condition or vacancy.

**3.32** The Council's enforcement policy will be applied to the conservation area as follows. The following unauthorised works will be given a high priority:

- the demolition or threat of demolition of a listed building, or alterations or removal of features which have a significant impact on the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building,
- the demolition or threat of demolition of an unlisted building which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area,
- the topping, lopping or cutting down trees, or the threat of this.

**3.33** The following unauthorised works will be given a medium priority:

---

30 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, EH, 2006, paras 5.22, 8.2

- works which have a moderate impact on the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building,
- works which may cause harm to the character and appearance of the area,
- the display of advertisements which detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**3.34** Enforcement activity may need to deal with non-compliance with conditions on schemes which have consent. Some conditions will require monitoring by the Enforcement Officer, carrying out by site visits and working with the building control service. Failure to adhere to conditions may result in enforcement action.

**3.35** Successful enforcement may depend on acting quickly. Delegated powers are in place for the development control manager to issue the following: a planning contravention notice, an enforcement notice, a Section 215 notice, a stop notice, a building control notice, or an enforcement notice in relation to demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area. Delegation is also in place to allow use of powers to acquire a listed building needing repair, to serve a repairs notice, to apply for an injunction relating to a listed building, for powers relating to tree preservation, and to apply for an injunction restraining a breach of planning control.

**3.36** Credible enforcement activity should also consider the use, where necessary, of other statutory powers. Serving notices will only be considered after negotiations fail, and none should be entered into lightly. However, actively considering the option of serving a notice can often bring forward a negotiated solution:

- *Urgent Works Notice*  
For vacant listed buildings or unlisted buildings contributing positively to the conservation area. Allows, after 7 days, the Council to carry out urgent works needed for a building's preservation, and for recovery of costs from the owner<sup>(31)</sup>.
- *Section 215 Notice*  
Can be served on any land or building to remedy the adverse effects to the neighbourhood's amenity from their condition or unsightly nature<sup>(32)</sup>.
- *Repairs Notice*  
To secure more extensive works for the proper, long term preservation by the owner of a listed building (only) and, should reasonable steps not be taken within a specified period, the Council can consider a Compulsory Purchase Order (against which the owner has rights of appeal and compensation)<sup>(33)</sup>.

**3.37** Relevant guidance will be used<sup>(34)</sup>. The Council also has other compulsory purchase powers under the Planning Acts, which it can consider where necessary.

**3.38** Enforcement activity will also involve proactive monitoring. This will include producing a comprehensive dated photographic record of every building in the conservation area as evidence of its appearance at a particular time, and using this to help monitor the area regularly (at least annually) in conjunction with conservation officers, to identify potential breaches of planning control.

31 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s54

32 Town & Country Planning Act 1990, s215

33 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s47 and s48

34 eg. Stopping The Rot, 1998, English Heritage; Derelict Land and Section 215 Powers, 2000, Arup & ODPM



## 3 Identification & Protection

### Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity

#### Context

- 3.39** PPS5 makes clear the need for local planning authorities to have evidence about archaeological assets in their areas. Where proposed development sites have archaeological interest or potential archaeological interest, an appropriate assessment should be undertaken<sup>(35)</sup>. English Heritage guidance recommends identifying those parts of conservation areas with archaeological interest<sup>(36)</sup> and Local Plan Policies GP20 and GP21 control development affecting sites of archaeological significance.

#### Position

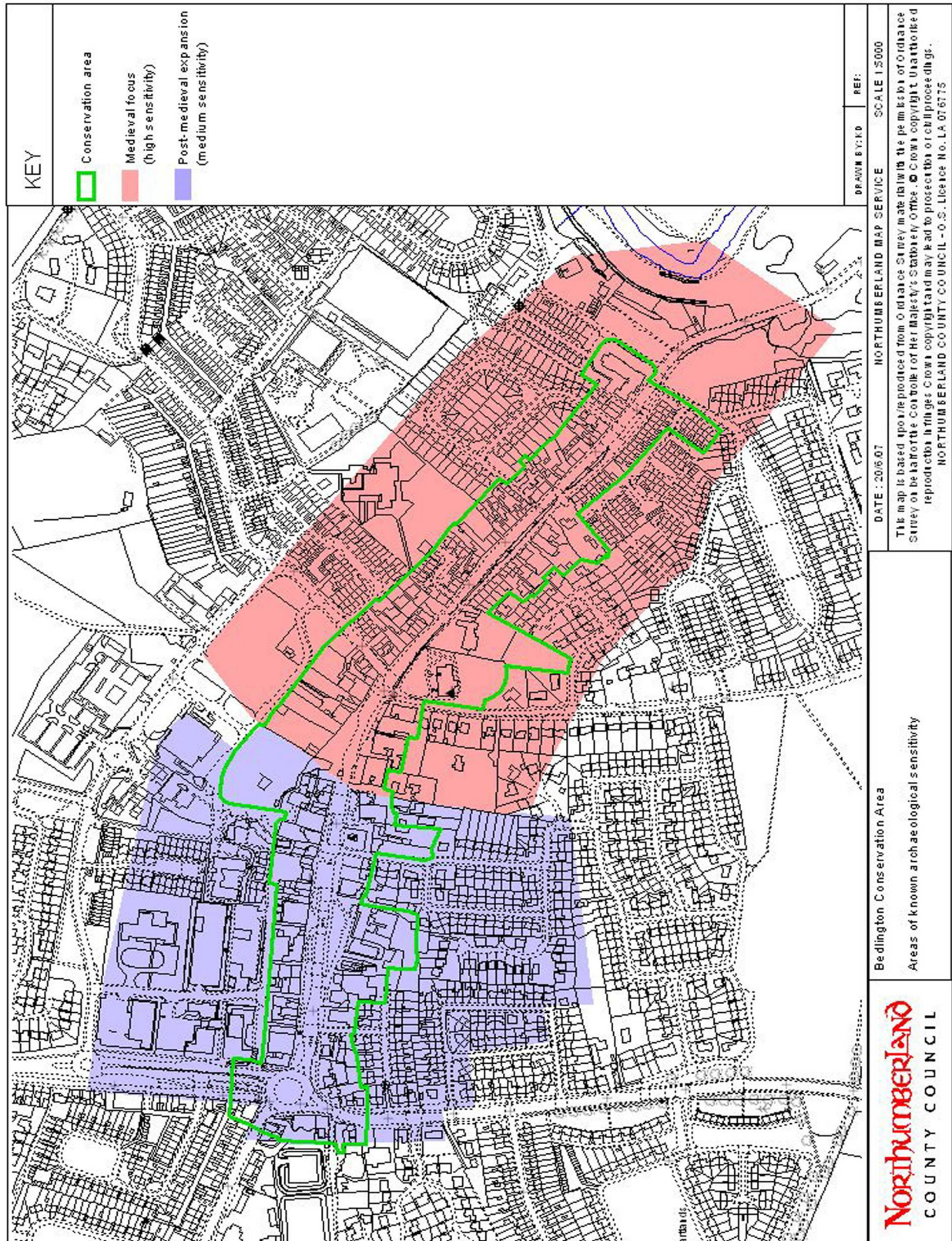
- 3.40** The recently updated *Archaeological Assessment of Bedlington* indicates there has been a settlement at Bedlington since at least the medieval period<sup>(37)</sup>. References also indicate the presence of a medieval hospital and bishop's palace apparently to the west of Church Lane, close to the existing church, but their exact location has not been verified. Any surviving remains of the medieval hospital or bishop's palace would be of very high archaeological significance. Archaeological investigations in Bedlington are increasingly providing much more detailed information about the nature and extent of the medieval and later settlement.

---

35 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE6

36 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2006, para 4.10

37 Archaeological Assessment Of Bedlington, Extensive Urban Survey, Second Draft, A Williams, 2007



**Figure 5 Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity**

NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A

### Implementation

#### **Objective G: Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity**

In applying Local Plan Policies GP20 and GP21, the Council will assess the nature and extent of archaeological work necessary, based on the location of the development in relation to the archaeological sensitivity map, the development's size, and the level of previous site disturbance.

- 3.41** The *Archaeological Assessment of Bedlington* has identified the presumed extent of the early settlement and its post-medieval expansion, based on historic sources, old maps and recent archaeological investigation – see Figure 5. It is highly likely that archaeological work will be required on development in these areas.
- 3.42** The nature and extent of archaeological work required as part of the planning process will depend on the location of the development in relation to the most archaeologically sensitive areas, the size of the development and the level of previous disturbance on the site. Work could comprise one or more of the following:
- 1. Evaluation of large or particularly archaeologically sensitive sites by trial trenching to establish the nature, extent and importance of archaeological remains. This work will need to be carried out prior to the determination of a planning application to enable an appropriate decision to be made.
  - 2. The formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy based on the results of the evaluation. The majority of these options can be dealt with as a condition of planning permission and comprise one or more of the following:
    - Preservation in situ of important archaeological remains revealed during evaluation. This could have an impact on the viability of the scheme and whether planning permission should be granted;
    - Full excavation prior to construction work commencing for significant remains that do not necessarily warrant preservation in situ. This will also require full analysis and publication of the results;
    - Strip and record prior to construction work commencing for a high density of less significant archaeological remains. This may require full analysis and publication dependant on the importance of the remains that are revealed;
    - A watching brief during construction work for a low density of less significant archaeological remains;
    - No further work in areas where no archaeological remains are found.
  - 3. Small scale development such as extensions within the area of high archaeological sensitivity may not require pre-determination evaluation and may be dealt with by an archaeological watching brief during construction.
- 3.43** The nature and extent of archaeological work will be gauged for each individual site. Prospective developers should therefore contact the County Archaeologist at the earliest opportunity to discuss potential requirements on development sites within the conservation area.



### 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

#### Introduction

**4.1** Identifying and protecting the heritage will not by itself preserve or enhance character and appearance. Future change needs to be managed to encourage good practice and to seek enhancement where possible. This section deals with:

- the design of new development in the conservation area,
- the importance of maintenance and repair,
- the positive relationship between conservation and regeneration,
- the need for proactive development briefs,
- works to the public realm, highways, green spaces and trees.
- opportunities for enhancement,
- opportunities for research and interpretation.

#### Design

#### Context

**4.2** PPS1 firmly links design and planning, requiring submission of Design & Access Statements (DAS) with planning applications. PPS5 requires that consideration be given to the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment<sup>(38)</sup>. Local Plan Policy GP18 requires development in or affecting a conservation area to be sympathetic to character and appearance. Policies GP30 and 31 set out the need for good design and to control visual impact.

**4.3** The former Wansbeck District Council committed to high quality design standards by adopting the *Wansbeck Design Guide*, including for new residential development and residential extensions. It also adopted as planning guidance a *Shopfront Design Guide* for Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea conservation areas. There is copious national guidance on DASs, on good design, design in historic areas, and design details for historic buildings. This is largely from the government, CABI, English Heritage and the national amenity bodies such as the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group.

#### Position

**4.4** Policy GP31 (with others such as GP30) and the *Wansbeck Design Guide* form the basis for assessing design. For example, the *Wansbeck Design Guide* concludes that Front Street and Market Place maintain the town's historic character but a mismatch in scale and styles in some parts detracts from the inherent quality of the town. To augment this, more detailed guidance on design in conservation areas is needed – this is the reason, for example, for commissioning the *Shopfront Design Guide*. Currently, design casework is handled by development management officers and historic buildings advisors.

---

38 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE7.5

### Implementation

#### Objective H: Design

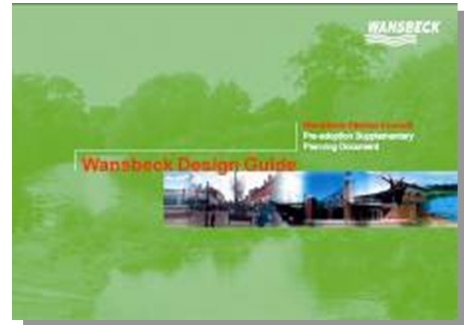
The Council will:

- i. encourage best practice in the use of Design & Access Statements, as set out in the Wansbeck Design Guide, particularly regarding the need to demonstrate how design has responded to the character and distinctiveness of the site and the conservation area;
- ii. encourage applicants to use design to enhance the conservation area;
- iii. consider from time to time the need for specific topical guidance;
- iv. encourage biodiversity benefit and the conservation of energy and water resources through good design.
- v. All new design in the conservation area should:
- vi. respond to and reinforce local distinctiveness and special architectural and historic interest;
- vii. relate well to the history, topography and setting of the area;
- viii. sit happily in the pattern of development, uses, spaces, routes & views;
- ix. respect and contribute to the landscape setting of the site and the area;
- x. respect the layout, height, scale and massing of neighbouring buildings;
- xi. use materials and methods which are as high quality as existing ones;
- xii. follow complementary or contemporary themes rather than imitation;
- xiii. add to the intricacy and delight of the area's character and appearance.
- xiv. addition, new design in existing historic buildings should:
- xv. accurately respond to the detailed architectural and historic characteristics of the building;
- xvi. for shopfronts, follow guidance in the adopted Shopfront Design Guide;
- xvii. use appropriate traditional natural materials and methods including materials salvaged from the building where appropriate;
- xviii. seek a balance between protecting character and appearance and meeting other requirements such as building regulations and access;



- xix. where possible, investigate removal of existing inappropriate features;
- xx. where possible, be informed by modest historical research such as an old photo or careful on-site investigation of the historic fabric affected;
- xxi. be informed by up-to-date conservation best practice.

**4.5** More detailed guidance on design will improve the quality of new work in the conservation area. It will also encourage stronger pre- and post-application discussions by providing an agenda around which to base debate. For large scale new design such as new-build and extension, *Wansbeck Design Guide* and Policies GP30 and 31 will be augmented by more detailed themes of how the new work responds to the conservation area.



CABE and English Heritage guidance in *Building in Context* suggests the following questions to assess new design in historic areas<sup>(39)</sup>:

- How does the proposed work relate to its site? Is there a positive and imaginative response to any problems and constraints, such as changes in level and access? Can the amount of accommodation required be fitted on the site in an elegant way?
- How does the proposal relate to its wider setting? Are the street pattern and grain of the surroundings respected? If there are changes in height between existing and new work, how are they handled?
- How does the proposed density related to existing neighbouring sites?
- Has the impact of the new work in close views been assessed? Does it respect the scale and rhythm of its neighbours or is it overpowering?
- How do the materials relate to the surroundings? Are they quality high? Are there interesting contrasts or comparisons? How will colours work together?
- Is the architecture of the building suitable for the uses it contains? Is it trying to be too grand or pretending to be more modest than it really is?
- How does the architecture present itself? Is there a strong composition in the pattern of solid-to-opening in the façades? Does the detailing show signs of careful thought or originality in the way the new work is put together?
- What contribution does the work make to the public realm? If new space is created, is there a clear positive benefit and a genuine use for it?
- Has the impact of the new work been assessed in wider views and context? Does it form a harmonious group or composition with existing buildings or landscape features? Does it distract the eye and, if so, is this a good thing?

**4.6** Such detailed themes should provide generous opportunity for a positive, high quality response from large scale new design in the conservation area.

39 Building in Context, New Development in Historic Areas. CABE and English Heritage, 2001

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

**4.7** For existing historic buildings, the objective of new design is to respond accurately to the architecture and history of the building in question, and its neighbours. The basic principles set out above encourage a modest conservation-led approach to new detailed design and should, for example, result in the use of Welsh slate or handmade clay pantiles rather than artificial roof coverings, or the use of traditional timber sliding sash windows rather than top-hung casements or PVCu frames. Such matters of detail are very important to protecting the collective appearance of the conservation area, and, as set out in the character appraisal, to restoring it where it has been eroded over time.

**4.8** A summary of the main principles of the *Shopfront Design Guide* is as follows:

- the shopfront is a component of the whole street and should be considered in the context of the architectural character of the adjacent properties,
- a shopfront is not the only – or even the most significant – component of a building; its design should respect the proportions of the building's frontage as a whole,
- where one shop occupies two or more buildings of different character, it is likely to be better to respect the identity of each building in the design,
- traces of old shopfronts are rare and valuable; hidden elements of older shopfronts should be recorded and, where possible, re-used in new designs,
- existing out-of-character shopfronts should be seen as temporary intrusions failing to meet the standard, and their replacement should be a proactive goal,
- where no original detail survives, and there is no evidence of an earlier design, a high quality modern solution might be as suitable as a traditional one.



**4.9** In every case of assessing new design, the Council will work in collaboration with the developer, the designer, the local authority historic buildings advisor and other consultees to achieve the optimum solution to preserving the conservation area. It will be guided by best practice and relevant guidance. It will take opportunities to encourage new design to enhance the conservation area, taking proactive steps to discuss with developers and designers any options and opportunities there may be within the scope of proposals, rather than relying solely on what does and does not require consent.

### Building Maintenance & Repair

#### Context

**4.10** PPS5 recognises the importance of keeping historic assets maintained and in use<sup>(40)</sup>. English Heritage guidance and the RSS encourage the use of buildings at risk strategies for buildings in poor repair, with English Heritage stressing the need for prevention as well as cure<sup>(41)</sup>.

40 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE1

41 Buildings At Risk, 1998, EH, p7; Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East, July 2008, policy 32

### Position

- 4.11 The Council has no published guidance on maintaining historic buildings, and no buildings at risk strategy. A lack of maintenance and poor quality repairs continue to damage the special interest of the conservation area. The Stage I THI bid identified poor condition and ill-informed repairs as key issues to tackle. Long term vacancy is less of a problem, affecting a relatively small number of properties.

### Implementation

#### **Objective I: Building Maintenance & Repair**

The Council will:

- i. encourage property owners to carry out maintenance and repairs;
- ii. provide information and guidance on the best approach for the area's historic buildings, and the financial benefits of such approaches;
- iii. engage in training and demonstrations for its officers and local building contractors to encourage best practice;
- iv. consider preparing a full building at risk survey and strategy, should long term vacancy become more widespread.

- 4.12 Encouragement is the best way to deal with matters of building condition, but in extreme cases the Council will always consider using its statutory powers to rescue a building at risk from its condition or vacancy (see page 19 *Enforcement & Monitoring*).
- 4.13 The saying 'a stitch in time saves nine' is entirely consistent with matters of building maintenance. Small problems such as leaking gutters or slipped slates can, if left, quickly lead to bigger problems that are very expensive to sort out. Problems of a different kind can result from well intentioned but unnecessary 'repairs' which unwittingly result in damage to a property. Large sums of money are wasted on poorly repointing perfectly sound mortar, or replacing windows which only require minor repairs. There is also a lot of misleading advice from unskilled builders, salespeople and magazine articles pressurising property owners to do building works which can damage the appearance and value of an historic building. Even reputable mortgage providers can cause difficulties if they employ surveyors who do not understand how traditional buildings work. There are numerous examples of mortgage conditions requiring the installation of an expensive damp proof course or rebuilding a wall with minor cracks when simpler, better – and cheaper – options are available and more appropriate.
- 4.14 Correct property maintenance makes good sense and saves money, but it will not happen without encouragement, good advice, and property owners being able to find it. The Council will address this by:

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

- producing a user-friendly printed and online *Building Maintenance & Repair Guide* with advice to building owners and occupiers. This could be led by the CAAG / THI Partnership (see page 46) and involve local people in its production;
- encouraging shared working in maintenance, such as jointly hiring a cherry picker to clean gutters, making it quicker and cheaper than individual action;
- training Council officers to provide good advice relevant to historic buildings;
- encouraging training for local building contractors in relevant skills such as good re-pointing, including certification to demonstrate their competence;
- producing a list of specialist contractors known to carry out work to a suitable standard (making clear that the list is not exclusive, and that inclusion on it does not imply recommendation by the Council);
- free demonstrations for owners on topics such as overhauling sash windows, repointing using lime mortars, and masonry, perhaps in the form of a skills fair.

**4.15** The need for good skilled contractors extends to new works as well as repairs. The Council will seek to encourage local contractors by provision of skills directories, training and awards, and encourage contractors to invest in their own training. In some cases, tender lists will be restricted to contractors committed to skills training.

**4.16** There is currently no need for a full building at risk strategy for the area. Work for the THI has identified key buildings suffering neglect and decay, and others with vacant floorspace (see below *Regeneration* and page 37 *Development Briefs*). Should the effects of long term vacancy and neglect become more widespread, the Council will consider preparing a full survey and strategy to identify problems and solutions.

### Regeneration

#### Context

**4.17** Conservation-led change plays a vital role in social and economic regeneration across the country<sup>(42)</sup>. PPS5 says that the potential for the historic environment to be a catalyst for regeneration in an area should be considered in local planning<sup>(43)</sup>. English Heritage stresses the need to tackle causes of low investment in run-down conservation areas, not just the repairs. The RSS encourages including under-used historic buildings in regeneration schemes<sup>(44)</sup>. Relevant Local Plan policies include RTC1, RTC8 and RTC10 on town centre regeneration and REC12 which encourages public realm improvements to support day visitor tourism. Go-Wansbeck is aimed at creating a more enterprising culture in the wider area, to support local business growth and to attract new investment and employment opportunities for the benefit of local people. The THI nests within Go-Wansbeck and also has a business premises grant scheme.

#### Position

**4.18** The area has two linked problems: poor building condition and low business vitality:

42 eg. Heritage Dividend, EH, 2002; Heritage Works: The Use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration, EH, n/d

43 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE3

44 Regional Spatial Strategy for the NE, July 2008, policy 32

- Historic fabric is degraded due to low investment, poor quality alterations and inappropriate works over a long period. These include lack of repair, use of modern materials, removal of functionally superfluous features (e.g. shopfronts, chimneys), poorly-informed methods, and alterations not in sympathy with the place's architecture. Such incremental deterioration has accumulated to harm the area visually and physically, degrading historic character and losing unity.
- The former Wansbeck area suffers from a seriously disadvantaged enterprise performance shown by several indicators<sup>(45)</sup>. The *Bedlington Investment Study* analysed the contrast between a growing population and significant deprivation levels. It concluded there was a heavy dependence on convenience shopping, a lack of modern facilities, and low levels of entrepreneurial activity. There was a major 'expenditure leak' to other towns<sup>(46)</sup>. The 2006 *Town Centre Appraisal* showed Bedlington had mainly a service role with few comparison retailers and below-average number of multiples. Retailer demand was very low, but vacancy was not endemic – 7.5% in 2004 (national average 10%) – although there were some long-term vacant units and some under-used upper floors<sup>(47)</sup>.

**4.19** These reports concluded Front Street's attractiveness should be exploited, Market Place improved, convenience shopping expanded, and the gap site redeveloped.

**4.20** The Council is now pursuing a heritage-led regeneration agenda led by Go-Wansbeck and the THI (see page 7), plus public realm improvements informed by Street Pride (see page 6), and a new drive for development on the Market Place gap site (see page 37). It is unlikely the THI will meet all existing demand for building repair grants in the area.

---

45 Stage I THI Application, Bedlington Conservation Area, Wansbeck District Council, 2006, question 21

46 Bedlington Investment Study, Shared Intelligence, April 2002

47 Advice on Future Dev't of Key Sites & Attraction of Busn's Investment & New Enterprise, GVA Grimley, 2006

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

### Implementation

#### Objective J: Regeneration

The Council will:

- i. put conservation at the heart of physical and economic regeneration;
- ii. continue to explore strategic regeneration opportunities to improve the condition, quality and authenticity of the built stock and public realm;
- iii. pay particular attention to the town centre retail and service sectors;
- iv. continue efforts to bring forward development on the Market Place gap site which, through design and use, preserve or enhance Market Place;
- v. promote the benefits of and encourage support for a heritage-led approach to regeneration to decision-makers, owners and traders;
- vi. ensure the special requirements of the conservation area are taken into account in plans or proposals for regeneration, including Go-Wansbeck;
- vii. in running the THI, have regard to best practice, and attend meetings of the regional THI practice group, NETHIOG;
- viii. investigate future heritage-led regeneration and funding options.

**4.21** English Heritage evidence demonstrates that built heritage can be a valuable asset and can have an important role as a catalyst for regeneration<sup>(48)</sup>. Equally, economic prosperity can be the cornerstone of investment in environmental improvements and the repair and maintenance of properties<sup>(49)</sup>. The Council will therefore tackle the area's two main problems – building condition and business viability – together.

**4.22** The THI is key to this, and the Council will consider best practice in its delivery. The THI's success will partly depend on its momentum and on Council support. HLF research shows that certain characteristics can hinder THIs, including low public knowledge of the scheme, a concentration on public realm, and a lack of wider support from the local authority<sup>(50)</sup>. This is backed up by experience of THIs in the region, and will need to be carefully controlled.

**4.23** The THI cannot meet all the likely demand for financial support for historic building repair and enhancement. The Council will need to consider its heritage-led regeneration strategy for the area beyond the THI. This is likely to concentrate on other area-funding regimes such as English Heritage.

---

48 Heritage Works: The Use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration, English Heritage, n/d, p1

49 A Community Plan for Wansbeck 2004-2008 and Beyond, Wansbeck Initiative, 2004

50 Townscape Heritage Initiative Longterm Evaluation, Summary Interim Report, for HLF, May 2005



- 4.24** One of the biggest impacts on town centre regeneration will be comprehensive, sustainable new development on the Market Place gap site which enhances the conservation area. The Council will continue to pursue this as a key objective.
- 4.25** In any wider regeneration plans, programmes and activities affecting the area, including Go-Wansbeck, the special local interest and needs of the conservation area will be taken into account. A strong case for heritage-led regeneration will be created, concentrating on the benefits to the economy and community life of re-using historic buildings and working within the character of the conservation area.

### Enhancement Opportunities

#### Context

- 4.26** Legislation requires local authorities, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas<sup>(51)</sup>. English Heritage suggests enhancement might include redeveloping negative sites and buildings, or proactive investment such as building or public realm improvements<sup>(52)</sup>.

#### Position

- 4.27** There have been several enhancement schemes in the conservation area since designation. Two of the largest are the 1998-2001 Conservation Area Partnership Scheme (CAPS) and the 2005-07 Street Pride initiative (see page 6). The English Heritage-funded CAPS spent £30,000 mainly on environmental improvements (to the Trotter Fountain, Market Cross and St Cuthbert's Church), plus the first development brief for the Market Place gap site (see page 37), a feasibility study for the Old School, Church Lane, and preparation of shopfront security design guidance (now incorporated into the *Shopfront Design Guide*; see page 6). More recently, there has been investment in routes through the green banks on the north side of Front Street West, and work in 2006 to the setting of the now listed War Memorial.
- 4.28** The Street Pride initiative identified a series of issues to be addressed. Its three key projects were enhancement of the Market Place (which has now been completed), radical alteration of the Red Lion roundabout, and improvement of the retail environment in shopping streets.
- 4.29** Enhancement is key theme of the THI with most of the total £1.984m pot being spent on enhancing historic buildings and on public realm improvements.

---

51 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 s.71

52 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, para 5.2

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

### Implementation

#### Objective K: Enhancement Opportunities

The Council will:

- i. maintain a long term agenda of enhancement opportunities in the area;
- ii. consider all opportunities whether buildings or spaces, public or private;
- iii. from time to time, investigate opportunities for delivery and funding;
- iv. where possible, use opportunities provided by the investment of others to bring about enhancements to the area;
- v. treat as a high priority opportunities to:
  - improve condition, appearance and architectural integrity of buildings,
  - restore a suitable historic character to modernised historic spaces,
  - encourage private owners to bring forward enhancement schemes.

**4.30** Bedlington could benefit from a considerable amount of enhancement. For example, Bedlington's road layout is a large part of its local distinctiveness but was not designed for motor vehicles and, not surprisingly, has seen enduring conflict between the needs of pedestrians and vehicles which has eroded its character in places. This could be restored and enhanced to contribute to the town's attraction as a place to live, work or visit.

**4.31** There are potential projects in the public and private sector, and in buildings and spaces. Many are large scale problems which could not be addressed until the long term, but it will be important to create an 'agenda' for future action so that issues do not get left behind in forward planning and strategy making. The Council will, from time to time, review delivery and funding options for enhancements.

**4.32** In the short term, the THI is key to enhancement. The THI has already begun restoration of historic buildings and delivered a major enhancement of the Market Place. The Council will capitalise on the momentum created in the town and consider future options for when the THI comes to an end in 2013.

**4.33** The following is an agenda list of enhancement opportunities in the conservation area, illustrated in Figure 6:

- *Buildings*  
Much of the area's historic building stock has become degraded over a long period. There are considerable opportunities to invest in building restoration and maintenance throughout the area.
- *Alleyways*  
Many of the historic alleyways between Front Street and the car parks, shops and services to the north are in poor condition and unattractive to users. This could be improved with new traditional materials and better lighting and signs.

- *Red Lion Roundabout*

This is a very poor western gateway to the conservation area, with a very large roundabout and stub dual carriageway heading north which are not in keeping with the conservation area. Radically altering this junction is a long term project identified in Street Pride, based on restoring a more traditional single carriageway crossroads, and improving access to Glebe Road. This may permit the Trotter Memorial Fountain to be reinstated to its original position. In the short term, removing some pedestrian barriers (if not needed for public safety) and rationalising pedestrian movement could bring modest enhancement, as would painting the remaining barriers and fitting simple ball finials to them.
- *Front Street Highway*

Front Street tends to bisect the conservation area and in many places is not easy to cross. High traffic volumes can limit pedestrian activity. Enhancement opportunities could involve carriageway narrowing (eg. at Market Place where it is a formidable barrier), providing more crossing points / re-siting existing ones, investigating ways of reducing the volume of traffic without harming town centre viability (eg. traffic calming, a lower speed limit, raised 'table' crossing points), and promoting the use of existing car-parks to the north.
- *Building Illumination*

Sympathetic feature lighting of some of historic buildings would bring them to public attention in the evenings, demonstrated well at the Market Cross. This could be used at St Cuthbert's Church, Trotter Memorial Fountain, Old Police Station and many of the pubs (some already have existing but not always sympathetic lighting). It could be encouraged by discussions with owners.
- *Views of the Area from the North*

Views of the conservation area from Schalksmuhle Road are not always good, mainly looking through surface car-parks towards the rear of Market Place (large, intrusive modern flat roofed buildings) and Front Street West (loss of unity, loss of rear boundaries, out-of-scale extensions, poor condition). Improvements to Front Street West could involve recreating unified boundary walls and gates, and improving the appearance of the public realm.
- *Conservation Area Signage*

Introducing signs at the approaches to the conservation area would improve public awareness. Successful signage would be robust, locally distinctive, carefully sited and well designed, possibly with artist involvement.

**4.34** Enhancement works should where possible incorporate biodiversity benefit such as habitat and green infrastructure. There will be other enhancement opportunities and the long term 'agenda' will be kept up to date in this document.

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

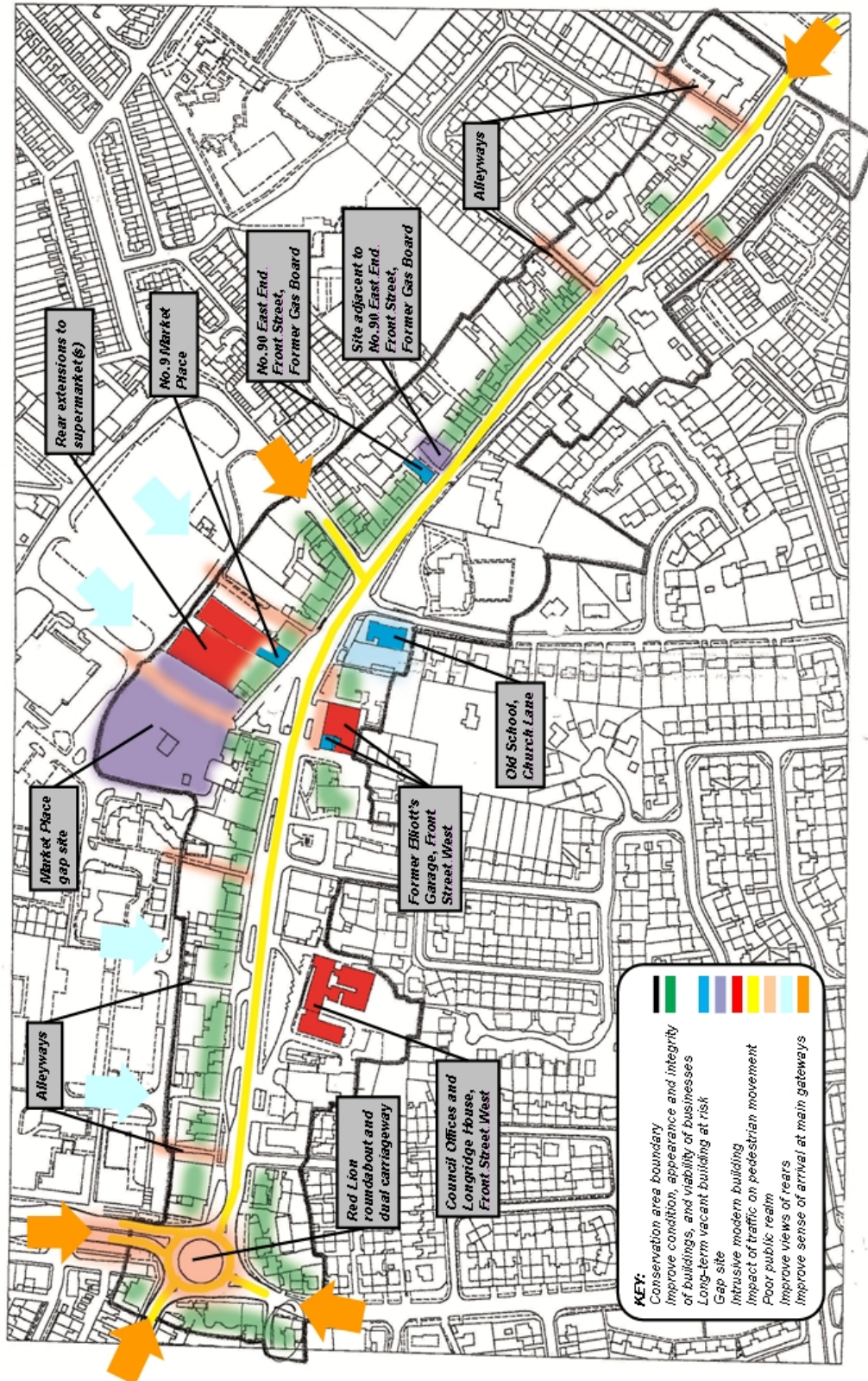


Figure 6 Summary of regeneration and enhancement opportunities

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

NB. The conservation area boundary shown is existing. Boundary review as part of this strategy has produced a revised boundary – see Appendix A.



### Development Briefs

#### Context

- 4.35** English Heritage guidance suggests using development briefs to demonstrate how policy and guidance might apply to specific sites<sup>(53)</sup>. Government guidance suggests briefs to minimise uncertainty and gain quality where advice would expedite development or on sites with specific constraints<sup>(54)</sup>. The Wansbeck District Local Plan commits to development briefs as necessary, to expand on Policy GP31's design issues<sup>(55)</sup>. Policy RTC10 identifies the Market Place gap site as the key development opportunity in Bedlington.
- 4.36** It is common for developers to produce detailed proposals for sensitive sites in conservation areas without involving the local authority. This may be due to a lack of capacity from the local authority to give guidance and take part in pre-application discussions, or it may reflect an unwillingness by the developer to seek advice. Frequently there is a significant gap between what the developer and local authority aspire to on sensitive sites. Having spent time and money on producing proposals it is not surprising that developers may then adopt an entrenched position.

#### Position

- 4.37** Several sites in Bedlington would benefit from new development (see page 30 *Regeneration* and page 33 *Enhancement Opportunities*), including:
- Gap site, Market Place
  - Former Gas Board shop and adjoining gap site, No.90 East End Front Street
- 4.38** The Market Place gap site has presented a key development opportunity in a focal location for over 30 years. A development brief was prepared in 2000 and the site was highlighted as a priority in the *Town Centre Appraisal*<sup>(56)</sup>. There is now developer interest in the site and the prospect of securing appropriate development looks good. Satisfactory proposals for the former Gas Board shop and adjoining site have, however, not yet come forward.

#### Implementation

##### **Objective L: Development Briefs**

The Council will prepare, consult on, adopt and promote development briefs for important opportunity sites. In doing so, it will take account of developer interest and available resources, and follow good practice, concentrating on design issues.

53 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, para 7.5

54 Planning and Development Briefs: A Guide to Better Practice, 1996, para 2.1

55 Wansbeck District Local Plan, June 2007, para 3.85

56 Advice on Future Dev't of Key Sites & Attraction of Busn's Investment & New Enterprise, GVA Grimley, 2006



## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

- 4.39 Development briefs are an opportunity for the Council to be proactive, and guide suitable development of a site while allowing some flexibility to respond to the brief. The developer benefits from a clear steer, removing uncertainty and improving the chances of a speedy planning process. It should also help the developer calculate a realistic price for acquiring the site. In an appeal against refusal of planning permission, a development brief will also help support the local authority's case.
- 4.40 Briefs will contain realistic and unambiguous guidance on the following<sup>(57)</sup>:
- objectives and background,
  - site information and constraints,
  - policy context,
  - the development response, such as the uses sought, infrastructure, layout, parking, design issues, landscaping and off-site requirements,
  - the role and status of the brief, and where to find out more.
- 4.41 Briefs will concentrate on design issues such as scale, height, form, massing, pattern of frontages, vertical or horizontal emphasis and materials, but will avoid detailed prescriptive designs, or the dictation of a particular architectural style.
- 4.42 The availability of resources and developer interest will help decide when and in which order briefs are produced. Preparation will use appropriate expertise and will involve consultation with owners, the CAAG (see page 49), Design Review Panel (see page 46) and local people.

### Public Realm, Green Spaces & Trees

#### Context

- 4.43 PPS5 promotes a holistic approach to the historic environment in which spaces may be as important as buildings<sup>(58)</sup>. Spaces in conservation areas may include historic routes, surfaces, furniture, green spaces, trees, etc and they should be firmly integrated into management. Legislation gives powers over trees in conservation areas<sup>(59)</sup> – essentially, anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop any tree has to give notice to the local authority which can then decide whether to make a tree preservation orders (TPO)<sup>(60)</sup> based on its contribution to the area.
- 4.44 English Heritage says coordination is key to public realm, suggesting the use of public realm strategies<sup>(61)</sup>. Its *Streets for All* guidance, published jointly with the Department of Transport, urges full integration of highways and traffic issues. English Heritage also encourages protection of trees, and addressing biodiversity<sup>(62)</sup>.

---

57 Planning and Development Briefs: A Guide to Better Practice, 1996, chapters 4 and 6

58 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010

59 Town & Country Planning Act 1990, s211

60 Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Part VIII

61 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, paras 5.2, 7.11-7.17

62 Streets For All: North East, 2005, English Heritage and Department for Transport

- 4.45** *Wansbeck Design Guide* provides an assessment of Bedlington's public realm and highlights the need for a public realm strategy in the conservation area to raise aspirations, draw on distinctiveness and set out the use of materials<sup>(63)</sup>. As part of the THI, the Council has committed to public realm maintenance for 10 years.

### Position

- 4.46** The public realm of the conservation area is one of its strong points, especially the green banks which line the full length of Front Street, and the survival of the Market Place and alleyways running north-south from Front Street as historic spaces.
- 4.47** The Street Pride initiative concluded with a wide range of recommendations for the public realm covering roads, crossing points, signage, facilities, footways, obstructions, security, aesthetics and maintenance. Many of these are being addressed but some could form future opportunities.

### Implementation

#### **Objective M: Public Realm, Green Spaces & Trees**

The Council will:

- i. prepare a comprehensive Public Realm Manual which addresses public realm, highways, green spaces and trees;
- ii. have regard to Streets For All North East and other published guidance on dealing with the public realm in historic areas;
- iii. apply highways and traffic legislation and guidance sensitively, and design works in a way which recognises local distinctiveness;
- iv. work collaboratively in the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of public realm and highways works;
- v. maintain existing and new public realm to high standards;
- vi. consider from time to time the need for further tree preservation orders;
- vii. ensure the protection, enhancement and ongoing management of biodiversity in the conservation area.

- 4.48** The public realm is the one public service that everyone uses all of the time, and it can have a big impact on the conservation area. The Council's duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area should exert a strong influence over its work in this field. It is crucial that design and maintenance

---

63 *Wansbeck Design Guide*, Wansbeck District Council, 2007, p61

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

in the public realm demonstrate best practice and civic pride as well as setting a good example to private owners. Successful management depends upon a clear vision and a coordinated approach to ensure delivery is efficient and effective.

**4.49** A Public Realm Manual for the conservation area will be prepared to meet THI and *Wansbeck Design Guide* objectives, and to build on the Street Pride initiative. This need not be a detailed or constraining document, but one which builds on a range of current practices and enhances them to ensure good conservation practice. It will incorporate themes in the *Wansbeck Design Guide*:

- embrace the town's history and character, creating a higher quality scene
- improve the landscape design and quality of Market Place and green spaces
- improve the pedestrian experience, remove clutter and reduce verge parking
- explore longer-term options for the Red Lion roundabout and Hartford Road
- improve physical and visual permeability on alleyways from the north

**4.50** The manual will be based on advice in *Streets for All* and will address:

- design and local distinctiveness
- traffic management
- engineering works
- signage
- street lighting and furniture
- maintenance of green spaces and trees
- street cleaning and litter collection
- environmental improvements

**4.51** Once complete, the manual will be used by the Officer Group set out on page 47 and other relevant services to deliver a high quality response to the area's needs. It will ensure coordination of planning and highways functions, set high standards and aspire to good quality design to create a well orchestrated street scene. Key topics to address are:

- *Co-ordinate to integrate:* A qualified professional should act as the public realm co-ordinator to co-ordinate the activities of the Council and other public agencies by providing advice on siting, design, materials, liveries, etc.
- *Partnership:* All relevant local authority departments should work together, as well as working with local groups. The Street Pride initiative is a good example of this.
- *Expertise:* There should be a multi-disciplinary approach to presentation and management of the public realm and all enhancement and highways schemes.
- *Training:* There should be a shared understanding across professional disciplines of issues such as urban design, traffic engineering and safety.
- *Policies:* There should be clear policies for various topics (eg. paving, street furniture; a public realm policy will be investigated for the emerging LDF).
- *Guidance:* There should be clear guidance on standards, specification, materials etc, for use in-house and by other agencies involved with the public realm so that their requirements can be co-ordinated in a consistent way.

- *Context:* There should be full understanding of the historic and landscape context; local distinctiveness should be respected so all highways and public realm works follow good streetscape practice and principles.
- *Quality:* There should be an investment in high quality, enduring, value for money solutions. If resources are inadequate, do less to a higher standard.
- *Less is more:* There should be a policy of placing nothing in the street unless there is a clear public benefit. Much street furniture is unnecessary and redundant items should be removed. Necessary items should be coordinated and carefully sited in relation to the buildings and townscape.

**4.52** All capital and maintenance works should respond to conservation area status, influencing decisions as well as the nature and quality of works. There is copious guidance on public realm and highway works in conservation areas and they will be used. Principal among these is *Streets for All* which details the opportunities there are to apply the traffic regulations more flexibly in conservation areas, analysing relevant legislation and manuals. Other useful guidance includes:

- *Save Our Streets*, 2004, English Heritage and Women's Institute,
- *Focus On The Public Realm*, 2003, English Historic Towns Forum,
- *Transport and the Historic Environment*, undated, English Heritage,
- *Enhancing The Street Scene and Traffic Management, Signs & Lighting*, practical guides appended to *Conservation Area Management, A Practical Guide*, 1998, English Historic Towns Forum,
- *Traffic Measures in Historic Towns*, 1993, English Historic Towns Forum.

**4.53** Traffic management and highways maintenance schemes can have a significant impact on conservation areas and it is important that a corporate approach is adopted and that potential impacts are addressed in the planning stage.

**4.54** The Council will consider the need for further TPOs as the need arises. It will use guidance on dealing with trees in conservation areas (including opportunities for new planting and landscaping) and on handling trees in the planning system<sup>(64)</sup>. TPOs can be made on trees which make a significant contribution to their surroundings. The tree's visual, historic and amenity contributions are taken into consideration.

**4.55** Future activities within the conservation area should not result in adverse impacts on protected species or sites of international, national or local nature conservation importance. Activities should seek to create and maintain the integrity of designated sites, habitat networks and multi-functional green infrastructure.

### Research & Interpretation

#### Context

**4.56** Research is important to improving our knowledge of the history and evolution of the conservation area. Interpretation helps us to understand what is important about the conservation area and why. The value of educational opportunities in the historic

---

64 Tree Preservation Orders: A Guide to Law & Good Practice, 2000, chapters 5 and 9

## 4 Managing Change & Enhancement

environment is well recognised. The *Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* promotes informed research to help to understand, progress and appreciate the region's historic environment<sup>(65)</sup>.

### Position

**4.57** As set out in the *Archaeological Assessment of Bedlington*, the town has been the subject of some research, but recently this has tended to focus on industrial history. Further study of primary sources would allow a greater understanding of the town's development<sup>(66)</sup>. Interpretation of the town's heritage is modest – there is a blue plaque network (the associated leaflet is out of print) and an interpretation board was installed in Market Place in 2006 as part of Street Pride. Two local history groups are active in the area; the Six Townships Community History Group regularly publishes leaflets including the monthly *Bedlingtonshire Revisited*.

### Implementation

#### Objective N: Research & Interpretation

The Council will:

- i. prepare and encourage others to prepare interpretation of the area's special local interest, potentially using on-site, printed and digital media;
- ii. encourage local history groups and others to carry out and publish research into the area's architecture and history, taking into account the agenda set by the archaeological Assessment Of Bedlington;
- iii. investigate opportunities for building recording to identify early buildings in the conservation area, and examine and understand their evolution.

**4.58** There are many possibilities for research and interpretation in the conservation area. These include small-scale incidental activities and large-scale site-based archaeological investigation.

**4.59** Some suggested research activities are as follows:

- those identified in the *Archaeological Assessment Of Bedlington*,
- those identified in the *Regional Research Framework for the Historic Env.*,
- those identified by local history groups,
- *Bedlington Conservation Area Atlas*:

Based on an innovative project in Northumberland National Park, this would be a collaboration between the Council, the local community and archaeologists to look at and explain the history of the town. Its aims would include:

- furthering the study, understanding and enjoyment of the conservation area,
- reinforcing and developing the sense of place and belonging of local people,

65 Shared Visions: North-East Regional Research Framework, D Petts & C Gerrard, EH / Durham Uni, 2006

66 Archaeological Assessment Of Bedlington, Extensive Urban Survey, Second Draft, A Williams, 2007



- providing background information for future community-led initiatives,
- facilitating conservation area management by the Council.

- *Historic Photographs*

A project to research, compile and publish (printed and online) a collection of old photos of the conservation area. Photos are an easy way to understand past times and are an invaluable guide to building conservation. Postcards, family photos, archives and history books are useful sources.

- *Building Recording Projects*

One of the best ways to understand traditional buildings is to physically investigate them on site. Recording could identify and examine early buildings in the area which have evolved over time, or traditional buildings which are to be substantially altered. There should also be opportunities for training in building recording techniques for local people, possibly in conjunction with the North East Vernacular Architecture Group.

**4.60** Some suggested interpretation activities are as follows:

- *Blue Plaques*

There is already a network of blue plaques on some of the town's historic buildings, but they are not always displayed to best effect. The existing town trail has recently been put online, but consideration could be given to expanding and improving the plaque network and associated trail.

- *A Bedlington Book or DVD*

This would arise from material gathered in the Conservation Area Atlas and could be a popular, well-illustrated guide to the conservation area in book or DVD form. This could also be completed in collaboration with local people.

- *Street Theatre*

A good way for local people and visitors to experience 'living' history is through street theatre. This could involve an active trail where, at various points, scenes from Bedlington's past are re-enacted, with the buildings (potentially inside and out) providing the 'stage set' and local people and schoolchildren being the actors. Such activities have become annual events in other places, and are ideal for inclusion in the national Heritage Open Days programme.

- *Photographic Competition*

A photographic competition, perhaps on the theme of *Bedlington Conservation Area Today*, would encourage local people to take a good look at their neighbourhood and record what it means to them. Sponsorship could provide prizes, and entries could be displayed in local venues such as the community centre, Council offices and library as well as local pubs, clubs and shops.

**4.61** There will be many more possibilities for research and interpretation. The leadership of the Community Heritage Officer will be key to action on this issue.

### 5 Resources & Community Involvement

#### Introduction

**5.1** Having sufficient resources is important to ensuring proper management of the area. Resources are limited and need to be prioritised, but good practice does take time, funds and skills. Not all of these need come directly from the Council and the involvement of local people and other agencies can also be important to efficient conservation area work. This section addresses:

- involving stakeholders, including local people, businesses and interest groups,
- Council resources, and the need to work corporately and in partnership,
- getting the right advice to influence new development and design,
- ensuring appropriate skills are available,
- the importance of funding.

#### Community Involvement

##### Context

**5.2** Public involvement in the environment in general is key to local authority work and early local involvement in policy formulation and decision-making is promoted in national planning guidance. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out who should be involved in planning and how. English Heritage guidance reinforces the need for local involvement in conservation area management. It suggests consultation activity should generally be in line with the SCI, even if it does not technically apply. Community involvement should be sustained by regular information, consultation and participation with local residents, businesses, amenity groups and authorities<sup>(67)</sup>.

##### Position

**5.3** Community activity in the town is quite high with a number of active groups, but little relates specifically to the historic environment. There is only modest public information about the area. The town centre often makes the local press, but rarely from an historic environment point of view.

---

67 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, paras 3.8-3.10

### Implementation

#### **Objective O: Community Involvement**

The Council will:

- i. have regard to the SCI as the basis for public consultation and involvement, whether the SCI technically applies or not;
- ii. foster local involvement in conservation area management;
- iii. provide regular opportunities for involvement including information, consultation and participation.

**5.4** The SCI's principles will be adopted in relation to all community involvement in the area. This would bring proposals closer to the public and ensure appropriate input into decisions being made. This would mean seeking to ensure consultation:

- is early in the process,
- is clear, easily accessible and available in alternative formats,
- is available to all sections of the community,
- involves reporting back in some form.

**5.5** The Council will foster local involvement in the historic environment by encouraging local people and groups to do the following:

- develop local amenity and interest groups to encourage participation,
- share knowledge, views and ideas about the area with the Council and others,
- ensure the chance is not missed to comment on proposals,
- aim to 'sign up' to new development and design through continuous dialogue,
- challenge developers to prove they are achieving high quality,
- develop their own built environment skills,
- help research local history and buildings, and get involved in interpretation.

**5.6** The Council will ensure sufficient information is available to support public goodwill:

- regular press releases and photo calls, including Council newsletters,
- feedback to councillors and the local strategic partnership,
- public meetings, exhibitions or drop-in sessions where appropriate,
- printed material such as information leaflets and guide maps,
- newsletters available across the area and beyond, during the THI,
- dedicated pages on the Council's website, including pages on character, architecture, history, management, involvement opportunities, and possibly a discussion board.

## 5 Resources & Community Involvement

### Conservation Area Advisory Group

#### Context

- 5.7 PPS5 emphasises the need for local planning authorities to understand the significance of heritage assets to the local community.<sup>(68)</sup> The associated PPS5 planning practice guide advises that conservation advisory committees can offer advice in this respect and can be valuable sources of local knowledge<sup>(69)</sup>.

#### Position

- 5.8 The conservation area has no existing CAAG. A THI Partnership has been created, however, and could essentially fulfil the role of a CAAG during the life of the THI.

#### Implementation

##### **Objective P: Conservation Area Advisory Group / THI Partnership**

The Council will establish and service a Conservation Area Advisory Group(CAAG) to aid community consultation and involvement, and to promote the interests of the conservation area. The THI Partnership will act as the CAAG for the life of the THI. The Council will consider the relationship of the CAAG with the Design Review Panel, and with the CAAG needs of other conservation areas.

- 5.9 It is in the Council's interests to foster community activity that can contribute to the conservation area management process. The THI Partnership will act as the CAAG in the first instance and the situation will be reviewed at the end of the THI.
- 5.10 The CAAG / THI Partnership will be set up to:
- identify issues and opportunities for protection, enhancement and regeneration of the conservation area,
  - promote understanding and awareness of the area's special local interest,
  - act as a formal, mutual point of contact for consultation and involvement,
  - offer comment on planning and other applications affecting the area,
  - engage in voluntary practical work, where there is scope.
- 5.11 The group would offer community comment on planning applications in parallel with the Design Review Panel's expert role. It could carry out its own activities (such as interpretation work or a schools' project) if suitable resources were secured. It could also lead on production of a *Property Maintenance & Repair Guide*.
- 5.12 The CAAG / THI Partnership will 'nest' within the existing structure of either the Council or the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, and will be administered by it. It will select a chair and establish a code of conduct. Membership will be based on:

68 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG 2010 Policy HE7

69 Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide, DCLG, English Heritage & DCMS, March 2010, Para 59

- ward councillors and other relevant members of the County Council
- West Bedlington Town Council
- West Bedlington Community Forum
- South East Area Partnership
- Bedlington Forum
- Bedlington Chamber of Trade
- other representatives from the business community
- representatives from the residential community
- representatives from local amenity, history and other interest groups

**5.13** Council officers will be in attendance.

### Council Resource & Corporate Working

#### Context

**5.14** English Heritage stresses that insufficient resources to manage conservation areas can seriously undermine their purpose and value. It recommends all local authority functions understand the significance of conservation areas, and work together<sup>(70)</sup>. It also considers every planning authority should have access to at least one full time conservation specialist. The HLF places great emphasis on a corporate approach to THI delivery<sup>(71)</sup>.

**5.15** English Heritage and CABI recommend the appointment of Historic Environment Champions and Design Champions at senior officer and member level<sup>(72)</sup>. Their role is to raise the profile and encourage high quality in architecture, design and historic environment management by influencing the Council's functions and decisions.

#### Position

**5.16** A range of officers currently work in the conservation area, mainly development management and planning policy officers, and historic buildings advisors. Historically, activity is not co-ordinated around conservation area management issues and is mostly reactive to planning casework. There has, however, recently been more proactive team working as a consequence of the THI and involving regeneration, building control, community heritage and highways officers.

**5.17** The Council has both a Historic Environment Champion and a Design Champion, a senior councillor and a senior officer.

---

70 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006, paras 3.3-3.6

71 Townscape Heritage Initiative Application Pack, HLF, 2004, pp11-12

72 Historic Environment Champions, English Heritage, 2004; Local Authority Design Champions, CABI, 2004



## 5 Resources & Community Involvement

### Implementation

#### **Objective Q: Council Resources & Corporate Working**

The Council will:

- i. ensure a corporate commitment to conservation area management in planning and regeneration service plans during the life of the THI;
- ii. create an informal Officer Group with the multi-disciplinary skills needed to ensure effective conservation area management over time;
- iii. ensure appropriate historic environment and project management expertise and experience is available to lead delivery of the THI;
- iv. ensure the Historic Environment & Design Champions are involved in conservation area work, encourage collaborative working, encourage local involvement and publicity, and help secure training where needed.

- 5.18** On review of the service plans for planning and regeneration services, the Council will ensure a corporate commitment to conservation area management during the THI under appropriate themes.
- 5.19** Managing the area's historic environment effectively will require experienced professional input from a range of fields to ensure decisions are informed and balanced. To comply with HLF guidance, the THI will be managed day-to-day by officers with project management and historic environment skills.
- 5.20** It is important that officers work in a corporate manner to deliver the successful management of the conservation area. This will be achieved through the creation of an informal conservation area officer group and the networking of its members. The group will need to be multi-disciplinary. It may also need access to biodiversity, culture, tourism, business support, environmental protection, project management, legal, financial and other skills.
- 5.21** It is vital that all officers receive training in conservation principles and techniques. This is particularly important for those not normally involved in conservation, such as planning, design, building control, regeneration and highways officers. In particular, engineers will be encouraged to understand and take into account conservation objectives as part of their regular implementation and maintenance responsibilities. Some officers will also have useful contacts, such as building control officers whose contacts with local contractors can help identify site problems and provide technical advice with conservation in mind. As well as officers, the involvement of councillors will be important including Historic Environment & Design Champions
- 5.22** The Champions have a special responsibility to advocate the cause, raising the profile of heritage and good design in and beyond the Council<sup>(73)</sup>. They should:

---

73 NE Design Champions & Historic Environment Champions Induction & Resource Pack, NECT / NA, 2005

- break down internal barriers, and encourage new ways of working between Council departments, and between the Council and other agencies,
- make contact with the community, seek support and encourage local involvement, as well as use the media to sell good news stories,
- ensure officers have the necessary skills, ensuring the authority can promote the benefits of good design and the historic environment properly.

**5.23** Champions and officers can, in part, be self-taught through the English Heritage HELM website, and by CABE's copious free publications.

### Design Review Panel

#### Context

**5.24** Local Plan Policy GP18 requires development in or affecting a conservation area to be in sympathy with its character and appearance. The *Wansbeck Design Guide* SPD requires high standards of design generally across the former Wansbeck area including for new residential development and residential extensions. There is also a *Shopfront Design Guide* for Bedlington and Newbiggin conservation areas.

**5.25** National guidance from CABE encourages the use of design review to encourage good schemes and to increase the breadth and depth of experience available to the planning authority in looking at new development<sup>(74)</sup>. English Heritage stresses the importance of good architectural and urban design in conservation areas<sup>(75)</sup>.

#### Position

**5.26** Development proposals are currently assessed by planning officers and historic buildings advisors. Where relevant, English Heritage's Historic Areas Advisor is also invited to comment. The Council recognises available design skills are not as strong as they could be, and that additional resource in tackling design on a case-by-case basis is desirable, in addition to the policy and guidance already in place. This is especially important during the life of the THI.

---

74 How to do Design Review, Creating and Running a Successful Panel, CABE, 2006, p5

75 Building In Context, New Development in Historic Areas, English Heritage / CABE, 2001

## 5 Resources & Community Involvement

### Implementation

#### Objective R: Design Review Panel

The Council will establish a Design Review Panel which:

- i. offers free specialist advice to developers and the planning authority on selected pre- and post-submission applications for planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent;
- ii. has appropriate expertise and experience based on existing Council officer resource plus additional members from outside the Council;
- iii. is small-scale but appropriately administered and resourced;
- iv. is flexible and responsive, offering advice early in the design process;
- v. is independent of development management committee;

The Council will consider the relationship of the Panel with the CAAG, with any design review committee for the wider council area, and with the design review needs of other conservation areas

**5.27** A more targeted approach for an historic environment context is required which:

- brings together relevant expertise and experience in and beyond the Council,
- is flexible to changing levels of development in the area but sufficiently responsive to offer advice early in the design process,
- is modest but appropriately administered and resourced.

**5.28** In establishing a Design Review Panel, the Council will follow guidance in *How to do Design Review, Creating and Running a Successful Panel* (CABE, 2006).

**5.29** The Panel will provide guidance:

- to developers at pre-application stage, when advice could remain private if commercial sensitivity issues were relevant, and
- to development management officers on current applications, when advice would become a material consideration.

**5.30** It will establish criteria to select the proposals on which it would offer advice. Meeting regularly would be excessive for a relatively small area, so being 'on-call' will offer greater flexibility. Members will need appropriate skills in conservation, architecture, planning or urban design, and should be experienced in design review and critique. Consideration will be given to inception and modest training. The expertise and experience required for design review would preclude the task being fulfilled by the CAAG, the membership of which would be more lay and community based, but the

two groups will need to be closely coordinated. Membership of the Panel will also need to be independent of development management committee to ensure transparency. The Panel will select a chair and establish a code of conduct.

### External Funding

#### Context

- 5.31** Capital funds are important to conservation area management. English Heritage guidance recommends financial aid for building repairs and public activities, but also recognises internal budgets may not always meet the demand<sup>(76)</sup>.

#### Position

- 5.32** External funds secured for the conservation area in recent years include a contribution from English Heritage towards the £30,000 CAP scheme in 1998; and £200,000 from Safer Cleaner Greener funds for Street Pride since 2005. More recently, £587,000 has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the THI. Notwithstanding the grant aid and additional funding made available from County Council budgets towards the THI, the project has identified greater need and demand for historic building grant aid than the THI funds can solve. Some activities identified in this strategy will need partnership funds to make them viable.

#### Implementation

##### **Objective S: External Funding**

The Council will use its best endeavours to secure the necessary funding to ensure conservation area management follows best practice. This will include bidding for external funding from a variety of heritage and regeneration sources, for a range of activities including regeneration, building repairs, enhancement schemes, public realm works, research, interpretation, training and community involvement.

- 5.33** Realising conservation area enhancement objectives will require substantial funding from Council budgets, some of which must be targeted towards the private sector. Using this to lever in external funding will be a key way of increasing the investment in the area and encouraging the private sector to do the same.
- 5.34** Access to funds is increasingly linked to partnerships with external funding bodies. The Council will investigate a wide range of funding sources as opportunities arise, considering in particular the availability of conservation area funds from English Heritage partnership schemes.

---

76 Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, EH, 2006, paras 3.3 and 3.5

### Appendix A - Boundary Review

The following is a review of the existing boundary of Bedlington Conservation Area.

#### **Does the conservation area still have special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance?**

Yes. The character appraisal has identified that, despite some erosion of detailed character over time in places, the whole area has special local interest based on its long history as a market town, its nineteenth century industrial pre-eminence, and the high quality representation of these and other aspects of its history in the architecture, spaces and townscape surviving today.

#### **Does the boundary still exist on the ground?**

Yes, but with some inconsistencies. The boundary generally follows the backs of plots facing Front Street, Market Place and the roundabout with Glebe Road and Hartford Road. There are several minor inconsistencies which should be clarified:

- The modern back lanes behind Millfield Court on East End Front Street and on the north side of Front Street West from Carlton House to No.66 should be excluded, but the rear boundary treatments to all these properties should be included.
- The historic back lane behind Nos.40-58 East End Front Street (off Bell's Place) and the rear boundary treatments of these properties should be included.
- The car-park to the rear of the Council Offices is the site of former grounds to the demolished Bedlington Old Hall and associated backland development; the full extent of this car-park should be included for its spatial characteristics and potential archaeological interest (though no more of the adjoining Lion Garage car-park than is currently included should be added).
- Where the boundary crosses Church Close / Windsor Gardens at Windsor House, modern highways and pavements should be excluded but rear boundary treatments should be included.
- The boundary should follow the historic plot shape at Perrystone Mews where an unusually long plot boundary, protruding into what is now school playing fields, survives intact (as shown on the 1st Edition OS Map of 1860).
- In the north west corner, the boundary should follow the line of the subway and its steps.

#### **Is the boundary drawn too tightly to exclude integral parts of the development pattern on the periphery of the area?**

Yes, at three locations into the conservation area, integral development pattern and historic buildings are excluded:

- On Ridge Terrace, the boundary cuts through an historic terrace at Nos.1-3 Brown's Buildings. All three buildings should be included to ensure equal protection of this characterful old block at a gateway site which follows a plot pattern in place since the earliest available map of 1847.



- Including the characterful group on Catholic Row would complement the various places of worship in the town and recognise the striking but secluded architectural contribution made by the collection of historic and modern buildings there.
- At the east end, Spring View, a large late Georgian house built for the principal agent of Bedlington Iron Works, is an important reminder of the positive impact the works had on the town's nineteenth century wealth. It and its grounds are substantially intact, already listed Grade II, but also worthy of conservation area status. A boundary to reach the house is carefully drawn to exclude more recent housing.

### **Is the setting adequately protected?**

Largely, yes. But the conservation area's setting at Church Lane, and the setting to the Grade II\* listed parish church and the Old School would be better protected by including the first four plots on the west side of Church Lane – Nos.1-4. They are also characterful early twentieth century suburban buildings in their own right. (NB. The decision to include or exclude them should not be influenced by the poor condition of the neighbouring Old School, only by the recognised criteria for boundary review set out in page 10.)

### **Are all aspects of the legislation considered?**

Yes. No revisions to the boundary are needed to address issues relating, for example, to trees, permitted development rights or other heritage designations.

### **Have changes in attitudes towards architecture, history, planning and townscape changed opinions of what has special local interest?**

No. There is no development on the periphery of the conservation area, either from a different era or of a different type, which has enough interest to warrant inclusion.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Modest extension of the boundary would provide a better reflection of Bedlington's special local historic and architectural interest, as shown in Figure 7. All parts are coherently linked to the existing designation. The resultant area has a character and appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance and has therefore been included in the Bedlington Conservation Area.



Figure 7 Boundary Modifications & Clarification of Existing Boundary

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved (100018319) 2008

### Appendix B - Initial Local List Suggestions

The following buildings and structures in the conservation area are an initial set of possible nominations for a future Local List. They should not pre-judge the process for the creation of a Local List as described above on page 10 *Local List*.

#### **Catholic Row(NB. Not currently in conservation area – see page 10 Boundary Review)**

- St Bede's Catholic Church and Priests House

#### **Church Lane**

- Various structures, walls and gravestones at parish church

#### **East End Front Street**

- Northumberland Arms PH
- Nos.92-98
- No.36
- Victorian Post Box, No.28
- Nos.22-26
- No.14
- The Dun Cow PH
- Black Bull PH

#### **Front Street West**

- Bedlington Social Club
- The Sun PH
- Bedlington Community Centre
- Windsor House, The Cottage and Demesne Farm (behind the war memorial)
- Former Primitive Methodist Chapel and attached Manse
- United Reformed Church and Manse to rear
- Blue Bell Inn
- Nos.40, 40a, 40b
- Nos.50-60
- Nos.78-82

#### **Hartford Road**

- Masonic Lodge
- Old Police Station and Magistrates Court
- Red Lion PH

#### **Market Place**

- Market Tavern

#### **Vulcan Place**

- No.10

**If you would like this document in a different format, language or font size, please contact:**

Karen Ledger  
Head of Development Services  
Northumberland County Council  
Freepost NEA 3728  
Morpeth  
NE61 2EF  
Telephone: 0845 600 6400  
Email: [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)