



Wansbeck District Council

Regulatory Services Division

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

Conservation Area (Existing & Proposed)



Management Strategy Supplementary Planning Document

Produced by



NORTH of ENGLAND CIVIC TRUST

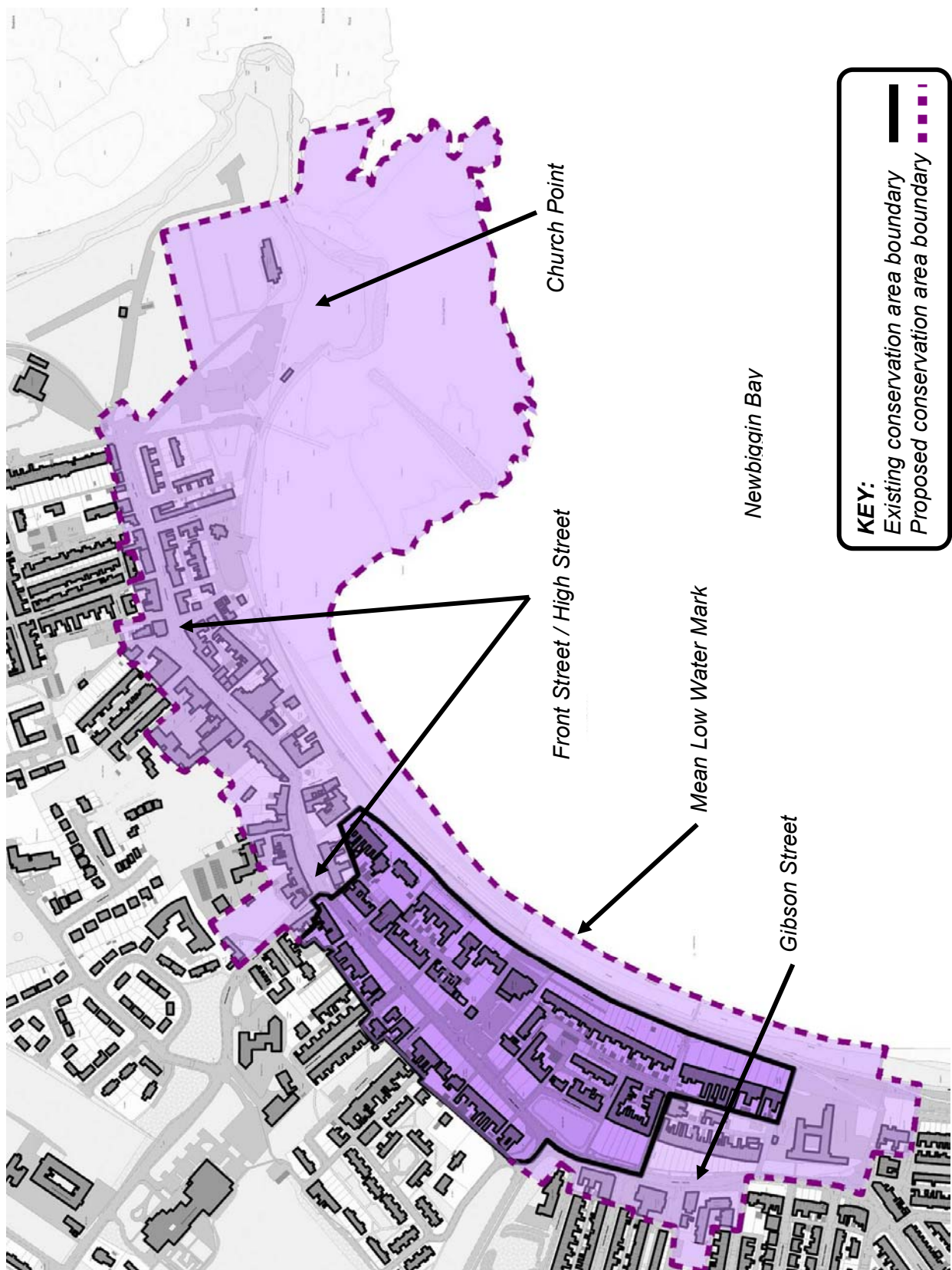
Northumberland
COUNTY COUNCIL

February 2009

www.wansbeck.gov.uk

Fig 1: Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area (Existing and Proposed)

(See page 12 and Appendix A for boundary review)



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1 Introduction

1.1 Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”¹. They are 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.

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. There are three in Wansbeck district:

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

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.

1.2 Why Manage Conservation Areas?

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

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

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 Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance.

1.3 ***This Management Strategy***

This management strategy was prepared during spring 2008 by North of England Civic Trust and the County Historic Buildings Advisor for Wansbeck District Council. It is to be adopted as a supplementary planning document, expanding on Policy GP17 of the Local Plan. There is also a conservation area character appraisal which forms evidence for this strategy's policies and proposals. The strategy and the character appraisal can be downloaded from www.wansbeck.gov.uk.

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.

The strategy should be reviewed every five years or so.

1.4 ***Further Information***

For further information on conservation, management strategies, design, planning permission or building regulations, please contact:

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

Information can also be provided in other languages and alternative formats eg. Braille, audiotape and large print. For further information please contact (01670) 843 405.

1.5 ***Note on Local Government Reorganisation***

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

2 Context and Objectives

2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the policy and guidance context for Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area, and sets out the objectives to be achieved by management.

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Legislation

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 them².

2.2.2 Government Guidance

Set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPG15 is a comprehensive and essential reference on the historic environment³. Others may include: PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable Development*, PPG3 *Housing*, PPS6 *Planning for Town Centres*, PPS9 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*, PPS12 *Local Development Frameworks*, PPG16 *Archaeology & Planning*, PPG18 *Enforcing Planning Control*, PPG19 *Outdoor Advertisement Control*. Other relevant guidance is also discussed.

2.2.3 Conservation Area Management Guidance

English Heritage's 2006 guidance on conservation area management sets out key good practice, recognising that resources are limited⁴. Other conservation area guidance, notably from the English Historic Towns Forum, is also discussed.

2.2.4 Regional and Sub-Regional Planning and Strategies

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) sets out a spatial vision for the north east⁵. This strategy conforms with relevant RSS policies. Other relevant regional/sub-regional strategies include:

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

³ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, DoE & DNH, 1994

⁴ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006

- Regional Economic Strategy and Integrated Regional Framework⁶,
- Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strat. and Local Area Agreement⁷.
- Northumberland Strategic Statement and Strategic Investment Plan⁸,
- Regional Cultural Strategy and Northumberland Cultural Strategy⁹,

2.2.5 **Development Plan**

The Wansbeck District Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2007, replacing that adopted in 1994. This, together with RSS (see above), forms the development plan for Wansbeck. Under the new planning system, the Council is preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF), a portfolio of development plan documents used to plan and control development across the district. This will eventually be replaced by a county-wide LDF which will be prepared by the new unitary authority (see 1.5).

Policies include GP17-19 *Conservation Areas*, GP6 *Trees*, GP8 *Coastal Zone*, GP9-13 *Nature Conservation*, GP14-16 *Listed Buildings*, GP20-21 *Archaeology*, GP30 *Visual Impact*, GP31 *Urban Design*, GP32 *Landscaping & Public Realm*, H5 *Housing Design*, RTC1, 6-9 & 11 *Town Centres*, T9 *Road Schemes*, and REC12 *Tourism*.

2.2.6 **Supplementary Planning Documents and Other Guidance**

More specific local planning guidance is contained in the following (see Fig 2):

- *Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Cons'n Area Character Appraisal*, June 2008
- *Wansbeck Design Guide*, adopted as an SPD in July 2007
- *Shopfront Design Guide*, adopted as planning policy in October 2007 and incorporating existing adopted guidance in:
 - *A Guide To Advertising In The Bedlington Conservation Area*
 - *Shopfront Security Measures for Bedlington Conservation Area*¹⁰

Wansbeck Design Guide is an adopted supplementary planning document (SPD) as part of the new LDF (see above). Other evidence is referred to where relevant.

2.2.7 **Wansbeck Initiative**

Wansbeck Initiative is currently the local strategic partnership¹¹. Regeneration and enterprise underpin its *Community Plan*, with aims including to enhance the quality, attractiveness and viability of town centres, and to sustain retailing in renewal areas such as Newbiggin¹². 2005 *Improvement Plan* priorities include: (i) to promote community engagement and build civic pride, and (ii) to improve local enterprise. The Council's *Best Value Performance Plan* links to the *Community Plan*¹³.

⁵ *The North East of England Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021*, Government Office North East, July 2008

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

⁷ *Realising the Strength of our Communities to 2021*, NSP, 2007; *Working Together 2006-09*, NSP, 2007

⁸ *Strategic Statement*, NSP, 2004-07; *Strategic Investment Plan 2005/08*, NSP, 2004

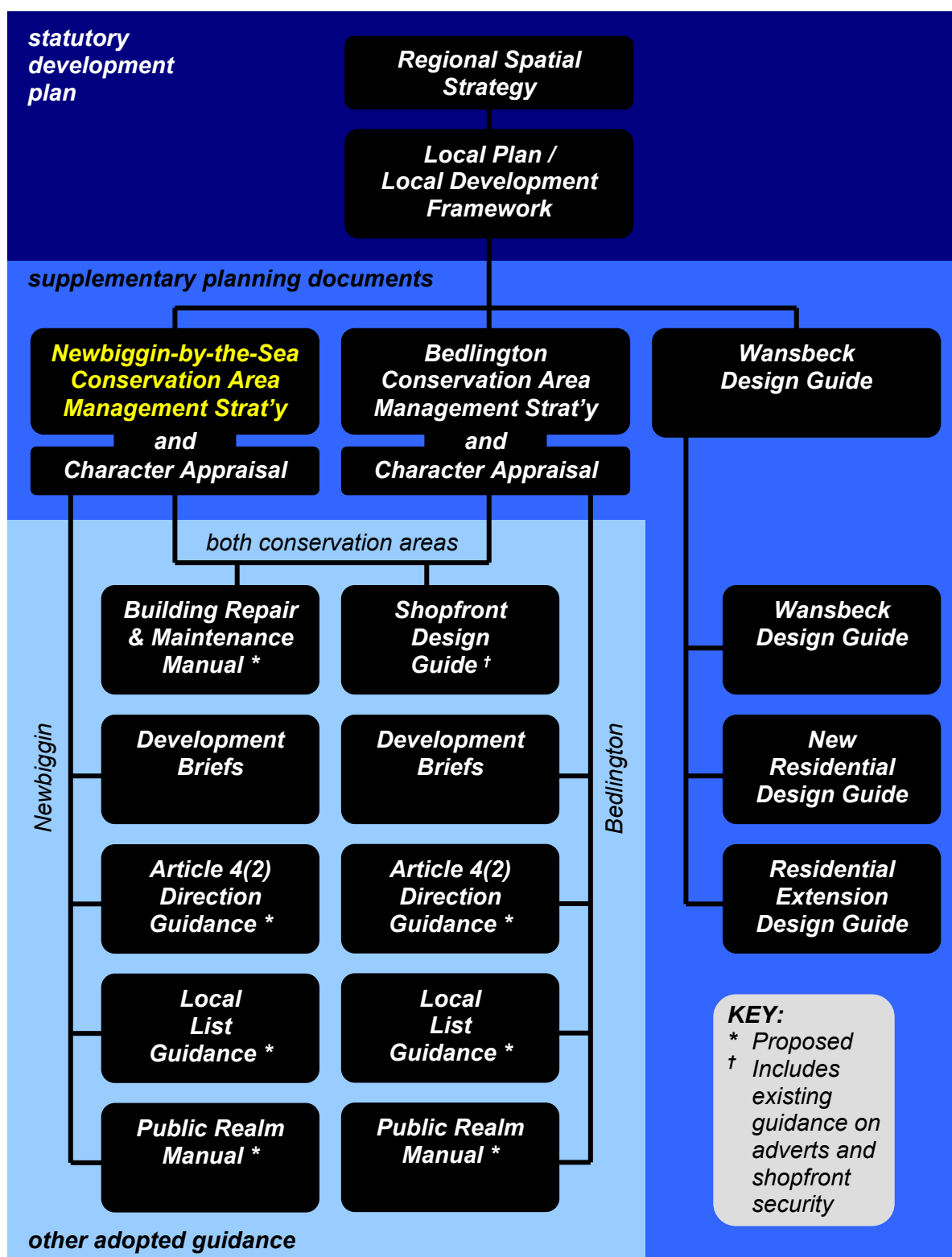
⁹ *Regional Cultural Strategy*, Culture North East, 2005; *Linkage & Leverage*, NSP 2002-08

¹⁰ Both of these now also apply to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area – see *Shopfront Design Guide*

¹¹ The future of Northumberland's local strategic p'ships is part of the current local government review; see 1.5

¹² *A Community Plan for Wansbeck 2004-2008 and Beyond*, Wansbeck Initiative, 2004

¹³ *Best Value Performance Plan 2007*, Wansbeck District Council

Fig 2: Policy and Guidance Context of this Management Strategy

2.2.8 Go-Wansbeck

Go-Wansbeck is a government backed initiative to create a more enterprising culture, support local business growth and attract new investment and employment opportunities. The 3 year programme (2007-10) has £11.8m of local enterprise growth initiative (LEGI) funds to boost business and encourage people to be enterprising, working with partners from all sectors. Go-Wansbeck is based on a

wide range of linked initiatives, a key one being Vibrant Town Centres which will improve the image, attractiveness and vitality of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Bedlington and Ashington town centres. The Newbiggin work will be led by Go Build On Your Heritage, a grant scheme to enhance the fabric and character of historic commercial properties in the town centre. In addition, a new Town Centres' Business Animator post will work in all three towns to identify new forms of trading such as fairs, to widen the customer base, to produce town centre marketing literature, and to bring together entrepreneurs and vacant business premises.

2.2.9 ***Newbiggin LIFE***

Newbiggin LIFE (Local Initiative For Everyone) was a partnership, running from 2003 to March 2008, between Wansbeck Council, Cheviot Housing Association and representatives of the local community. It aimed to secure social and physical regeneration using an integrated masterplan approach. As well as revitalising the local housing market with new housing and improvements to existing stock, it also sought to make environmental improvements and to support local business and enterprise, improve learning, leisure and culture.

2.2.10 ***International and National Habitat Designations***

The proposed extension to the conservation area (Fig 1, Appendix A) would include parts of the Cresswell & Newbiggin Shores SSSI, Northumberland Shore SSSI and Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar site. The latter is a European site, protected by statute, designated for its breeding birds and visiting migrant wildfowl and wader species. It must be ensured that future activities in the enlarged conservation area do not adversely effect sites and species of nature conservation importance.

2.2.11 ***Stakeholders***

The following stakeholders are relevant to the conservation area:

- Wansbeck District Council and Northumberland County Council
- Newbiggin Community Area Partnership (part of Wansbeck Initiative)
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Heritage Partnership, a recently created umbrella body for local amenity, history and interest groups including Newbiggin Local History Group and the Mary Joicey Maritime Trust
- Newbiggin Bay Committee, a liaison group dealing with management of the beach and Promenade area, set up for the coastal protection project (see 4.4)
- local residents in and around the conservation area (existing and proposed)
- local businesses in the conservation area (existing and proposed)
- shoppers and visitors to the conservation area (existing and proposed)
- English Heritage, which has a statutory role in some planning matters
- Natural England, where relevant in relation to the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar sites
- other amenity groups, such as the Northumberland & Newcastle Society

There are many more active groups in the wider town which could also become involved (eg. Arts Forum, Sailing Club, 50+ Club, WI, Newbiggin In Bloom).

The existing conservation area is in Newbiggin West ward. The proposed extension is in both Newbiggin West and Newbiggin East wards.

2.3 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.*

The vision, adapted from that in the Go-Wansbeck funding bid, is:

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea will capitalise on its intrinsic architectural and historic character to develop an identity and distinctiveness associated with an attractive seaside village, that is capable of better serving its residents but also appealing to and being able to offer more to visitors.

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

- to extend the conservation area to include the historic town centre and bay,
- to revitalise the resultant 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 ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site,
- to work in partnership with the local strategic partnership, local people, businesses, agencies and other interested organisations.

The vision and objectives accord with the context documents set out above. 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 area¹⁴. 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.

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

¹⁴ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, p3

3 Identification & Protection

3.1 Introduction

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.

3.2 Boundary Review

3.2.1 Context

Legislation places a duty on the Council to regularly review the coverage of conservation areas in its boundaries¹⁵. The Council commits to this in Local Plan Policy GP17. Guidance suggests review should take place where there is pressure for change and where the original designation took place many years ago.

3.2.2 Position

The conservation area was designated in 1986 and the boundary has not been reviewed since. Investment in the town centre from Go-Wansbeck has recently begun and will continue until at least 2010, major coast protection and associated public realm works have just been completed, and a major new maritime heritage centre is being planned (see 4.4). A boundary review is therefore needed now.

3.2.3 Implementation

Objective B: Boundary Review

The Council will review the conservation area boundary in 2008, 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.

¹⁵ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s69(1)(a)

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 review¹⁶. The boundary:

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

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)¹⁷.

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.

A boundary review has been carried out, recommending extension (Appendix A).

3.3 **Local List**

3.3.1 **Context**

RSS encourages local authorities to consider preparing lists of locally important buildings, supported by LDF policies to seek protection¹⁸. PPG15 recommends preparation of local lists of buildings which contribute to the local scene or for their local historical associations, together with supporting policies. This is supported in English Heritage guidance on assessing conservation area character¹⁹.

3.3.2 **Position**

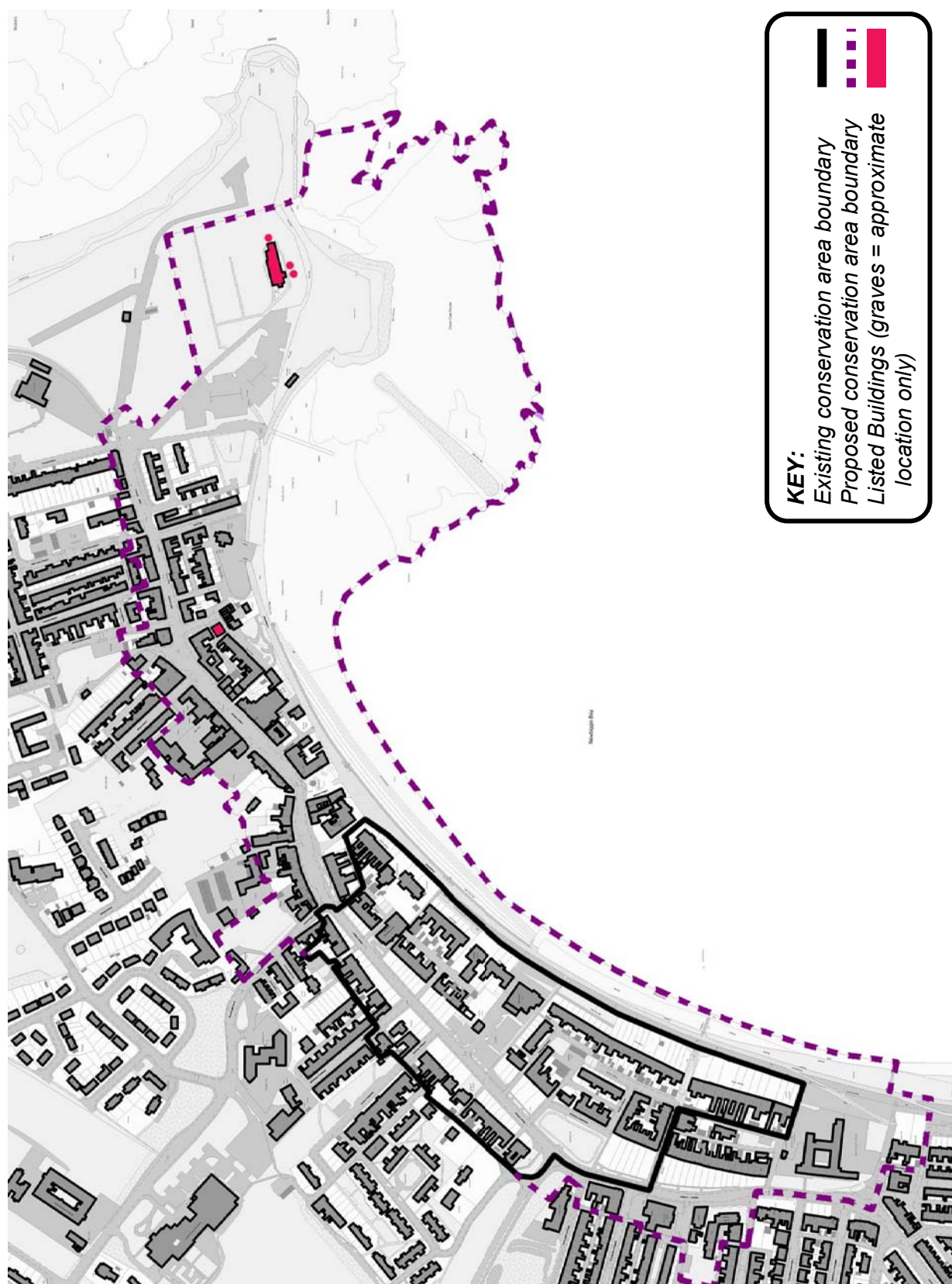
The Council does not have a Local List, but the character appraisal does identify a number of unlisted buildings of note. There are five entries in the statutory list in the vicinity (three being gravestones), a very low number compared to the quantity of historic buildings – see Figs 3 and 4. This suggests there may be many buildings falling short of national criteria but which might be of local interest.

¹⁶ *Conservation Area Management: A Practical Guide*, English Historic Towns Forum, 1998, p13

¹⁷ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.3

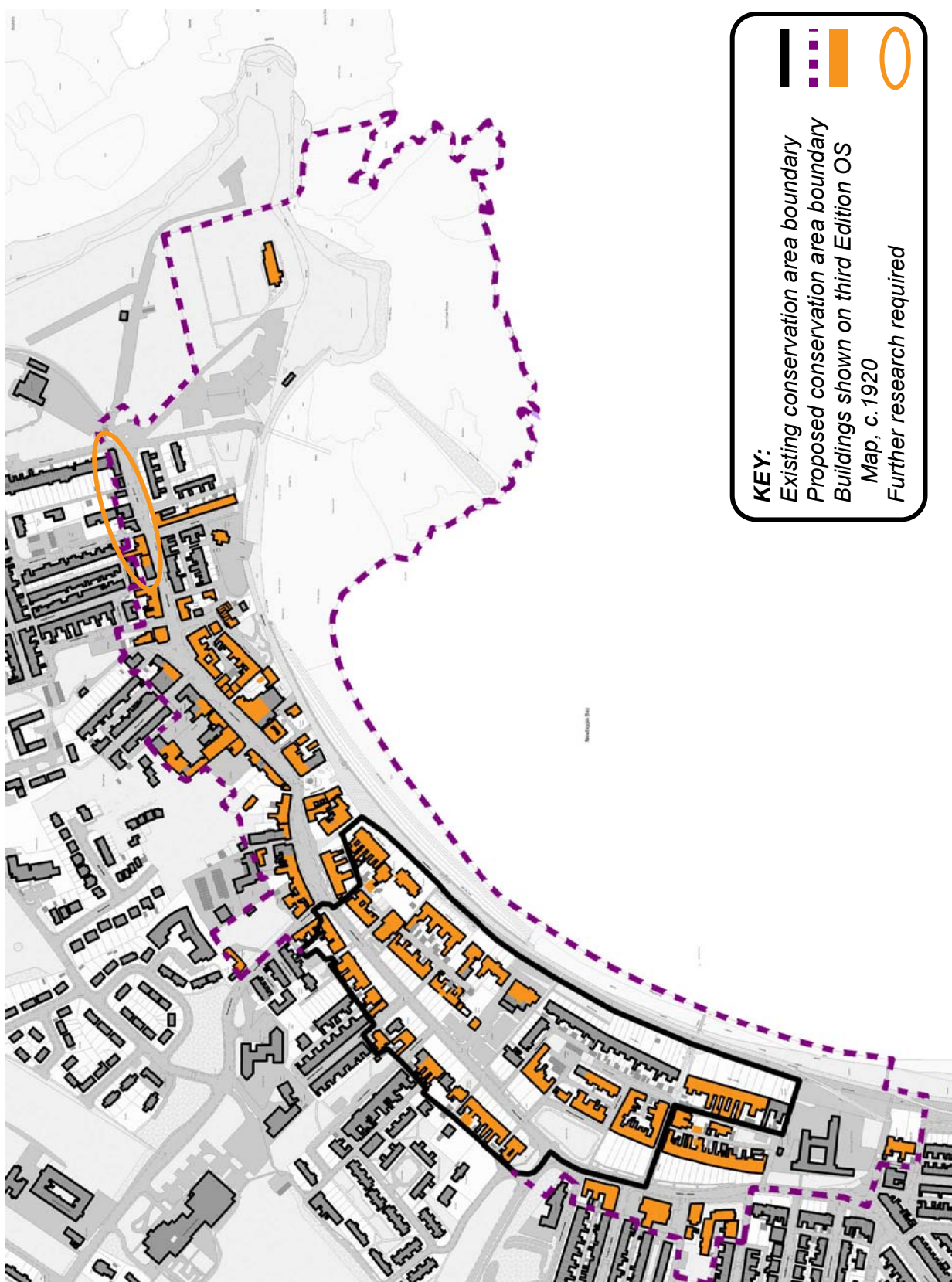
¹⁸ *Regional Spatial Strategy for the NE*, Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, Feb 2008, policy 34

¹⁹ *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, 2006, para 4.16

Fig 3: Listed Buildings

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Fig 4: Buildings Shown on Third Edition OS Map, c.1920



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3.3.3 **Implementation**

Objective C: Local List

The Council will 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.

The Local List will identify buildings with special local interest to be taken into consideration when development proposals are put forward. There is no statutory basis for producing local lists, but good practice will be followed, 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.

It is common for local lists to cover a whole district and, although this is not planned in Wansbeck, incorporating a list for this conservation area into a comprehensive council-wide list will be pursued in the future.

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 List²⁰.

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.

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.

An initial list of nominations has been prepared and is included in Appendix B.

3.4 **Demolition**

3.4.1 **Context**

Demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas requires Conservation Area Consent²¹. PPG15 says such demolitions should be assessed against the same broad criteria as for listed buildings, and advises against demolition until a contract

²⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 6.16

²¹ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s74

for the replacement scheme has been let²². 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.

3.4.2 **Position**

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 in para 3.55 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.

3.4.3 **Implementation**

Objective D: Demolition

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

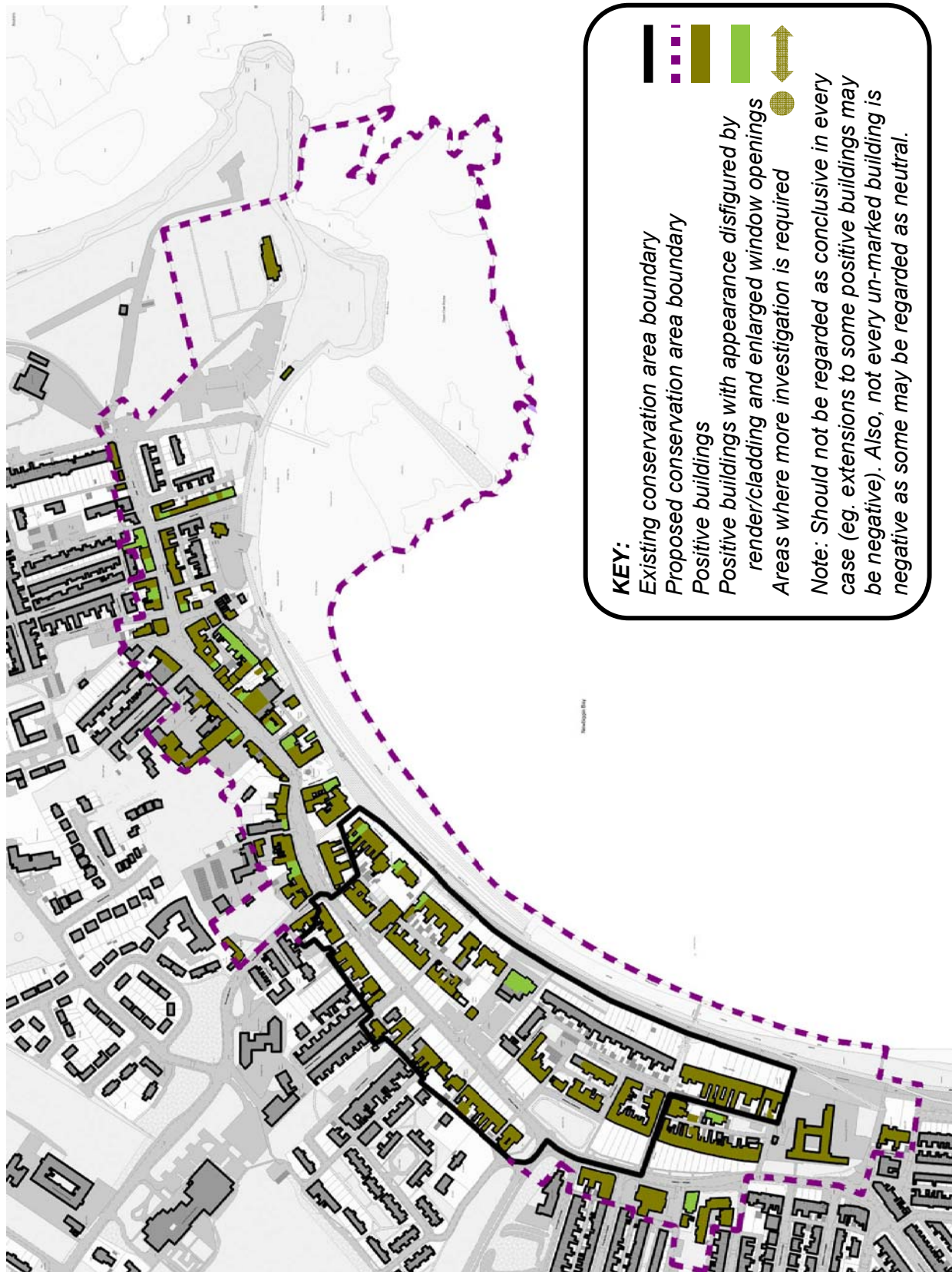
- i. have regard to relevant guidance in PPG15;*
- ii. discourage applications for conservation area consent without the parallel submission of full proposals for a replacement scheme;*
- iii. in deciding whether an unlisted building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, have regard to the Character Appraisal, Local List, and criteria set by English Heritage;*
- iv. in deciding whether evidence of an unlisted building being beyond reasonable economic repair is conclusive, have regard to relevant guidance in PPG15, including that demolition must not simply be more economically attractive than repair, and that economic repair has not been made unreasonable by the acquisition price reflecting perceived development potential rather than the building's condition & constraints;*
- 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.*

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 (see 3.3) and criteria published by English Heritage²³:

- 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?

²² Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, paras 4.27 and 4.29

²³ *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, 2006, appendix 2

Fig 5: Buildings making a positive contribution to character and appearance

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- 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?

In particular it will be important not judge a building solely on appearance. The character appraisal sets out that poor appearance of historic buildings is a notable problem, often disguising other qualities they may have which give them an overall positive character. It is important to assess a building's contribution fully, rather than just by how it looks. To this end, Fig 5 identifies buildings which make a positive contribution, separating out those which could be more positive if their appearance were improved. Those identified have been disfigured by both:

- comprehensive cladding or cement render to principal elevations, and
- enlarged window openings, particularly with a horizontal emphasis.

Reversal of these would restore a fuller positive contribution to the area and, in this respect, they should be seen as an 'agenda' for action (see 4.5 *Enhancement Opportunities*). To treat such buildings as negative or neutral would ignore their other positive qualities – age, form, style, etc. Some areas need more investigation, eg. buildings in backland and yards, or older fabric in ostensibly newer buildings. In each case, a full assessment should be made in line with the above guidance.

Any economic case made for demolition will be determined using best practice, including that set out in PPG15 which stresses that where a building has been deliberately neglected in the hope of obtaining consent for demolition, less weight should be given to repair costs. The Council may seek independent assessment of any economic case made for the demolition of an unlisted building. PPG15 also stresses the importance of new uses for redundant historic buildings, possibly by involving building preservation trusts, or through community ownership or use²⁴.

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 required²⁵.

3.5 **Permitted Development Rights**

3.5.1 **Context**

The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) automatically grants planning permission for a range of minor developments to householders²⁶. These permitted

²⁴ PPG15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, paras 3.11, 3.16-3.19, 4.25-4.27 and 4.29

²⁵ Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, and ODPM Circular 06/2005 (Part IV B)

²⁶ Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, Article 3

development (PD) 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 PD rights in the same way.)

Article 4(2) of the GPDO allows the Council to remove certain householder PD rights²⁷. They are normally used to control a proliferation of often minor alterations to conservation area buildings which, over time, can cumulatively erode character.

PPG15 suggests using Article 4 Directions to protect features key to character²⁸, whilst English Heritage says to use them to control damaging cumulative change²⁹. 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.

3.5.2 **Position**

There is currently no Article 4(2) Direction in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, but there is evidence of cumulative harm to character from a series of relatively minor works 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 government is currently reviewing householder PD rights and the impact on the conservation area of any changes to the GPDO would need to be assessed.

3.5.3 **Implementation**

Objective D: Permitted Development Rights & Article 4(2) Directions

The Council will:

- i. make an Article 4(2) Direction to control the impact of permitted development rights on dwellinghouses 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(2) 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 public sources;*
- iv. offer advice, guidance and encouragement to developers in order to influencing 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.*

²⁷ Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, Article 4 para 2

²⁸ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.23

²⁹ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, paras 5.13-5.22

PPG15 explains rights should not be withdrawn without justification³⁰. But here it is clear an Article 4(2) Direction is needed now to curtail the evident impact of rights over time on character. It 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.

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 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.

The Direction would mean certain works to a dwellinghouse (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 dwellinghouse, including repointing, 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.

The GPDO, and the related circular and guidance, set out the procedure³¹. An explanatory leaflet will be prepared. An Article 4(2) 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.

The Council will also engage proactively with householders and other developers to help reduce the potential negative impact of PD 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 PD rights on the area.

3.6 **Enforcement & Monitoring**

3.6.1 **Context**

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

³⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.23

³¹ DoE Circular 9/95; *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, EH, 2006, paras 5.13-5.22

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 date of substantial completion of the development. PPG15 and English Heritage suggest using a comprehensive dated photographic record to aid enforcement in conservation areas, listed buildings and Article 4 Directions³².

PPG15 also stresses the importance of the timely use of statutory powers where necessary, to rescue buildings at risk from their condition or vacancy³³.

3.6.2 **Position**

There is currently no proactive monitoring of the area for planning breaches, but the Council has recently appointed an Enforcement Officer and prepared an enforcement policy. 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(2) Directions (see above).

3.6.3 **Implementation**

Objective E: 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(2) 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.*

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,

³² PPG15, 1994, para 3.43; *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, EH, 2006, paras 5.22, 8.2

³³ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 7.2

- 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.

The following unauthorised works will be given a medium priority:

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

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.

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.

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 owner³⁴.
- *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 nature³⁵.
- *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)³⁶.

³⁴ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s54

³⁵ Town & Country Planning Act 1990, s215

³⁶ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s47 and s48

Relevant guidance will be used³⁷. The Council also has other compulsory purchase powers under the Planning Acts, which it can consider where necessary.

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.

3.7 **Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity**

3.7.1 **Context**

PPG15 recognises the importance of assessing the archaeological significance of both buildings and land³⁸, whilst English Heritage guidance recommends identifying those parts of conservation areas with archaeological interest³⁹. PPG16 gives detailed advice on dealing with archaeology, and Local Plan Policies GP20 and GP21 control development affecting sites of archaeological significance.

3.7.2 **Position**

There has been a focus of activity in the vicinity since the prehistoric period. A Mesolithic flint site has been identified on Newbiggin Point beneath a build-up of wind blown sand, while Bronze Age and Iron Age finds have been recovered from Newbiggin Moor. The Church of St Bartholomew dates to the thirteenth century, although possible pre-Conquest fabric incorporated in the nave may indicate an earlier origin. Sources indicate that there has been a settlement at Newbiggin since at least the medieval period. The existing street pattern along Front Street reflects the medieval layout with narrow burgage plots running back from properties along the street frontage. There are references to an existing pier at Newbiggin in 1352 which is thought to be located along the spur of rocks to the south of the church. In the nineteenth century, the pier was described as being large rocks with piles of wood visible at low tide, but these remains were not visible in the 1950s and it is thought coastal erosion and mining subsidence may have had an affect on its survival. A Medieval hospital is thought to have been located at Spital Point to the south of the proposed conservation area. In the post-Medieval period, the town developed as a residential centre and beach resort. In 1868, the first telegraph cable between Britain and Scandinavia came ashore at the Cable House (also known as the Winding House). The Lifeboat Station was constructed in 1852.

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea has not been the subject of a large amount of archaeological investigation. A watching brief for works to install floodlighting around the church revealed surviving medieval walls. A recent watching brief during water mains

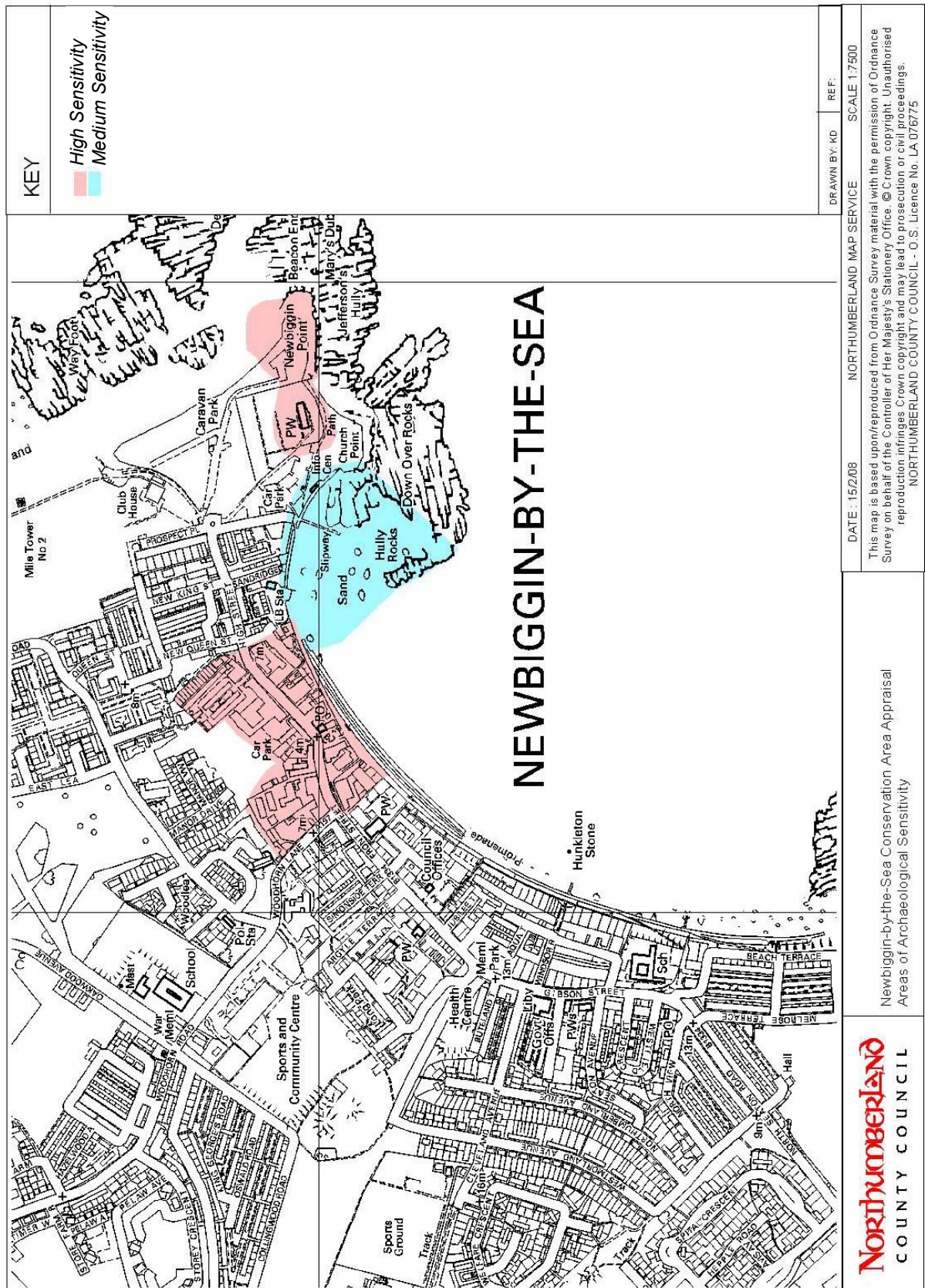
³⁷ eg. *Stopping The Rot*, 1998, English Heritage; *Derelict Land and Section 215 Powers*, 2000, Arup & ODPM

³⁸ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 2.15

³⁹ *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, English Heritage, 2006, para 4.10

rehabilitation within the historic settlement core revealed stratified medieval remains in the road and back plots, comprising walls, a hearth and a midden.

Fig 6: Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity



3.7.3 **Implementation**

Objective F: 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.

An archaeological sensitivity map has been prepared based on historic sources, old maps and recent archaeological investigation – see Fig 6. It is highly likely that archaeological work will be required on planning applications submitted within the areas highlighted as being of high and medium archaeological sensitivity.

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.

The nature and extent of archaeological work will be gauged for each individual site. Prospective developers should therefore contact the Assistant County Archaeologist at the earliest opportunity to discuss potential requirements on development sites within the conservation area.

4 *Managing Change & Enhancement*

4.1 *Introduction*

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.

4.2 *Design*

4.2.1 *Context*

PPS1 firmly links design and planning, requiring submission of Design & Access Statements (DAS) with planning applications. PPG15 explains historic buildings are best protected by any new buildings being carefully designed to respect their context, following fundamental architectural principles whilst allowing imaginative, high quality design, not imitation⁴⁰. 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.

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

⁴⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, paras 2.14 and 4.17

4.2.2 **Position**

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 the town centre has a very strong character from different architectural eras, but that materials are a little uninspiring and the public realm lacks identity. 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 largely handled by planning policy and development control officers, and the County Historic Buildings Advisor (see 5.4 below).

4.2.3 **Implementation**

Objective G: 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.*

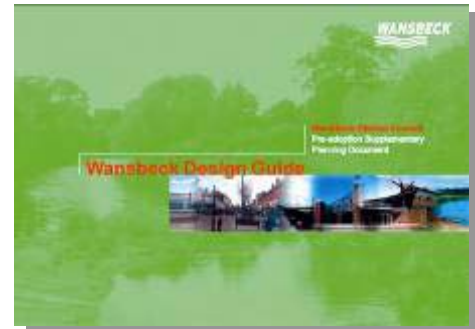
All new design in the conservation area should:

- v. respond to and reinforce local distinctiveness and special architectural and historic interest;*
- vi. relate well to the history, topography and setting of the area;*
- vii. sit happily in the pattern of development, uses, spaces, routes & views;*
- viii. respect and contribute to the landscape setting of the site and the area;*
- ix. respect the layout, height, scale and massing of neighbouring buildings;*
- x. use materials and methods which are as high quality as existing ones;*
- xi. follow complementary or contemporary themes rather than imitation;*
- xii. add to the intricacy and delight of the area's character and appearance.*

In addition, new design in existing historic buildings should:

- xiii. accurately respond to the detailed architectural and historic characteristics of the building;*
- xiv. for shopfronts, follow guidance in the adopted Shopfront Design Guide;*
- xv. use appropriate traditional natural materials and methods including materials salvaged from the building where appropriate;*
- xvi. seek a balance between protecting character and appearance and meeting other requirements such as building regulations and access;*
- xvii. where possible, investigate removal of existing inappropriate features;*
- xviii. where possible, be informed by modest historical research such as an old photo or careful on-site investigation of the historic fabric affected;*
- xix. be informed by up-to-date conservation best practice.*

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 areas⁴¹:

- 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 relate 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 an harmonious group or composition with existing buildings or landscape features? Does it distract the eye and, if so, is this a good thing?

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

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

⁴¹ *Building in Context, New Development in Historic Areas*. CABE and English Heritage, 2001

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.

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.



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.

4.3 ***Building Maintenance & Repair***

4.3.1 ***Context***

PPG15 says regular maintenance, repair and inspection are crucial to preserving historic buildings. Regular, modest repairs keep buildings weathertight, and routine maintenance (especially to roofs, gutters and downpipes) can prevent much more expensive work at a later date⁴². English Heritage guidance and the emerging 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 cure⁴³.

⁴² Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 7.1

⁴³ *Buildings At Risk*, 1998, EH, p7; *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East*, Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, February 2008, policy 34

4.3.2 **Position**

The Council has no published guidance on maintaining historic buildings, and no buildings at risk strategy. A lack of maintenance and poor quality or and ill-informed repairs continue to damage the special interest of the conservation area, and are key issues to tackle. Long term vacancy is less of a problem, affecting only a small number of properties, but short term vacancy of retail and commercial buildings is a notable problem. There has been modest public investment in building repairs – see 4.5 *Enhancement Opportunities*.

4.3.3 **Implementation**

Objective H: 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 buildings at risk survey and strategy, should long term vacancy become more widespread.*

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 3.6 *Enforcement & Monitoring*).

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. Applied renders and cladding are also a notable problem in the area which have the potential for more harm than good in the long term. There is 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.

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:

- 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 (see 5.3) 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.

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.

There is currently no need for a full buildings at risk strategy for the area. An outline survey has identified key buildings suffering neglect and decay, and others with vacant floorspace (see 4.4 *Regeneration* and 4.6 *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.

4.4 *Regeneration*

4.4.1 *Context*

Conservation-led change plays a vital role in social and economic regeneration across the country⁴⁴. PPG15 says plans should identify places where heritage can be a focus for regeneration⁴⁵. English Heritage stresses the need to tackle causes of run-down conservation areas. RSS encourages including under-used historic buildings in regeneration schemes⁴⁶. Relevant Local Plan policies include RTC1 and 8 on town centres and REC12 which encourages public realm improvements for tourism. *Community Plan* aims include enhancing quality and viability of town centres, and sustaining retailing in renewal areas like Newbiggin. Until March 2008, Newbiggin LIFE led regeneration activity around social, economic and environment improvements in the wider town. Go-Wansbeck will create an enterprising culture to support local business growth and attract employment opportunities. New development close to the SPA/Ramsar site could make feeding and roosting sites for relevant bird species more scarce, potentially threatening the SPA's integrity.

⁴⁴ eg. *Heritage Dividend*, EH, 2002; *Heritage Works: The Use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration*, EH, n/d

⁴⁵ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, paras 2.8

⁴⁶ *Regional Spatial Strategy for the NE*, Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, Feb 2008, policy 34

4.4.2 **Position**

Significant regeneration work in the wider town in recent years has focussed on liveability issues such as health, education, crime and housing in residential areas adjoining the town centre. Many of these priorities have been set by local people through Newbiggin LIFE. Two large regeneration schemes which are relevant were completed in 2007:

- A major £10m coastal protection project funded mainly by DEFRA to counter long term coastal erosion in Newbiggin Bay, comprising a new offshore breakwater, the recharging of the beach with around 500,000 tonnes of sand, the installation of a major piece of sculpture by Sean Henry, *Couple*, on the new breakwater, and a set of public realm improvements to the Promenade.
- Woodhorn Northumberland Museum, a new £14m world-class heritage visitor destination opened just a short distance from Newbiggin at Woodhorn.

This wider regeneration activity will benefit the existing and proposed conservation area, but little links directly to the town centre or has an historic environment theme. Even though the last 10 years or so have seen considerable public investment in public realm works for regeneration (see 4.5 *Enhancement Opportunities*), the town centre still has two key problems: poor fabric condition and low business vitality:

- 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 (eg. 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.
- Wansbeck suffers from a seriously disadvantaged enterprise performance shown by several indicators⁴⁷. Newbiggin East is in the top 3% most deprived wards in the country⁴⁸. The 2006 *Town Centre Appraisal* set out how Newbiggin suffers from high unemployment and low economic activity, with a housing market in decline and acute retail property market failure⁴⁹.

Go Build On Your Heritage is now tackling these issues with £500,000 of grants to run down town centre commercial historic buildings during 2007-10. The Town Centres' Business Animator will support this by improving vitality and viability. It is likely, however, that this will not meet all the existing need for building grants. Bedlington conservation area suffers from similar problems and heritage-led regeneration there is expected to be led by a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

Since 2005, plans have been developed by the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Heritage Partnership for a major new £1.75m maritime heritage centre to be built at Church

⁴⁷ *Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, Application Form*, Wansbeck District Council, 2006, p1-2

⁴⁸ *Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, Application Form*, Wansbeck District Council, 2006, p6

⁴⁹ *Advice on Future Dev't of Key Sites & Attraction of Busn's Investment & New Enterprise*, GVA Grimley, 2006

Point. Project development funds of £165,000 have allowed building, exhibition, interpretation and renewable energy plans to be prepared. An HLF bid was due to be submitted in February 2008. Other capital funds would need to be secured.

The Council has recently produced a new logo identity for the town which references the seafront, St Bartholomew's, *Couple* and Woodhorn Museum.

4.4.3 **Implementation**

Objective I: Regeneration

The Council will:

- i. put conservation at the heart of physical and economic regeneration in the existing and proposed conservation area;*
- ii. explore strategic regeneration opportunities to improve the condition, quality and authenticity of the built stock and public realm in the existing and proposed conservation area;*
- iii. promote the benefits of and encourage support for a heritage-led approach to regeneration to decision-makers, owners and traders;*
- iv. pay particular attention to the town centre retail and service sectors;*
- v. capitalise on the regenerative effect of recent investment in Newbiggin Bay, at Woodhorn Northumberland Museum and elsewhere in the town;*
- vi. support proposals for a new maritime heritage centre at Church Point;*
- vii. ensure the special requirements of the existing and proposed conservation area are taken into account in plans or proposals for regeneration, including those of Go-Wansbeck;*
- viii. have regard to best practice in conservation-led regeneration, and take advantage of joint working with the Bedlington THI;*
- ix. investigate future heritage-led regeneration and funding options;*
- x. use Local Plan policies GP8, 9, 12 and 13 to protect and enhance the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar sites from the impacts of regeneration activities.*

English Heritage evidence demonstrates that built heritage can be a valuable asset and can have an important role as a catalyst for regeneration⁵⁰. Equally, economic prosperity can be the cornerstone of investment in environmental improvements and the repair and maintenance of properties⁵¹. The Council will therefore:

- take advantage of nearby regenerative activity, for example by associating Newbiggin as the day-tripper destination of choice for visitors to Woodhorn, and by continuing the coastal protection project's investment in public realm,
- ensure the benefits of new regeneration and development elsewhere in the town are linked to the economic future of the town centre, for example by investigating opportunities for new housing in the proposed conservation area, and by supporting the new maritime heritage centre project,

⁵⁰ *Heritage Works: The Use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration*, English Heritage, n/d, p1

⁵¹ *A Community Plan for Wansbeck 2004-2008 and Beyond*, Wansbeck Initiative, 2004

- tackle the town centre's two main problems together using Go-Wansbeck funds, and investigating other sources to continue this post-2010.

Regeneration will tackle retail market failure, poor shop appearance, weak public realm, poor perceptions, and overall poor environmental quality to help revitalise the retail, leisure, tourism and housing offer. Such a joined-up approach will see new enterprise, higher private sector investment, reduced voids and better levels of local pride and confidence⁵². Some opportunities are shown in Fig 7.

Go Build On Your Heritage will be key to the town centre, and the Council will consider best practice in its delivery. Success will partly depend on wider support from within the Council and from local partners and the public. There will be benefits in running the Bedlington THI at the same time. However, Go Build On Your Heritage cannot meet all the need for historic building grant support and it does not include funds for public realm works (eg. to improve links with the new maritime heritage centre). The Council (or its successor, see 1.5) will therefore consider additional heritage-led regeneration opportunities alongside and beyond the life of Go-Wansbeck such as other area-funding regimes (eg. English Heritage).

Wider regeneration plans, programmes and activities will take account of the area's special local interest, creating a strong case for heritage-led regeneration focussing on the economic and community benefits of working with the area's character. The significance of the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site will also guide proposals were relevant.

4.5 **Enhancement Opportunities**

4.5.1 **Context**

Legislation requires local authorities, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas⁵³. English Heritage suggests enhancement might include redeveloping negative sites and buildings, or proactive investment such as building or public realm improvements⁵⁴.

4.5.2 **Position**

In the last 10 years or so there has been considerable investment in enhancements to the public realm and building repairs in the existing and proposed conservation area. This includes the following, which total over £9.3m:

- 1995-96: £20,000 on improving the Atlee Terrace Play Area.
- 1996-97: £5,000 on boards and signs.
- 1996-2000 (2 phases): just under £500,000 on road re-alignment, surfacing, parking, loading areas, paving, planting, street lighting and furniture on Bridge Street and Front Street between the White House and Central Club.

⁵² *Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, Application Form*, Wansbeck District Council, 2006, p26

⁵³ Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 s.71

⁵⁴ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, para 5.2

- 1997-98: around £151,000 on reshaping the Church Point car-park and improving vehicular access and coach parking.
- 1997-2000: £21,500 in grants for shopfront improvements.
- 1998-99: £32,800 for stonework and other repair at the Mechanics Institute.
- 1999-2000: £200,000 on paving and lighting at Sea View Lane.

All of this is in parts not yet in the conservation area, and it is true that not all of it has responded to local distinctiveness. If the conservation area is extended, it will be important to respond to local character when considering enhancements.

Within the existing conservation area, a substantial investment was recently made in restoring and enhancing Memorial Park (post-First World War gardens with an Art Deco style) including the installation of a large new war memorial sculpture.

Local Plan policy T9 protects land for a long term road proposal linking Woodhorn to Newbiggin. This would largely follow the former railway line and meet Front Street at the site of the town's demolished railway station, opposite Memorial Park.

Other enhancement opportunities would result from the Street Pride audit suggested under 4.7 *Public Realm* below.

4.5.3 **Implementation**

Objective J: 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 engineered spaces with modest landscape enhancements,*
 - improve condition, appearance and architectural integrity of buildings,*
 - encourage private owners to bring forward enhancement schemes.*

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea could benefit from a considerable amount of enhancement. The south end of Front Street in the existing conservation area has an attractive appearance and, although some improvements could be made, it will be important to focus on uplifting the quality, character and distinctiveness of the town centre and seafront. The goal should be to enhance it as a place to work, shop or visit.

There are potential projects in the public and private sector, and in buildings and spaces. Some problems may never be fully overcome, such as the visual impact of the sea wall. But even some large scale problems can be addressed in the long term, and so 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.

The following is an agenda list of enhancement opportunities in the conservation area, illustrated in Fig 7:

From the top: Examples of buildings on Front Street and Marine Cottages which could be enhanced. Methodist Church, Robinson Square. Bank House car-park. Bridge Street (also see front cover)

- **Buildings**

As set out at 4.4.2 above, many historic buildings in the town centre and seafront have become degraded over a long period. There are considerable opportunities to invest in restoration and maintenance across the area.

- **Methodist Church, Robinson Square**

As one of only two habitable listed buildings in the town, the Methodist church deserves a better setting. The crude modern brick wall could be replaced with a low stone plinth topped with traditional cast iron railings.

- **Bank House Car-Park**

The lodge at Bank House is one of the finest buildings in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea but its setting has been badly compromised by Bank House's gardens being put over to parking. A thorough landscaping scheme which responds to the original garden layout and includes some parking would be a considerable improvement at a prominent site. Protecting and repairing the original garden boundary wall in the middle of the car-park is very important. Improvements to Bank house itself, particularly addressing the impact of its late twentieth century extension, should also be considered in the long term.

- **Bridge Street**

Although recent improvements were well intentioned, they have unfortunately led to an incoherent space lacking local distinctiveness. The space is very over-cluttered, much of which is unnecessary, and surface materials are fussy, man-made and fail to relate to the buildings around. The scheme is too over-designed for such a small space. A more simple, modest treatment would provide a real focal point for the town centre and open views up to the Prom. Much of the metalwork (eg. shelter, bollards and, potentially, bandstand) could be removed



and a central splash of colour provided, say, by a restored fishing coble. Phone and pillar boxes could be re-positioned to the edges to open up the space. The palette of materials could be much simpler eg. resin-bound buff coloured pea gravel, sandstone flags and cobbled margins to reflect the location. The treatment could be extended across Front Street on a raised bed to calm traffic and visually enlarge the space.

- *Promenade and Seafront*

Considerable improvements could be made in reducing the visual impact of man-made materials and concrete infrastructure. It may not be possible to avoid the impact of the sea wall and structural masonry to the south ('disguising' it with artworks or cladding would add visual clutter), but other areas could receive modest, robust treatment using a simple palette of traditional materials. Possible sites include the arrival point from Bridge Street, Skeleton Walls, Covent Garden, and the boat yards. In such locations, the potential impact on the SSSI/SPA/ Ramsar site would need to be carefully considered.

- *Alleys, Squares and Streets between the Town Centre and Seafront*

Equally, the routes to and from the seafront would benefit from considerable enhancement along the lines of Bridge Street described above, reducing the impact of infrastructure and repeating a simple, distinctive palette of traditional materials. Sites include the route south of Black Pearl PH, Watt's Lane, Sea View Lane, Bay View East, Vernon Place, Robinson Square and Sandridge.

- *Top End of High Street, Church Point Car-Park and Church Point Caravan Park*

The turning head at the top of High Street could be considerably enhanced by visually reducing its size, narrowing the carriageway, and separating the bus lay-by to give pedestrians higher priority. A new focal point could be a stone wall or sculpture. The public toilets could also be replaced. The car park, an important visitor gateway, could be re-organised to improve its capacity and, in the process, remove

From the top: Prominent concrete infrastructure and left over space on the Promenade. Watt's Lane and Robinson Square, two routes from the town to the seafront. High Street turning head. Church Point car-park.



the central railings. While not intending to deny caravans of the bay view, there is a need to reduce the visual impact of caravans at this sensitive point in the proposed conservation area. Raising the grass bank should be considered.

- ***Front Street Build-Outs***

Areas on Front Street where the pavement width has been extended are in visually contrasting materials, creating unnecessary fussiness which resurfacing in something simpler would resolve.

- ***Landscaping Outside Nos.43-57 Front Street***

Old photographs show this area to have once had simple stone steps in front of the attractive row of shops. Today's fussy brick planters landscaping and railings do not improve the setting of this attractive terrace. Going back to simpler steps and stone paving (still with planting and level access) would improve this gateway site.

- ***Site of Former Railway Station, Front Street***

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea owes much the railway. Its loss, and the station's demolition, has left a bleak grassy area, an over-engineered road junction and an out of keeping 'pavilion' building. The sense of enclosure important to Front Street and Gibson Street is harmed. Here, a future link-road is possible, but enhancements around it could restore a sense of enclosure and street pattern. This might include new terraced buildings aligned east to west, a substantial piece of public sculpture (perhaps on a railway theme), or rows of tall trees to complement historic trees nearby.

- ***Street Lighting***

Throughout, street lights should either be of a good 'period' design or a simple modern one. The former, if a little over scaled, are seen on Gibson Street and Front Street – these should be extended into High Street. Promenade lights are utilitarian and not of a high enough quality – a consistent modern treatment would be better here. All lighting should have mercury bulbs with white light.

- ***Overhead Wires***

At the northern end of High Street, and in some of the backstreets, overhead wires spoil the street scene. Utility companies should be encouraged to underground them to improve the area's appearance.

- ***Street Clutter***

There is scope to reduce clutter by removing redundant street furniture, grouping signs to reduce poles required, and reducing the number of bollards.



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.

4.6 **Development Briefs**

4.6.1 **Context**

PPG15 recommends design briefs for important opportunity sites in conservation areas⁵⁵. English Heritage suggests using briefs to demonstrate how policy and guidance might apply to specific sites⁵⁶. Government guidance suggests briefs to minimise uncertainty and gain quality where advice would expedite development or on sites with specific constraints⁵⁷. The Local Plan commits to development briefs as necessary, to expand on Policy GP31's design issues, but does not identify any town centre sites in Newbiggin⁵⁸.

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.

4.6.2 **Position**

Several sites would benefit from a development brief, including:

- St Mark's Church, Gibson Street
- site adjacent to Café Riviera, Promenade
- Collection of historic industrial and commercial buildings behind 116-124 Front Street

The first two have come forward as potential development opportunities in the last two years. The third is in need of a brief due to the complexity of the collection of historic buildings on the site, and the rarity of such an intricate backland group in the conservation area.

4.6.3 **Implementation**

Objective K: Development Briefs

The Council will prepare, consult on, adopt and promote a development brief for the following during 2008-09, and other sites as the need arises:

- i. *St Mark's Church, Gibson Street,*

⁵⁵ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.18

⁵⁶ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, para 7.5

⁵⁷ *Planning and Development Briefs: A Guide to Better Practice*, 1996, para 2.1

⁵⁸ *Wansbeck District Local Plan*, June 2007, para 3.85

*ii. site adjacent to Café Riviera, Promenade.
In doing so, the Council will take account of developer interest and available resources, and will prepare briefs following good practice, concentrating on design issues.*

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.

Briefs will contain realistic and unambiguous guidance on the following⁵⁹:

- 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.

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 style⁶⁰. Preparation will use appropriate expertise and will involve consultation with owners, the CAAG (see 5.3), Design Review Panel (see 5.5) and local people.

The availability of resources and developer interest will help decide when and in which order briefs are produced. St Mark's Church and the site adjacent to Café Riviera will have briefs during 2008-09. The Front Street site, however, is a lower priority as there is currently no expectation of redevelopment. Other opportunities for briefs may come forward in the future, notably on the west side of Front Street north of Woodhorn Lane, and possibly for the other seaward-facing sites.

Draft briefs for both priority sites have been prepared as part of this strategy, and are included in Appendices C and D.

4.7 **Public Realm, Green Spaces, Trees & Biodiversity**

4.7.1 **Context**

PPG15 says that spaces in conservation areas are as important as buildings themselves (eg. historic routes, surfaces, furniture, green spaces, trees, etc) and they should be firmly integrated into management⁶¹. Legislation gives powers over

⁵⁹ *Planning and Development Briefs: A Guide to Better Practice*, 1996, chapters 4 and 6

⁶⁰ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.18

⁶¹ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.2, 5.1

trees in conservation areas⁶² – 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)⁶³ based on its contribution to the area.

English Heritage says coordination is key to public realm, suggesting the use of public realm strategies⁶⁴. Its *Streets For All* guidance, published jointly with the Department of Transport, urges full integration of highways and traffic issues. English Heritage also encourage protection of trees, and addressing biodiversity⁶⁵.

Wansbeck Design Guide provides an assessment of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea'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 materials⁶⁶.

Policy GP9 of the Local Plan sets out how development proposals likely to affect the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site (directly or indirectly, individually or in combination) must be in accordance with specific regulations, and are controlled by statute⁶⁷.

4.7.2 **Position**

The public realm of the conservation area is both one of its strongest and weakest points. There has been considerable investment in the 10 years or so, mainly in Front Street and Bridge Street (see 4.5 *Enhancement Opportunities*). The seaward side including the Promenade, beach, lifeboat house and Church Point are in the main positive, highly distinctive assets, marred only by the visual dominance of concrete and man-made materials. The main route through the town is also very attractive, particularly to the south, but the retail centre tends to suffer from over-engineered streetscape solutions with little recognition of local distinctiveness (eg. Bridge street is very over-cluttered). Some of the worst parts are the links between the two – a series of generally uninspiring or uninviting alleys and squares with much greater potential for connecting the town to the sea. Studies and consultation have highlighted the poor quality of the public realm – see 4.4 *Regeneration*. The open spaces which are part of the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site designations are internationally and nationally significant for their biodiversity and habitats.

4.7.3 **Implementation**

Objective L: Public Realm, Green Spaces, Trees & Biodiversity

The Council will:

- i. *prepare a comprehensive Public Realm Manual which addresses public realm, highways, green spaces and trees;*

⁶² Town & Country Planning Act 1990, s211

⁶³ Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Part VIII

⁶⁴ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, paras 5.2, 7.11-7.17

⁶⁵ *Streets For All: North East*, 2005, English Heritage and Department for Transport

⁶⁶ *Wansbeck Design Guide*, Wansbeck District Council, 2007, p71

⁶⁷ Habitats Regs for Protection & Management of European sites (Pt I Circ ODPM 06/2005 and Defra 01/2006)

- ii. *carry out a Community Street Audit using a recognised toolkit to identify public realm issues, such as street clutter, accessibility, signage, footways, lighting, security, aesthetics and maintenance;*
- iii. *have regard to Streets For All North East and other published guidance on dealing with the public realm in historic areas;*
- iv. *apply highways and traffic legislation and guidance sensitively, and design works in a way which recognises local distinctiveness;*
- v. *work collaboratively in the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of public realm and highways works;*
- vi. *maintain existing and new public realm to high standards;*
- vii. *consider from time to time the need for further tree preservation orders;*
- viii. *ensure the protection, enhancement and ongoing management of biodiversity in the conservation area, and in particular the special interest features of the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site.*

Enhancing Newbiggin-by-the-Sea's public realm must be a priority, particularly in the proposed conservation area extensions of the Promenade and town centre where a significant improvement in quality and character is needed. 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.

In new work, care must be taken to avoid engineered solutions over those informed by landscape architecture. Schemes must not be 'over-designed' and should set the scene rather than dominate it. It is crucial that design and maintenance 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.

A community street audit, like that carried out as part of Bedlington's Street Pride initiative, would help identify what sort of focus Newbiggin's public spaces need.

A Public Realm Manual for the conservation area will be prepared to meet *Wansbeck Design Guide* objectives. 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 place's attractive coastal town identity
- improve physical and visual permeability from the town to the sea
- rationalise and enhance parking opportunities in and around the town centre
- increase streetscape coherence throughout the town centre and seafront
- exploit and animate the seafront as a calm but flourishing area with activity
- capitalise on the natural heritage in Newbiggin Bay and Church Point

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

Once complete, the manual will be used by the Officer Group set out under 5.4 below 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 which ran in Bedlington 2005-07 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.

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:

- PPG15, paragraphs 5.11 to 5.18,
- *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.

PPG15 explains that the government attaches particular importance to early consultation on traffic management and highway maintenance schemes which affect conservation areas, and urges authorities to seek the advice of English Heritage, where appropriate, before determination⁶⁸.

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 system⁶⁹. 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.

There is a need to ensure all works to the public realm take account of the SSSI/ SPA/Ramsar site in relevant places in the conservation area. More generally, all 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.

4.8 **Research & Interpretation**

4.8.1 **Context**

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. PPG15 and emerging RSS recognise the value of educational opportunities in the historic environment⁷⁰. The *Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* promotes informed research to help to understand, progress and appreciate the region's historic environment⁷¹.

4.8.2 **Position**

The town has been the subject of very limited research. Further study of primary sources would allow a greater understanding of the town's development.

⁶⁸ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 5.3

⁶⁹ *Tree Preservation Orders: A Guide to Law & Good Practice*, 2000, chapters 5 and 9

⁷⁰ PPG15, 1994, para 7.1; *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East*, Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, February 2008, policy 34

⁷¹ *Shared Visions: North-East Regional Research Framework*, D Petts & C Gerrard, EH / Durham Uni, 2006

Interpretation of the town's heritage is good and improving. Heritage groups are active in the area. Plans are being developed by Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Heritage Partnership for a major new maritime heritage centre to be built near Church Point (see 4.4.2). There are two annual summer events, a lifeboat day and a medieval day associated with St Bartholomew. There is a good online presence at www.newbigginbythesea.co.uk/history. There is a modest blue plaque network and, although the associated leaflet is out of print, it is available online.

4.8.3 **Implementation**

Objective M: 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;*
- iii. investigate opportunities for building recording to identify early buildings in the conservation area, and examine and understand their evolution.*

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.

Some suggested research activities are as follows:

- those identified in the *Regional Research Framework for the Historic Env.*,
- those identified by local history groups,
- *Newbiggin-by-the-Sea 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,
 - 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. A 2004 calendar with historic images was produced by Newbiggin LIFE.
- *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.

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 Newbiggin-by-the-Sea 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 Newbiggin-by-the-Sea'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 *Newbiggin-by-the-Sea 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. A similar activity ran in 2007 linked to the coastal protection project.

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*

5.1 *Introduction*

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. Fig 8 is a summary diagram. 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.

5.2 *Community Involvement*

5.2.1 *Context*

Public involvement in the environment in general is key to local authority work. Wansbeck Initiative's *Improvement Plan* includes a priority to promote community engagement in local liveability programmes and to build capacity for civic pride⁷².

Increased community involvement in planning and development is promoted in the new national planning regime. Guidance encourages early local involvement in policy formulation and decision-making to obtain 'ownership' and reduce delay⁷³. 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 authorities⁷⁴.

⁷² *Improvement Plan*, Wansbeck Initiative, 2005, ref Li1. Wansbeck Initiative's future is under review; see 2.2.7

⁷³ Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Development Frameworks*, 2004, paras 3.1-3.2

⁷⁴ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, paras 3.8-3.10

5.2.2 **Position**

Community activity in the town is quite high with a number of active groups. Some does relate to heritage and the historic environment.

There is a good level of public information about the area, but this could be improved. The character appraisal is not yet publicly available, but there is a good amount of online information. The town centre often makes the local press, but rarely from an historic environment point of view.

5.2.3 **Implementation**

Objective N: 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.*

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.

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.

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

- regular press releases and photo calls, including in the Council's newsletter,
- feedback to ward councillors, the local strategic partnership, and Cabinet,
- 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,
- dedicated pages on the Council's website, including pages on character, architecture, history, management, involvement opportunities, and possibly a discussion board.

5.3 **Conservation Area Advisory Group**

5.3.1 **Context**

PPG15 stresses that the historic environment cannot be protected unless there is broad public understanding and support. It recommends setting up a conservation area advisory group (CAAG) to aid consultation and delivery⁷⁵.

5.3.2 **Position**

The conservation area has no existing CAAG but there are several other active community groups in the area – see 2.2.9 *Stakeholders*.

5.3.3 **Implementation**

Objective O: Conservation Area Advisory Group

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 Council will consider the relationship of the CAAG with the Design Review Panel, and with the CAAG needs of other conservation areas.

It is in the Council's interests to foster community activity that can contribute to the conservation area management process. The CAAG 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.

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* (see 4.3). The CAAG will 'nest' within the existing structure of either the Council or the local strategic partnership, and will be administered by it. It will select a chair and establish a code of conduct. Membership will be based on the following:

- ward councillors,
- relevant cabinet member and/or member Historic Environment Champion,
- Newbiggin Community Area Partnership,
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Heritage Partnership and/or constituent members,
- representatives from the business and residential communities,
- representatives from other local amenity and interest groups.

Council officers will be in attendance.

⁷⁵ Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning & The Historic Environment*, 1994, para 4.13

5.4 **Council Resource & Corporate Working**

5.4.1 **Context**

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 together⁷⁶. It also considers every planning authority should have access to at least one full time conservation specialist.

English Heritage and CABE recommend the appointment of Historic Environment Champions and Design Champions at senior officer and member level⁷⁷. 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.

5.4.2 **Position**

The Council's *Best Value Performance Plan* sets out overarching themes for service delivery. Associated service plans for the Council's regeneration and planning departments include actions and indicators relating to Go Build On Your Heritage and general partnership working.

A range of officers currently work in the conservation area, mainly development control and planning policy officers, and the County Historic Buildings Advisor. Activity is not co-ordinated around conservation area management issues and is mostly reactive to planning casework. The Historic Buildings Advisor's service level agreement – Wansbeck's only conservation expertise – equates to less than ½ day per week. There is some unfortunate evidence of Council investment in highways and public realm which would have benefited from a conservation input in design or execution.

The Council has two Historic Environment & Design Champions, a Cabinet member and a senior officer.

5.4.3 **Implementation**

Objective P: Council Resources & Corporate Working

The Council will:

- i. ensure a corporate commitment to conservation area management in planning and regeneration service plans during the Go Build On Your Heritage initiative;*
- 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 Go Build On Your Heritage;*

⁷⁶ *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, English Heritage, 2006, paras 3.3-3.6

⁷⁷ *Historic Environment Champions*, English Heritage, 2004; *Local Authority Design Champions*, CABE, 2004

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.

On review of the service plans for the planning and regeneration departments, the Council will ensure a corporate commitment to conservation area management during Go Build On Your Heritage under appropriate themes.

Managing the area's historic environment effectively will require experienced professional input from a range of fields to ensure decisions are informed and balanced. Project management and historic environment skills will be key.

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. It will need to be multi-disciplinary, including the following:

- Building Conservation Officer, who will be key to all conservation area work, and who should be a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.
- Regeneration Officer, to bring together conservation and economic viability.
- Archaeologist, to be involved in all development aspects.
- Community Heritage Officer, as the essential link to the local community.
- Planning Officers, including development control, policy and implementation.
- Enforcement Officer, to help identify and resolve unauthorised works.
- Urban Designer, to be involved in all new design, building and public works.
- Building Control, to balance the building regs and conservation best practice.
- Landscape Architect / Tree Officer, particularly important to the public realm.
- Direct Works and Grounds Maintenance Officers, to address public realm.
- Highways Engineer, as streets and traffic have such a big impact on the area.

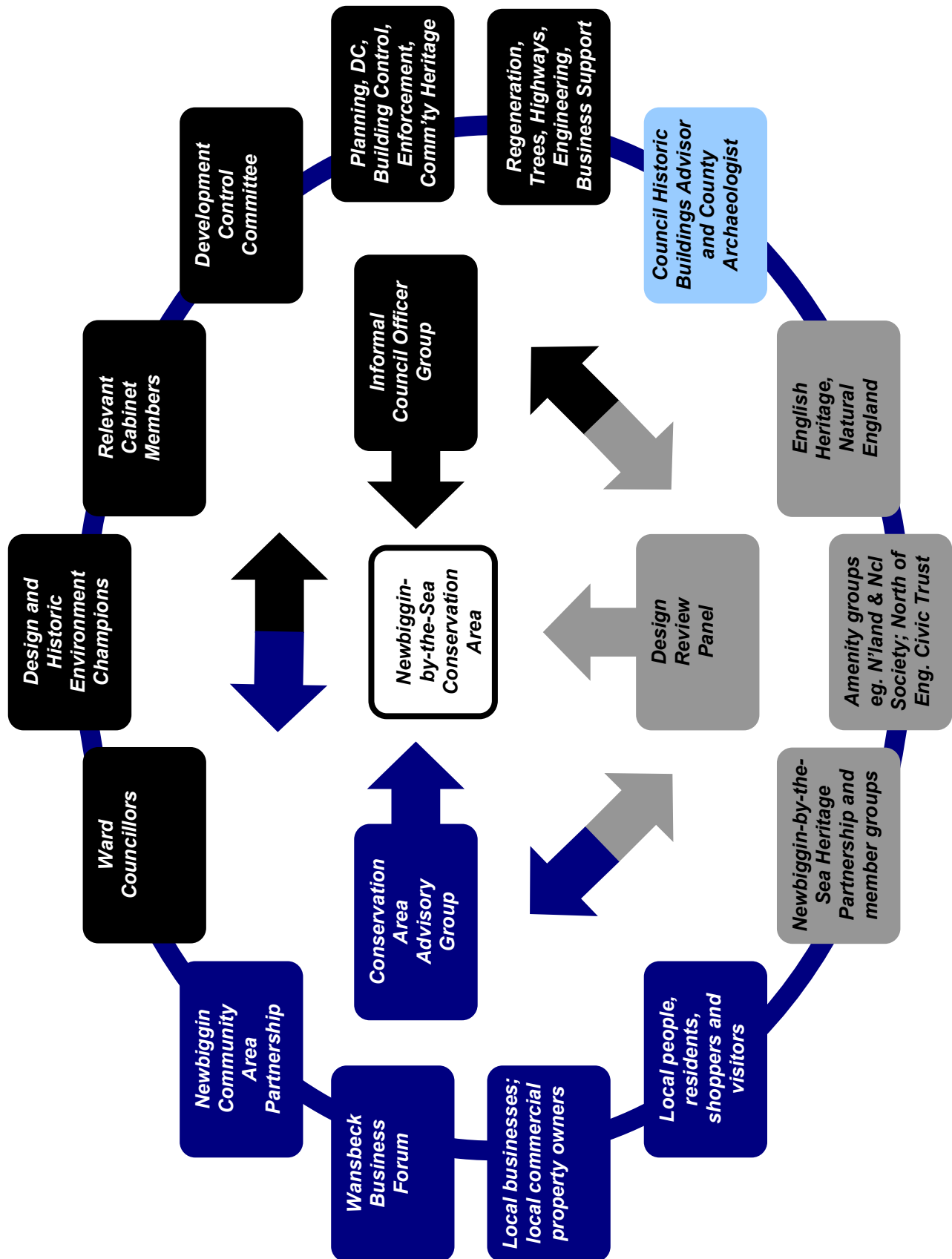
The group may also need to involve an ecologist (when relevant for the SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site), plus other skills such as culture, tourism, environmental protection, business support, project management and legal. The group will meet regularly.

It is vital that all officers receive training in conservation principles and techniques (see page 11). 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:

- relevant Cabinet member(s)
- ward councillors
- Historic Environment & Design Champions

Fig 8: Resources and Community Involvement



The Champions have a special responsibility to advocate the cause, raising the profile of heritage and good design in and beyond the Council⁷⁸. They should:

- 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.

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

5.5 **Design Review Panel**

5.5.1 **Context**

Local Plan Policy GP18 requires development in or affecting a conservation area to be in sympathy with its character and appearance. Across the district, the Council has committed to high quality design standards by adopting the *Wansbeck Design Guide*, including for new residential development and residential extensions. There is also a *Shopfront Design Guide* for Bedlington and Newbiggin conservation areas.

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 development⁷⁹. English Heritage stresses the importance of good architectural and urban design in conservation areas⁸⁰.

5.5.2 **Position**

Development proposals are currently assessed by planning officers and the County Historic Buildings Advisor. 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 Go Build On Your Heritage programme.

5.5.3 **Implementation**

Objective Q: Design Review Panel

The Council will establish a Design Review Panel which:

- 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;*

⁷⁸ *NE Design Champions & Historic Environment Champions Induction & Resource Pack*, NECT / NA, 2005

⁷⁹ *How to do Design Review, Creating and Running a Successful Panel*, CABE, 2006, p5

⁸⁰ *Building In Context, New Development in Historic Areas*, English Heritage / CABE, 2001

- 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 control 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.*

The *Wansbeck Design Guide* recommends the creation of a district-wide design review committee for major planning applications and significant public sector investment projects⁸¹. Such a committee would likely not serve the requirements of the conservation area because proposals in Newbiggin are rarely likely to qualify as major, and its membership may not have suitable historic environment expertise.

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.

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).

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 control officers on current applications, when advice would become a material consideration.

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 control committee to ensure transparency. The Panel will select a chair and establish a code of conduct.

⁸¹ *Wansbeck Design Guide*, Wansbeck District Council, 2007, p116

5.6 **External Funding**

5.6.1 **Context**

Capital funds are important to conservation area management. English Heritage guidance and PPG15 recommend financial aid for building repairs and public activities, but do recognise internal budgets may not always meet the demand⁸².

5.6.2 **Position**

The Council and its partners have successfully secured external funds for the existing and proposed conservation area in recent years. This includes funds towards the £750,000 worth of regeneration, public realm and building grant works identified above (see 4.4 *Regeneration* and 4.7 *Public Realm Green Spaces & Trees*), plus the £10m coastal protection project mainly funded from DEFRA and, most recently, the £500,000 for Go-Wansbeck's Vibrant Town Centres initiative, mainly from government LEGL funds. Go Build On Your Heritage is unlikely to meet the need for historic building grant aid. Additional external funds will be necessary to continue the public realm investment. Some other activities identified in this strategy will need partnership funds to make them viable.

5.6.3 **Implementation**

Objective R: 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.

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.

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.

⁸² PPG15, 1994, para 4.10; *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 Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area. It is informed by the Character Appraisal document which assessed the existing area, the wider historic town centre and its setting.

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 existing conservation area is a rich nineteenth and twentieth century townscape of considerable architectural quality. Its integrity is high and its layout and development pattern are interesting, distinctive and definitive of the southern half of central Newbiggin. There have been incremental changes to architectural features and materials over the decades since designation, but these have not been at such a harmful level to warrant de-designation of any part.

Does the boundary still exist on the ground?

Yes. The existing boundary follows clearly defined plots boundaries and built features.

Does the boundary still make sense? Is it drawn too tightly to exclude integral parts of the development pattern on the periphery of the area?

It does not make sense in parts, and has been drawn too tightly in others. In only including the nineteenth century residential suburb, the original boundary ignored special local interest in the wider experience of Newbiggin found in the distinctive and coherent layout of the settlement along the bay, culminating in Church Point. This 'visual envelope' is quite clear and, in its entirety, describes the architectural and historic interest of the town. For example, as well as excluding the town centre (discussed below), the current boundary excludes:

- Church Point, a remarkable piece of historic development with a striking and evocative presence definitive of the experience of the bay;
- the Promenade – although the boundary currently includes extensive sloping private gardens looking east across the bay, it excludes the public Promenade directly beneath them which forms part of the same linear corridor along the bay edge;
- significant remnant historic development between High Street and the bay, notably around Vernon Place, Sandridge and the Lifeboat Station;
- development physically and architecturally linked to that within the boundary at Lorne Terrace, at the junction of Front Street and Woodhorn Lane;
- the distinct point of arrival from the south where North Seaton Road turns into Gibson Street, marked by mature trees, a change in topography and several historic institutional buildings including schools and a church.

Is the setting adequately protected?

Yes and no. The introspective nature of development along Gibson Street and Front Street means their setting to the west and north-west is not significant to the special interest of the core, and is rightly excluded. However, setting to the east, ie. Newbiggin Bay, is not entirely protected (see above) and good practice would suggest the boundary should reflect the mean low water mark which is where, in general, planning controls end. This would be consistent with other nearby coastal conservation areas such as Berwick-upon-Tweed (suggested extensions), Holy Island and Tynemouth. **NB.** The recent beach recharge works, which involved importing sand to recreate the beach, may have moved the mean low water mark further east. The boundary should therefore reflect this.

Are all aspects of the legislation considered?

Yes, but there are trees in other parts of Gibson Street not currently protected, notably at Windsor County First School.

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

Yes. The existing boundary is based on what is essentially a nineteenth century suburb to the historic town centre, which itself has older origins. Today, historic town centres are seen as significant townscapes in their own right – indeed, the only other comparable conservation area in Wansbeck, Bedlington, was based on an historic town centre when it was designated in 1971. (Other comparable coastal town or village conservation areas in Northumberland include Blyth, Spittal, Tweedmouth, North Sunderland, Seahouses and Amble.) The inclusion of the retail and commercial parts of Front Street and High Street makes sense in understanding the historical development of Newbiggin, and the economic reasons for the high quality nineteenth century suburb currently designated – the special local historic interest of the two are firmly linked. Although the overall architectural quality is lower in the town centre than the existing conservation area, there is still sufficient special interest to warrant designation here, and it would compare favourably with Bedlington Conservation Area in terms of architectural quality and level of change in the last three decades or so. This would also follow the guidance in PPG15 regarding consistent local standards.

Other Matters – Regeneration and Consultation

In addition to these issues, the extension of the conservation area into the town centre would provide the opportunity to support on-going economic regeneration there. Go-Wansbeck is providing an opportunity to invest in town centre property in need of repair, and to bring empty space back into productive use. As many of these buildings are historic, conservation area status would allow greater influence over the design and quality of the works, ensuring the town centre remains distinctive and recognises that its heritage is important to its future.

There is evidence of community support for such an approach. Consultation in conjunction with Newbiggin LIFE in 2006 on the principle of conservation-led

regeneration in the town had an overall healthy conclusion. 40 shopkeepers and 32 other members of the community responded. Of the shopkeepers:

- 83% felt the town's history was not obvious to see when looking around.
- 95% felt restoring some historic buildings and enhancing the street scene could help Newbiggin.
- 93% felt the town would be more attractive if shopfronts and signs looked better
- 83% felt older shopfronts should be restored.
- 90% felt older building materials like stone would make the town look better.

Figures were similar from the other community responses too. Overall, 88% of shopkeepers and 94% of other community members felt a conservation-led approach to regeneration was a good one for Newbiggin.

Other Matters – International and National Habitat Designations

The Appropriate Assessment⁸³ for this CAMS notes that the Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar site could potentially be affected by the objectives of the CAMS if the conservation area boundary is extended to adjoin or include parts of the SPA/Ramsar site. In particular, it notes potential harm from CAMS objectives on Demolition (D), Design (G), Regeneration (I), Enhancement (J) and Public Realm, Green Spaces & Trees (L). It notes potential direct harm from 'land take' and indirect harm to water resources and from increased tourism and traffic. It concludes it would be possible to control impacts by applying existing Local Plan policies (including GP8, GP9, GP12 and GP13), and by making changes to the wording of objectives and supporting text in this CAMS, notably Objective L. Such changes have been made to the CAMS after consultation with Natural England.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The existing boundary does not reflect the entirety of the special local historic or architectural interest of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. Significant elements of town centre and coastal townscape are excluded which help define the town's distinctiveness and which contain several unlisted buildings with historic significance in their own right.

Most of this is coherently linked to the existing designation, leading to a boundary which takes Gibson Street, Front Street and High Street as its spine, then wrapping round to Church Point. This would include some historic development at the north-east end of High Street which has suffered intrinsically more change to architectural features and materials than elsewhere. Excluding it, however, would not recognise its importance to an historical understanding of the place, its role as an integral part of the historic development pattern to the north-east, or its position overlooking part

⁸³ Appropriate Assessment of plans that could affect SPAs is required by Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive. Wansbeck District Council: *Information to Inform the Appropriate Assessment of the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area (Existing and Proposed) Management Strategy, Pre-Adoption Supplementary Planning Document*, Natural Capital, December 2008.

of the bay. Consequently, it is proposed to include it, but to clearly identify in the adopted character appraisal its lower significance compared to the remainder. The extension would include land covered by the Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar site, designated for its biodiversity significance, but any potential impacts from the CAMS should be controllable by applying existing Local Plan policies.

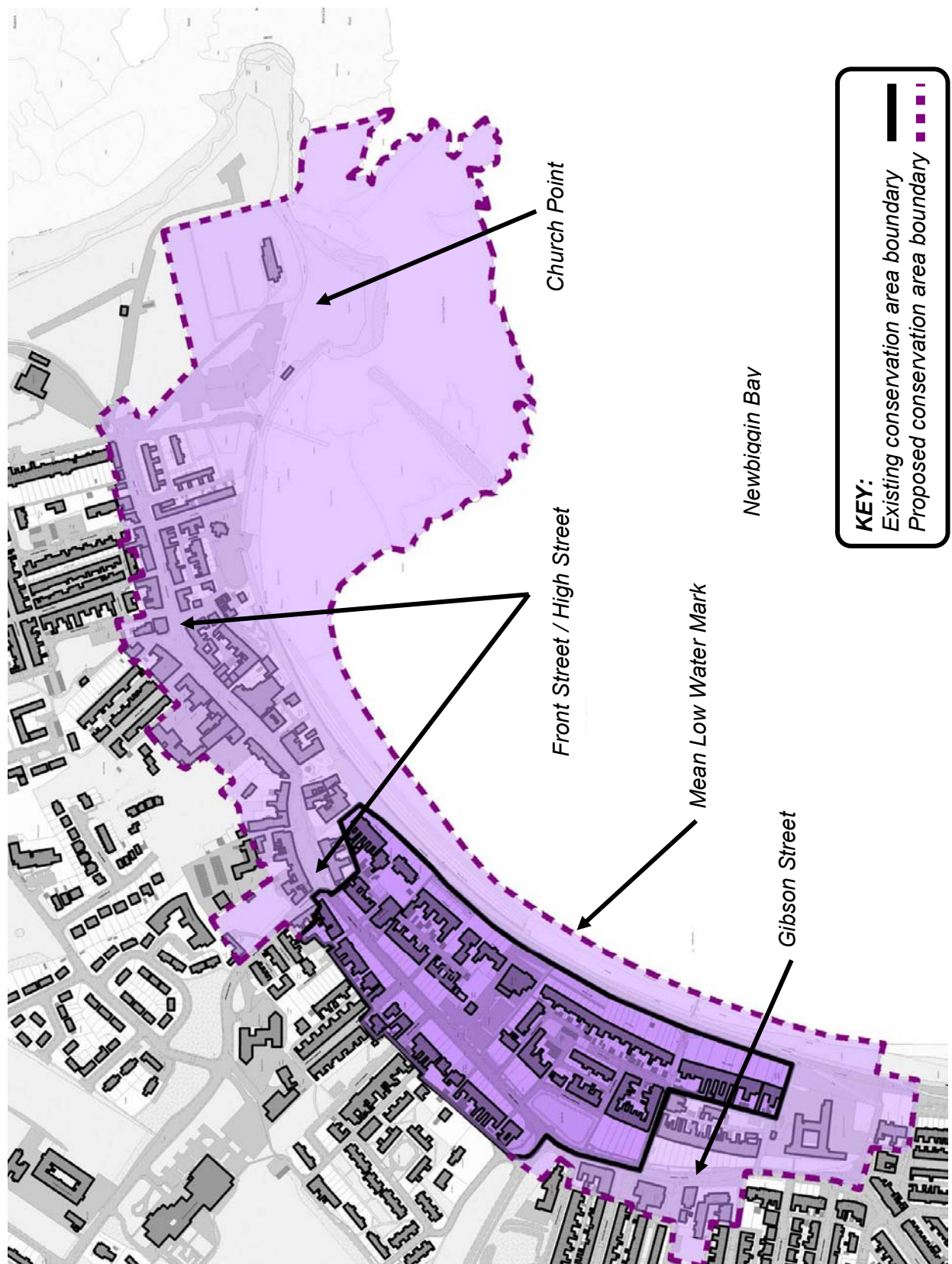
The proposed boundary extensions are shown in Fig 9 and are as follows:

- **To the south-west:**
 - Development on and around the west side of Gibson Street including Nos.2-4 (even) Seaton Avenue; St Mark's Church and its halls and grounds; the Apostolic Church; No.13 Gibson Street; the library and its grounds; Nos.1-9 (odd) Gibson Street; and open space on the west side of the junction of Gibson Street and Front Street at the site of the railway station (but not the late twentieth century health centre there).
 - Development on and around the east side of Gibson Street including Beachend / Beachville, Windsor County First School and its grounds; Nos.12-42 (even) Gibson Street; Marine Cottages; and south side of Windsor Road.
- **To the north-east:**
 - Development facing both sides of Woodhorn Lane from Woodhorn Villa southwards to its junction with Front Street (including Lorne Terrace and the former allotments but excluding all of Coronation Street and West View).
 - Development on both sides of Front Street and High Street from the White House PH north-eastwards to the Creswell Arms PH. On the north side, this would follow the back line of plots on these streets, thus taking in the collection of outbuildings behind Nos.118-124, Nos.136-138 Front Street and the hall opposite, but excluding Moor Croft, Maud's Terrace, Queen's Place, Nos.4-7 Waverley Place, New King Street and Prospect Place. On the south side, it would take in all development between Front / High Street and the bay, including Bridge Street, Covent Garden, Watt's Lane, Vernon Place, Henderson's Buildings, Robinson Square, Bay View East, Sandridge, Attlee Terrace and Attlee Cottages.
 - Open space and car-parks from the turning head outside the Creswell Arms PH east to the tip of Church Point, including the church, churchyard and public toilets, but excluding the caravan park between them.
- **To the east:**
 - An area enclosed by the mean low water mark between Church Point and Windsor County First School, including the Promenade, the beach and open space.

The resultant area has a character and appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and it would assist with economic regeneration in the town centre for which there is evidence of community support.

It is therefore recommended that the extensions to the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area be designated.

Fig 9: Proposed Boundary Extensions following Boundary Review



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Appendix B***Initial Local List Suggestions***

An initial list of buildings and structures in the conservation area put forward for consideration as part of a Local List. See 3.3 *Local List*.

Bridge Street

- Café Riviera
- Former Mechanics Institute

Church Point

- Boundary walls to Church of St Bartholomew

Front Street

- Nos.4 and 6
- Newcastle Building Society and adjoining house
- Bank House Lodge
- St Andrew's Methodist Church and Church Hall
- Nos.43-57
- No.66 (The White House)
- The Railway Inn
- The New Dolphin PH
- The Endeavour (south)
- The Endeavour (north)
- No.65 (Sunsations and Flowers by Dawn)

Gibson Street

- Former St Mark's URC and boundary wall to Gibson Street and Seaton Avenue
- Stone building with bellcote behind the former St Marks Church Hall
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Library
- The Co-operative

High Street

- The Co-operative
- Brick industrial building with pilasters behind Newbiggin Furniture & Suite Centre
- Queen Victoria PH
- Queen's Head PH
- Building on east side containing double shopfront painted black

Promenade

- Lifeboat House
- Seaview House
- Former Telegraph Cable House
- The Black Pearl PH

Appendix C

Draft Development Brief: St Mark's Church, Gibson Street

NB. This draft development brief assumes that the boundary extension proposed under the Conservation Area Management Strategy has been made.

Objectives and Background

St Mark's Church and its associated buildings have recently been declared redundant and offered for sale. This brief clarifies the Council's position on the future of the buildings and land, and provides positive guidance to prospective developers.

Site Location and History

The site occupies a prominent position at the southern end of the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area with its principal elevations facing on to Gibson Street and Seaton Avenue. The group comprises four elements:

- St Mark's Church which dates from 1865? and is constructed from local sandstone with a Welsh slate roof in the Gothic Revival style. It is understood that the designer and builder was local man Thomas Gibson, after whom Gibson Street was named.
- The church hall dating from 1910?, attached to the rear of the church and constructed of red brick and stone with a Welsh slate roof.
- An ancillary building attached to the rear of the church hall which appears to date from the mid nineteenth century. It is constructed of local sandstone with a Welsh slate roof and contains a bellcote at its east end. This would have originally been a free standing building and was probably the first church at this site which was subsequently outgrown by the size of its congregation.



Top: St Mark's Church
Above: Church Hall
Below: Ancillary Building

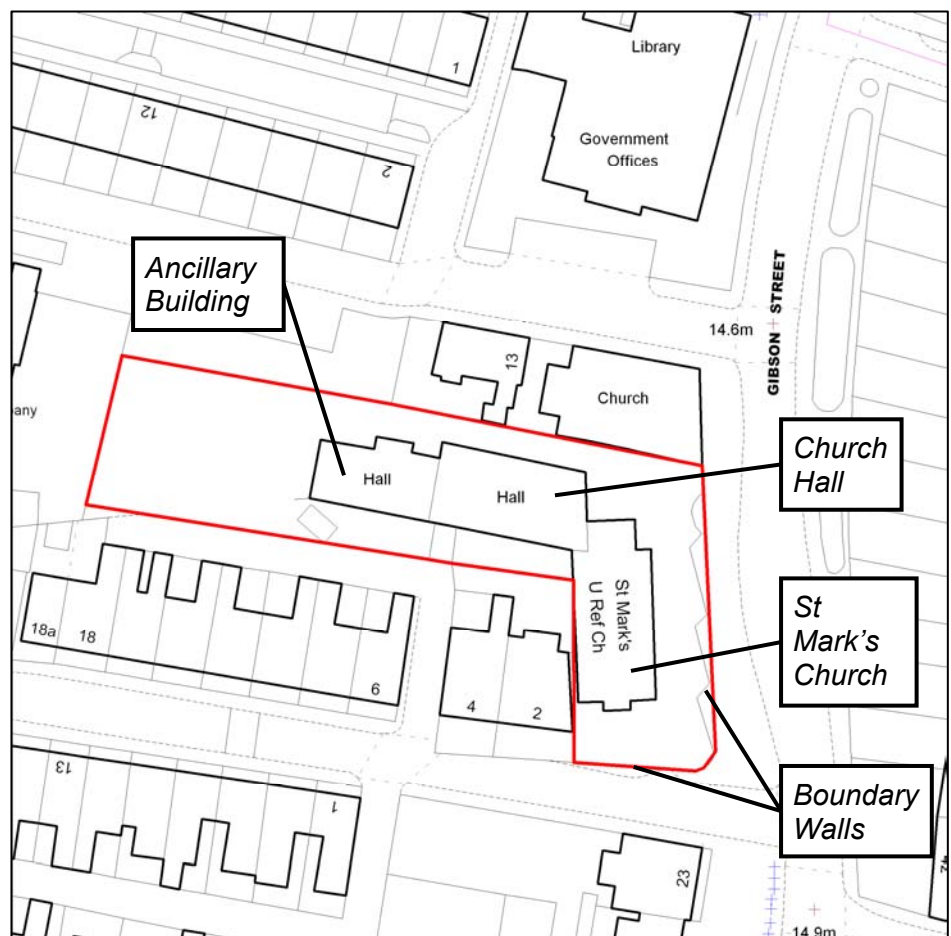


- Along the frontage to Gibson Street and Seaton Avenue is a stone boundary wall which was formerly topped by cast iron railings.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal

identifies the three buildings as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The boundary wall also makes such a contribution. The church, ancillary building and boundary wall (but not the church hall) have also been identified as having special local architectural and historic interest, and will be nominated for inclusion in a Local List to be prepared by the Council in the due course.

The site in its context on Gibson Street



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Site Information and Constraints

The approximately 0.3ha site has below standard vehicular access from the main road, Gibson Street, and from Seaton Avenue. The site has low archaeological sensitivity. The site is surrounded to the east and south by residential streets, with local retail nearby on Gibson Street. A neighbouring building is in use as an Apostolic Church.

Policy Context

The site is within the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea settlement limit (Local Plan Policy GP1). General policies include visual impact (GP30), urban design (GP31) and

landscaping and the public realm (GP32). Others will include those relating to access, sustainability, crime prevention and parking. If residential use is proposed, Policy H3, windfall sites, would apply.

There is a presumption in favour of retaining St Mark's Church, the ancillary building and the stone boundary wall. Retention of the church hall is also favoured but as it has lower significance, proposals for its demolition will be considered on their merits.

As the site is in a conservation area, Local Plan Policies GP17-19 will apply, together with supplementary objectives in the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area Management Strategy, including Demolition (Objective D) and Design (Objective G). Proposals for demolition would require conservation area consent. Demolition of the church or ancillary building will not be permitted unless there is conclusive evidence that it is beyond reasonable economic repair, taking into account that demolition must not simply be more economically attractive than repair, and that economic repair has not been made unreasonable by the acquisition price reflecting perceived development potential rather than the building's condition and constraints. Guidance in PPG15 *Planning and Historic Environment* (1994) will also be taken into consideration. A condition of any conservation area consent would be that no demolition shall take place until a contract has been let for a replacement development. The Council may seek independent assessment of any economic case made for demolition. Photographic recording would also be conditioned.

Development Response

Externally there should be no alteration to the church. Internally the east end of the church is to be retained as a single volume space while the west end may be subdivided. The building would be suited to a residential conversion, live/work space, light industrial, community uses or retail.

If the church hall is retained its external appearance should be substantially retained. It is suited to similar uses to the church. If it is to be demolished, its site is likely to be incorporated into the curtilages of the church and ancillary building. The ancillary building should remain unaltered externally. It is considered suitable for residential, light industrial and community uses.

Parking is to be located at the rear of the church and will not be permitted in front of its elevations to Gibson Street and Seaton Avenue.

Applicants will be expected to submit a full planning application.

Role and Status of Brief

This brief is a material consideration in development proposals for the site.

Further Information

For further information or discussion about this brief, please contact Wansbeck District Council Development Control Manager on Tel: (01670) 843 434 or to planningenquiriesmailbox@wansbeck.gov.uk.

Appendix D

Draft Development Brief: Site Adj. to Café Riviera, Promenade

NB. This draft development brief assumes that the boundary extension proposed under the Conservation Area Management Strategy has been made.

Objectives and Background

This site is underused and contains two disused buildings. This brief clarifies the Council's position on the future of the buildings and land, and provides positive guidance to prospective developers.



Site Location and History

This is a prominent site facing the Promenade, located to the rear Café Riviera, Bridge Street, and Nos.75-77 High Street. The site is in the same ownership as Café Riviera. There are two buildings on the site:

- a former telegraph cable house thought to date from 1868, with a rendered exterior, flat roof and blocked window openings, currently used as a garage and for storage;
- a former joinery workshop constructed of stone, brick and render with a flat roof, one large garage door opening, and other blocked openings, currently used for storage.

The remainder of the site is hard standing.

Although the telegraph cable house is much altered and its original machinery and equipment have been removed, it is thought to be one of the earliest surviving examples of its type,

Below left: former telegraph house and its blue plaque. Below right: former joinery workshop



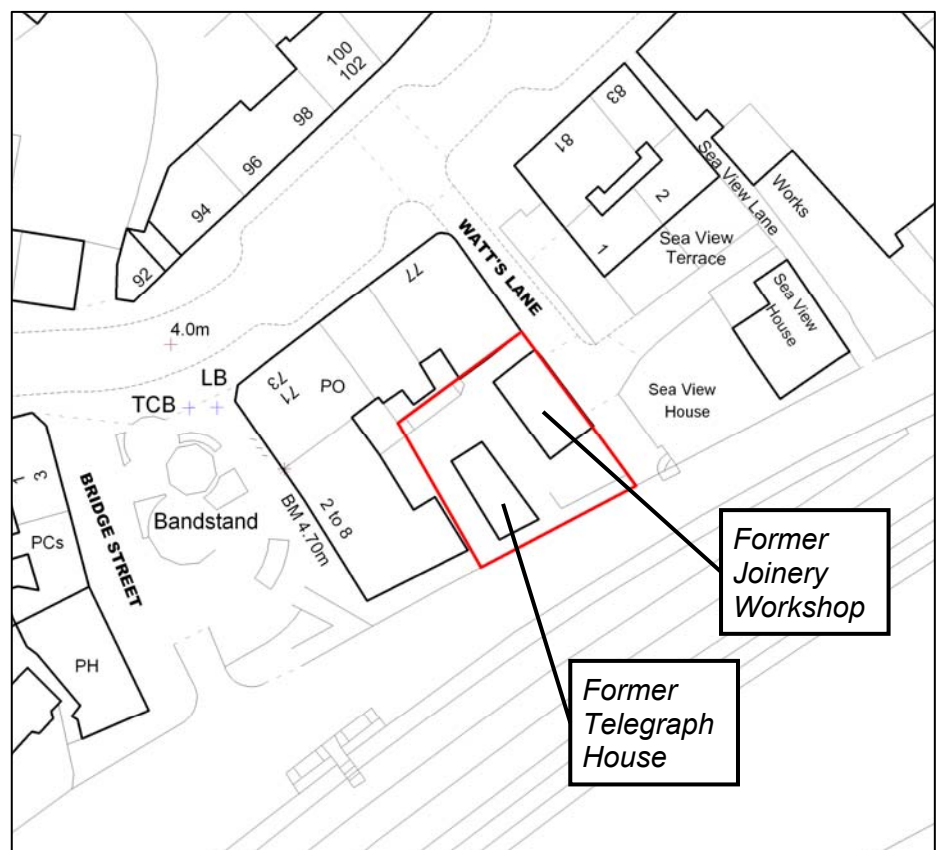
and was formerly linked to the European telegraph network via cables to Scandinavia. The building requires detailed research to establish its historic significance. Research may establish that it has sufficient national interest to become a listed building.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies both buildings as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The telegraph cable house has also been identified as having special local architectural and historic interest, and, if it does not become statutorily listed, it will be nominated for inclusion in a Local List to be prepared by the Council in the due course.

Site Information and Constraints

The approximately 0.1ha site has vehicular access from High Street via an alley to the east, and pedestrian access from the Promenade.

Recent improvements to the sea wall have reduced the potential risk of flooding. The site's surroundings are dominated by retail, commercial, residential and other town centre uses.



Policy Context

The site is within the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea settlement limit (Local Plan Policy GP1). It is also within Newbiggin-by-the-Sea town centre boundary (Local Plan Policy RTC1). General policies include visual impact (GP30), urban design (GP31) and landscaping and the public realm (GP32). Others will include those relating to access, sustainability, crime prevention and parking. If residential use is proposed, Policy H3, windfall sites, would apply. If the telegraph cable house becomes listed, Local Plan Policies GP14-16 will apply.

The site is located within an area of high archaeological sensitivity and is likely to require a site assessment funded by the developer prior to planning determination.

There is a presumption in favour of retaining the telegraph cable house. Proposals to replace the joinery workshop will be considered on their merits.

As the site is in a conservation area, Local Plan Policies GP17-19 will apply, together with supplementary objectives in the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area Management Strategy, including Demolition (Objective D) and Design (Objective G). Proposals for demolition would require conservation area consent. Demolition of the joinery workshop or telegraph cable house will not be permitted unless there is conclusive evidence that it is beyond reasonable economic repair, taking into account that demolition must not simply be more economically attractive than repair, and that economic repair has not been made unreasonable by the acquisition price reflecting perceived development potential rather than the building's condition and constraints. Guidance in PPG15 *Planning and Historic Environment* (1994) will also be taken into consideration. A condition of any conservation area consent would be that no demolition shall take place until a contract has been let for a replacement development. The Council may seek independent assessment of any economic case made for demolition. Photographic recording would also be conditioned.

Development Response

The site is considered suitable for residential use or uses which would bring life to the Promenade such as a café, tourism or cultural uses. The Council will seek an active frontage to the Promenade. Development of between two and three stories would be acceptable with the top floor partly within the roofspace. The front building line should be located within 1m of the back of the promenade.

Design cues may be taken from one of two neighbouring buildings. Cues from the Art Deco Café Riviera to the south could include the use of render, flat or mono-pitch roofs, a gabled east elevation, windows with horizontal proportions, and extensive glazing. Cues from the Georgian Seaview House to the north could include the use of natural sandstone facing the Promenade with red brick or render to the sides and rear, Welsh slate dual-pitched roofs and windows with vertical proportions. Parking could be incorporated on the ground floor or on hard standing to the rear. If incorporated on the ground floor, this should not interfere with a desire for an active frontage to the Promenade.

Should the Telegraph Cable House be retained it is likely to be possible to incorporate it within a new development, re-opening its blocked windows and doors and re-using the accommodation.

If the joinery workshop is to be demolished then some of its characteristics could be echoed in the new development to reflect its rugged functional commercial character on this route between the town and Promenade, for example using a natural sandstone plinth or colourful timber garage doors.

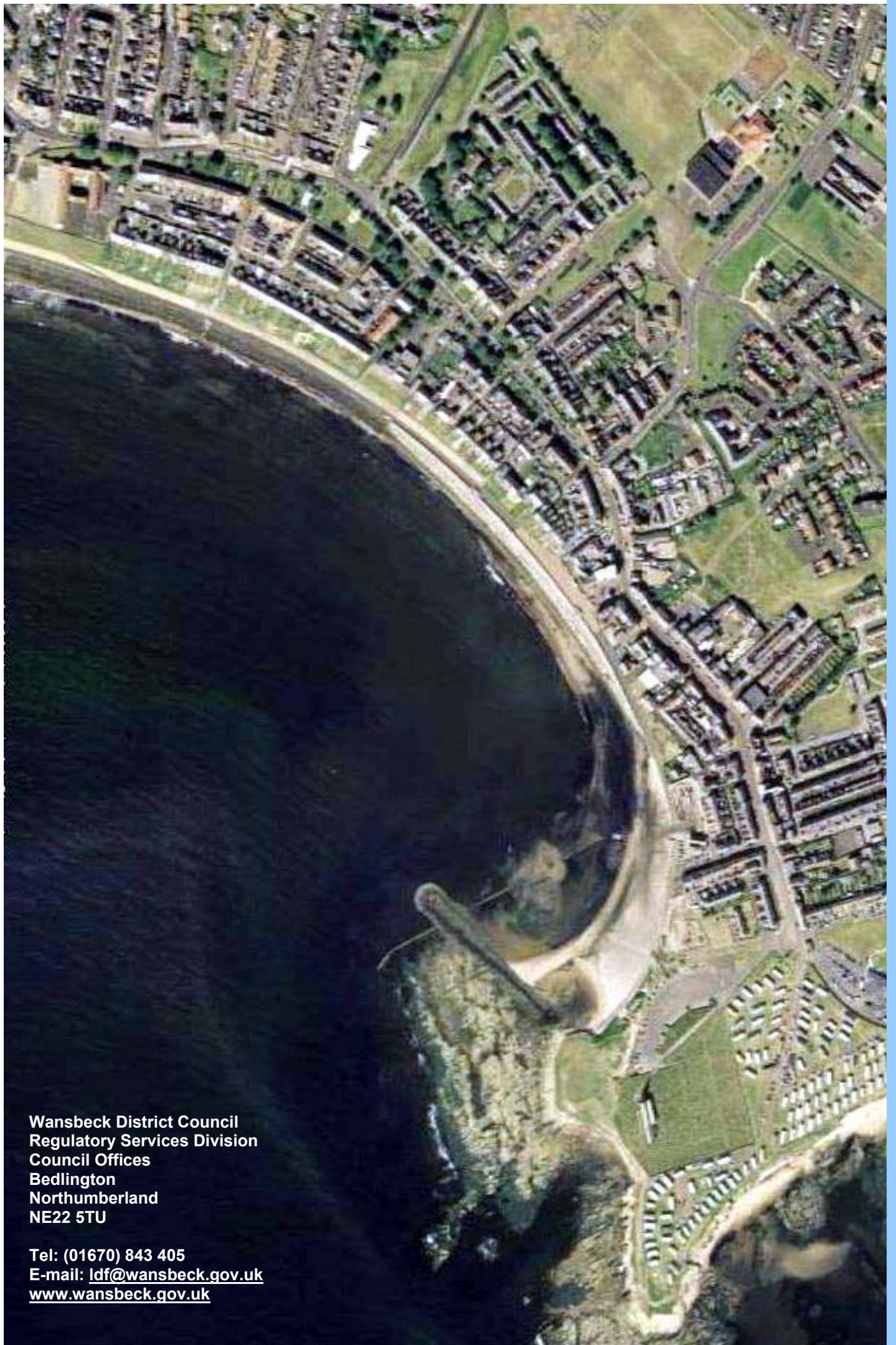
Applicants will be expected to submit a full planning application.

Role and Status of Brief

This brief is a material consideration in relation to development proposals for the site.

Further Information

For further information or discussion about this brief, please contact Wansbeck District Council Development Control Manager on Tel: (01670) 843 434 or to planningenquiriesmailbox@wansbeck.gov.uk.



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