

A historical painting of a coastal village. In the foreground, a small wooden hut with a corrugated metal roof sits on a grassy slope. To the left, a sandy beach leads to a body of water with a small boat and a person. In the background, a cluster of houses with various rooflines and chimneys is built on a hillside. The overall scene is a detailed depiction of a traditional coastal settlement.

Whitburn Bents Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and
Management Strategy

PLANNING GUIDANCE

Whitburn Bents Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

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Contents

Contents	i
Background	ii
Introduction	1
Part 1: Character Appraisal	
Historic Development	5
Fundamental Character	8
The Bents Cottages	11
The Bents Farmstead	12
Landmarks Views and Vistas	13
Current Issues and Possible Solutions	14
Part 2: Management Strategy	
Introduction	19
The Bents Cottages (Article 4 Directions)	20
South Bents Farmstead	23
Views and Open Spaces	24
Management Proposals: Summary and Recommended Action	25
Appendix 1	26
References	27

Background

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civil Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance." Local authorities are obliged to determine which parts of their district are of special interest and declare them Conservation Areas. Designation is dependent on the overall quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings, although it is common for such areas to contain a number of listed buildings. There are currently 13 Conservation Areas in Sunderland, including City Centre areas, pre-conquest villages, the Victorian suburbs of Ashbrooke and the coastal resort of Roker. Each conservation area has its own unique character and appearance. Designation as a conservation area has a number of implications. Most importantly, the local authority is required to give "special" attention to preserving or enhancing the conservation area in exercising its planning functions. Consent is required for the demolition of buildings within Conservation Areas. Designation also brings control over works to trees and householders must also gain consent for certain types of cladding, dormer windows, satellite dishes and radio masts/antennae to be erected to their houses.

Appraisal of Character

The protection of an area does not end with Conservation Area designation. The Governments Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" urges Local Authorities to prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their conservation areas. Local Authorities' performance in producing such character appraisals is currently monitored by 'Best Value Performance Indicator' (BV219b). A character appraisal defines and analyses the special qualities and architectural and historic interest which warranted the conservation area designation. PPG 15 states that "the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions, as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area." Character appraisals should therefore provide a framework against which development proposals can be assessed for their appropriateness in the historic environment.

Management of Conservation Areas

Local Authorities are under a duty from time to time to "formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas" (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)) Act 1990, s. 71). This requirement is formalised in BV219c which monitors the percentage of conservation areas with published management proposals. English Heritage guidance on the management of conservation areas advises that such proposals should take the form of a mid-to-long term strategy, setting objectives for addressing the issues and recommendations for actions arising from character appraisals, and identifying any further and more detailed work needed for their implementation.

Whitburn Bents Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

This Character Appraisal and Management Strategy has been prepared in response to the guidance outlined above and, as such, discharges the Council's obligations and duties under the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, as well as complying with English Heritage guidance. Following a formal consultation process the City Council will adopt the finalised document as formal Planning Guidance in support of the City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and future Local Development Framework (LDF). The adopted guidance will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the conservation area.

Sunderland City Council wishes to acknowledge the valued contribution of Sybil Reeder in the production of this document and express thanks, in particular, for granting permission for the use of historic photographs from her private collection.

Introduction

Whitburn Bents Conservation Area was declared in 1970 in recognition of its unique character and its historic interest, particularly in respect of the involvement of Sir Hedworth Williamson. It is the smallest conservation area in Sunderland and features a concave terrace of early twentieth century cottages built on the site of earlier fisherman's cottages, and a former eighteenth century farm stead. The Conservation Area is located in a pleasant situation immediately on the seafront and provides panoramic views of both the coast and towards Cleadon Hills. It forms a highly desirable gateway into the City, providing a distinctive group of charming buildings to the coastal landscape.

This document combines an appraisal of the Conservation Area's character and appearance with management proposals for preserving and enhancing its special qualities. Part 1, the Character Appraisal, identifies and assesses those characteristics and features that give the area its special architectural and historic interest and considers current issues which may threaten its historic integrity. Part 2 of the document comprises a Management Strategy and contains a series of management objectives and proposals to address the issues raised in the Character Appraisal. This includes consideration of the resources needed and envisaged timescales to implement the management proposals.



Location

Between South Shields and Sunderland lies Whitburn, an old village whose origins can be traced to the 12th century, and a small former fishing hamlet called Whitburn Bents. Whitburn Bents Conservation Area is located on the North East coast to the North of Seaburn and Roker. The conservation area is rectangular in shape and is contained within the land originally developed as the fishing hamlet. Its boundaries are thus tightly drawn and best defined by Whitburn Bents Road to the west and the beach to the east.

UDP Conservation Policies

Policy **B4** of the City of Sunderland UDP states that "All development within and adjacent to Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance". Under this policy the Council is obliged to prepare supplementary guidance in the form of character assessments for each of its Conservation Areas. These will identify features and characteristics that contribute to the areas' special interest, identify opportunities for enhancement and, where appropriate, establish design criteria for new development and restoration projects. The Whitburn Bents Character Appraisal / Management Strategy is one of a series of such assessments that will cover all the City's conservation areas.

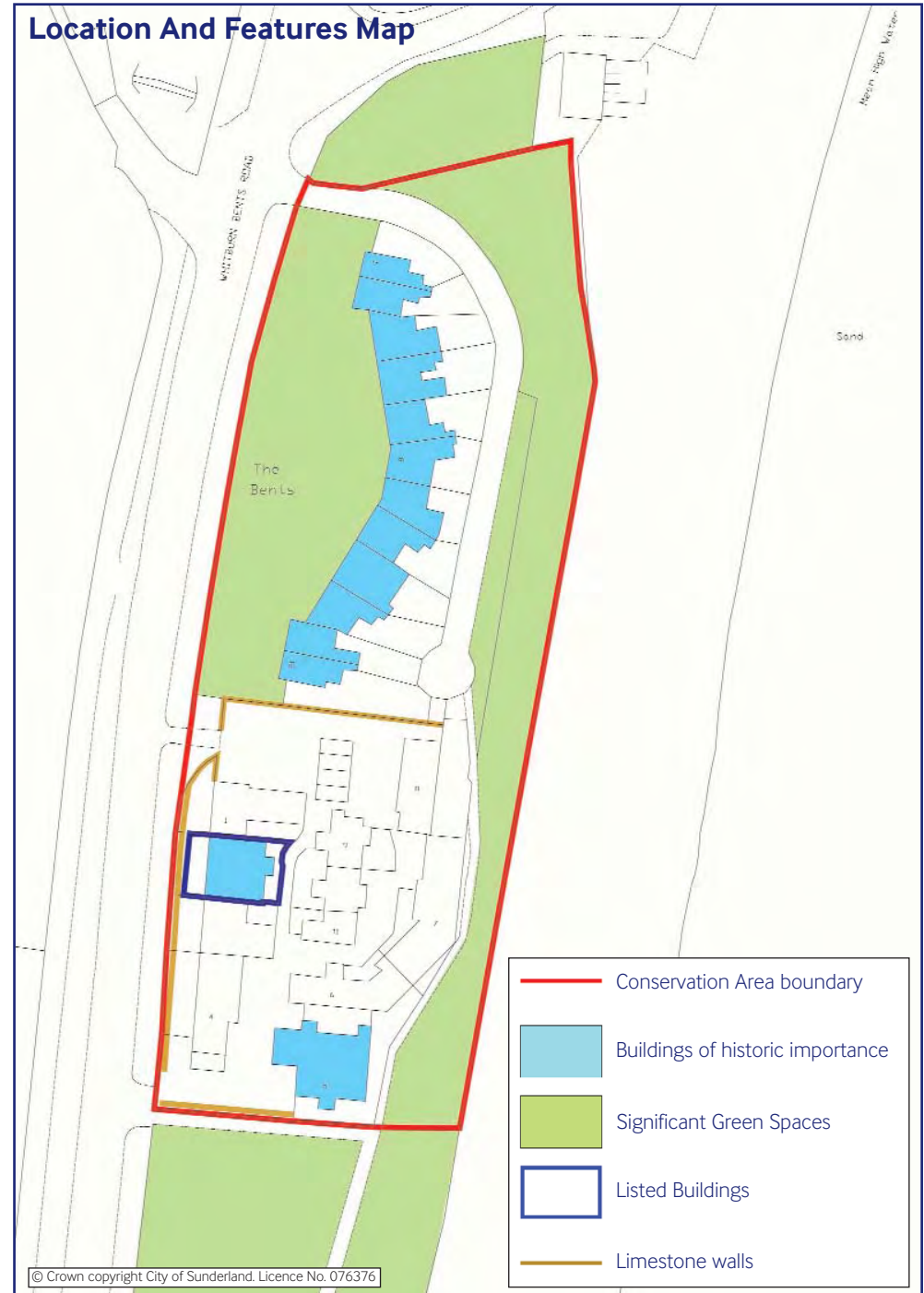
The Whitburn Bents Farmhouse is a Listed Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and is thus protected by tight planning controls. Policy **B8** presumes in favour of the retention of listed buildings whilst policy **B9** aims to prevent these buildings from undergoing extensions and alterations that would adversely affect their architectural or historic character. Policy **B10** seeks to preserve the setting of Listed Buildings.

In order to protect unlisted buildings from inappropriate alterations, the Council can seek under policy **B6** to make Article 4 Directions where considered appropriate, requiring planning permission to be gained for development which is normally 'permitted' in the case of dwellinghouses. The policy also encourages the retention of open spaces.

However, within Whitburn Bents Conservation Area the gradual loss of architectural features gives cause for concern and raises the issue as to whether further measures should be introduced that would provide better protection for the Conservation Area. To this end, the Management Strategy in part 2 of the document expands upon existing UDP policy to give clearer guidance on issues of particular importance to Whitburn Bents. This includes a proposal for an Article 4 Direction on the Bents Cottages.

All UDP policies relating to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings are re-produced in full in the appendix.

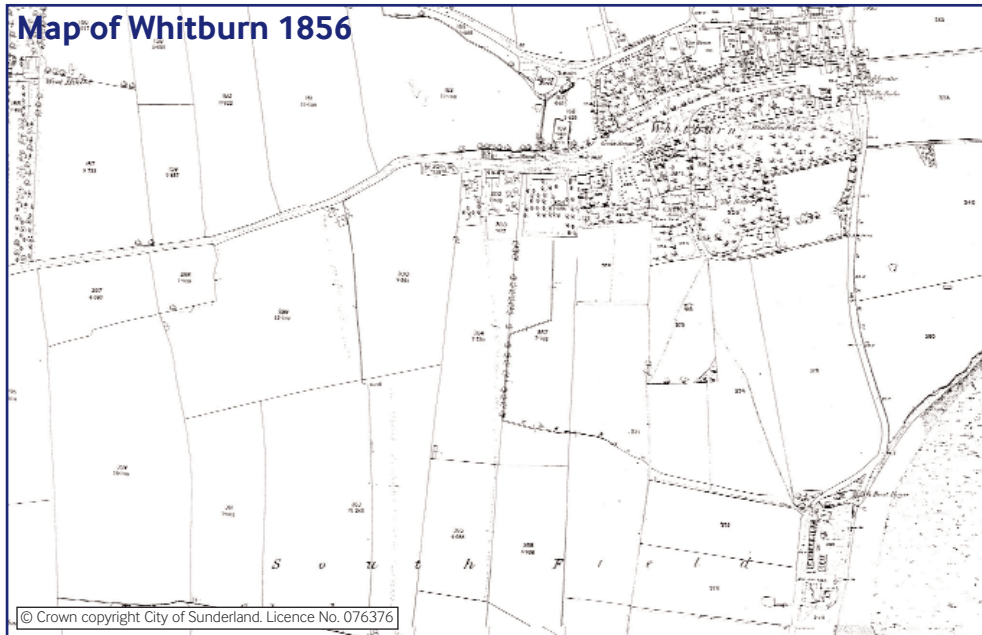
Location And Features Map





Part 1
Character Appraisal

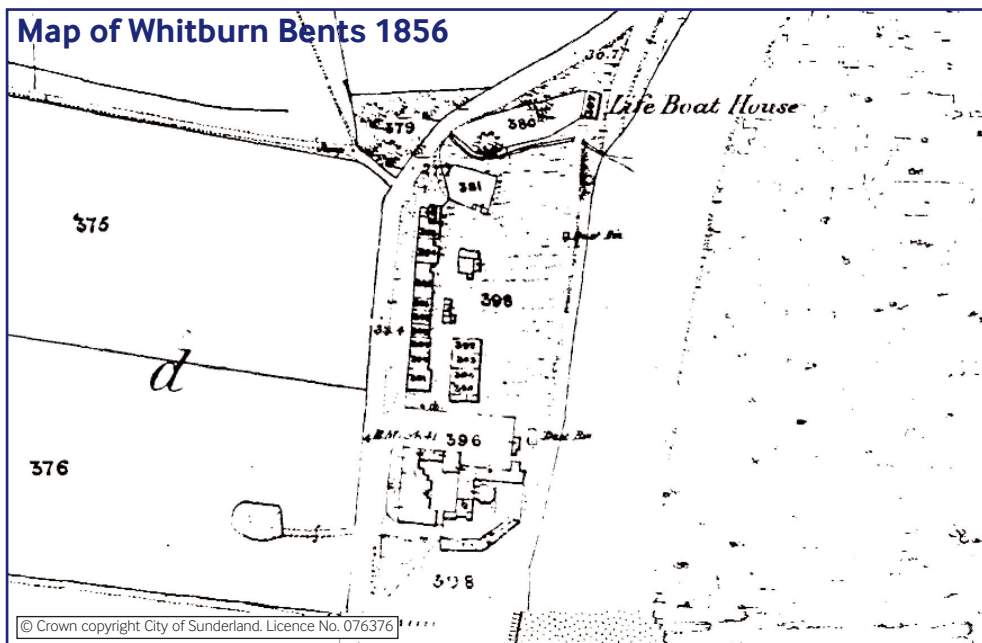
Historic Development



The ancient village of Whitburn is situated on the North East coast at one end of the beautiful curve of Whitburn Bay. The Village of Whitburn is located to the North of The Bents Conservation Area. It lies outside the boundary of the City of Sunderland and is the responsibility of South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council. Much of the village core comprises the Whitburn Conservation Area.

From Medieval times the village of Whitburn has been recorded, being called 'Whitbern' in the Bolden Buke in 1137. It probably originated as a Saxon settlement. It is possible that the name Whitburn derives from Hwita's barn or burial place. The name 'Bents' was derived from the coarse grass that characterises the coastal environment of Whitburn.

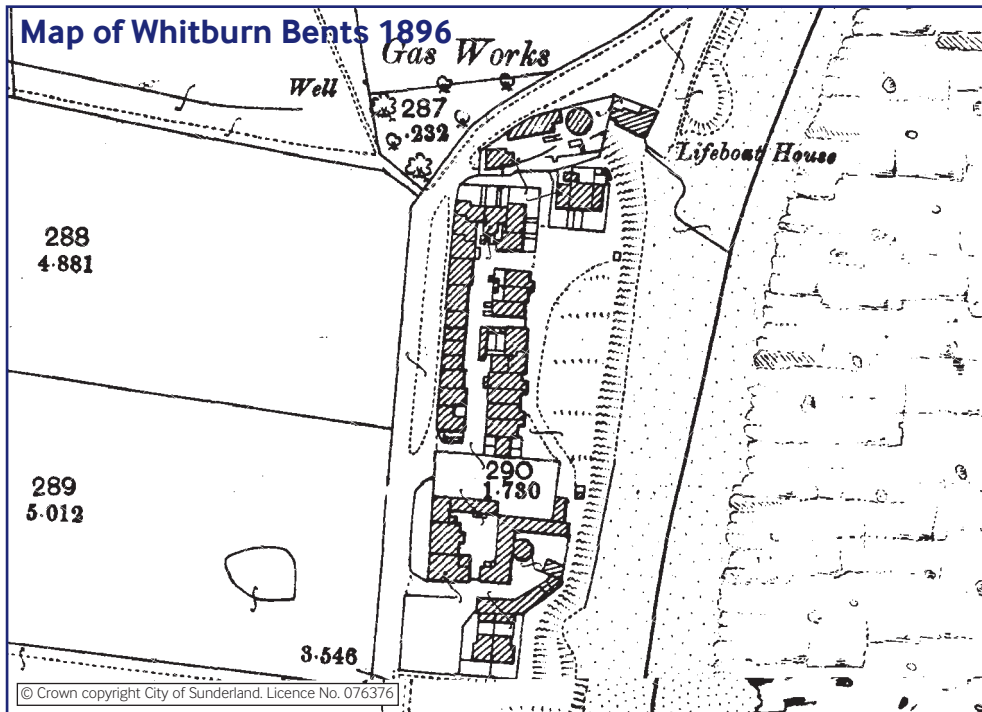
The construction of Whitburn Parish Church, the oldest surviving building in the village, in the thirteenth century and Whitburn Hall in the sixteenth century were focal points about which the village grew. It was a fairly undisturbed settlement until 1718 when the Land Enclosure Act came into force and a number of farms were created and are still in evidence today. The settlement was isolated as no roads connected to it, but there was a path on Sea Lane (now East Street) connecting it to Whitburn Bents. Although Whitburn Bents and Whitburn Village are closely related they were recognised as being two separate and very different communities.



One of the main differences that existed between the two areas was the occupations of the people living there. The Bents was originally a farming and fishing community. In 1828, The Bents was described as 'a small hamlet on the seashore with ten fishing boats and bathing machines stationed there'.



A view of the Bents from the beach in the early 19th century. South Bents Farmhouse and surrounding farm buildings can be seen to the left. Source: Reeder, S (1992)



South Bents Farm was the first development in Whitburn Bay. It was established during the 18th century and included a number of barns and outbuildings. Following this, a row of fishermen's cottages was built in the 19th century, creating The Bents hamlet. This was in the form of a row of single storey, white washed cottages; in addition there was also a lifeboat house on the north side.

Whitburn Bents had its own public house, "The Board", that in the 1850/60s was owned by William Purvis who was a fisherman as well as a publican. During the mid 19th century, a Gas works was also set up in The Bents area by Sir Hedworth Williamson, the owner of most of the lands from Monkwearmouth shore to Whitburn, with the purpose of bringing gas lighting to his family house at Whitburn Hall. Consequently, in 1864 Whitburn Hall became the first house in the area to have gas lighting.

By 1896 the hamlet had grown to accommodate a double row of fisherman's cottages (shown opposite), with two small groups of grandeur cottages (illustrated below) situated perpendicular to the main rows at the north and south ends of the hamlet. The cottages at the south end still survive, albeit now as a single house known as Sandpiper.



Front of the first row of the original Bents Cottages facing onto Whitburn Road.
Source: Reeder, S (1992)



Cottages at north end Source: Reeder (1992)

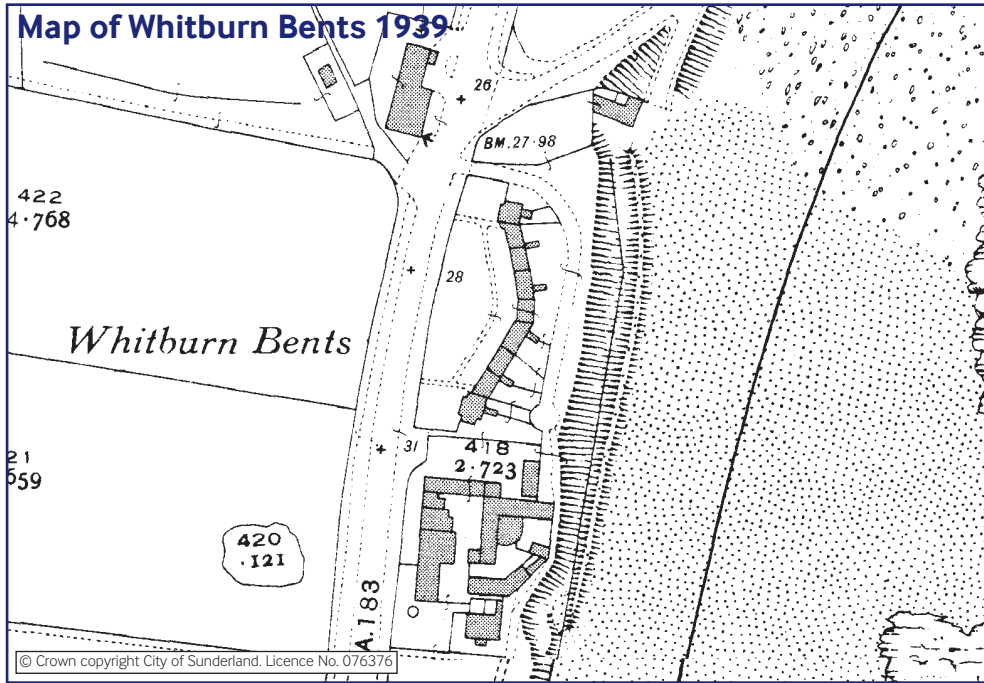


Cottages at south end (now sandpiper)

The Coast Road between Roker and Whitburn was not formed until after the First World War. With no ready means of travelling between the two, the hamlet remained quiet and quite secluded: only occasional horse drawn vehicles made the journey. Residents wishing to visit Sunderland were obliged to walk to Seaburn to catch a tram. A proposal to extend the seafront tram-way which terminated by the Seaburn Hotel was never pursued.

From the mid 19th century to the 1920s there were few changes made to the properties in Whitburn Bents. But it wasn't long before the open rural setting of the

Map of Whitburn Bents 1939

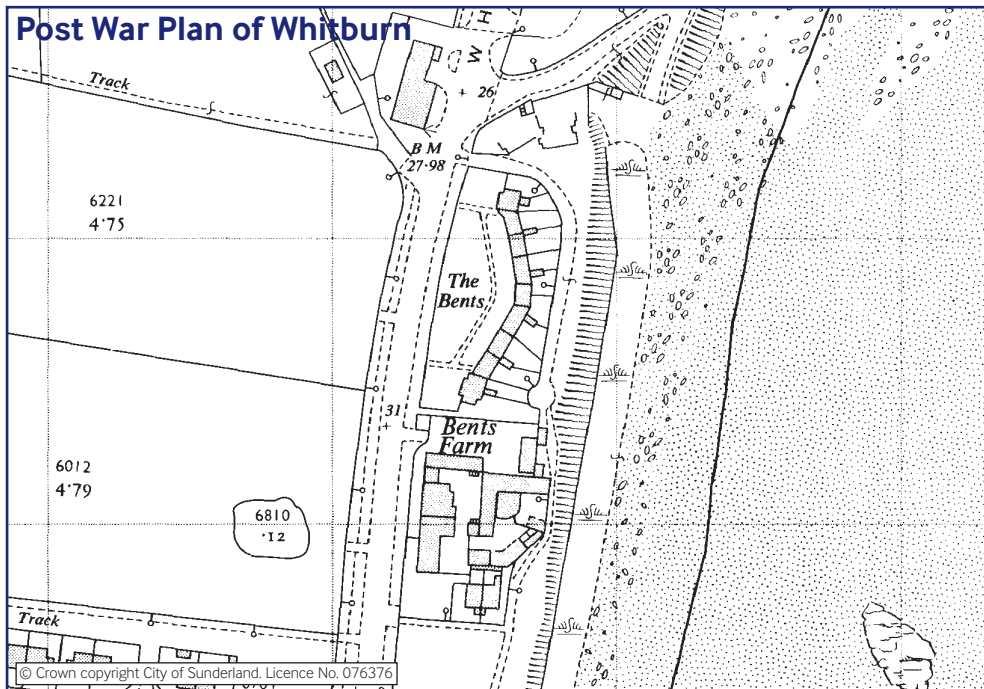


area was to be intruded into by a ribbon of residential development along Whitburn Road as Sunderland increasingly extended northward as people sought to take advantage of the sea views. In the 1920s a small shop known as 'the smallest shop in Sunderland' occupied the space between the wall and the end cottage at the south, and the end cottage became a tea-room.

In 1938, the cottages were demolished by Sir Hedworth and rebuilt in a more modern style, taking on the now familiar crescent shape. The date stone visible in the centre of the cottages displays the initials of Sir Hedworth Williamson as well as the date when the cottages were built. The Gas Works were also demolished and the site left vacant. Sadly the newly built cottages were badly damaged during heavy bombing in 1940.

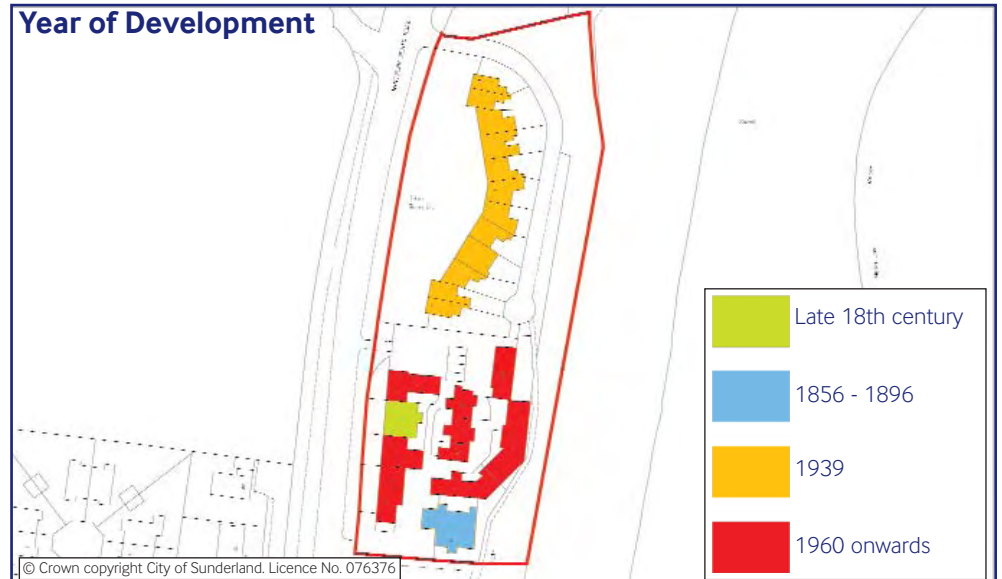
After the war Whitburn Bents began to change, the Bents cottages were rebuilt, the previous design and materials being, for the most part replicated. South Bents Farm had remained largely intact, until the 1960s when the agricultural uses decreased. In recent years there has been extensive modern infill developments around South Bent Farm Stead which regrettably, required the demolition of the agricultural buildings; hence much of the evidence of early farming activities at the Bents has been lost.

Post War Plan of Whitburn



Although the farm is no longer working, fishing boats can still be seen on the beach as the tradition is maintained through the Fishermen's Club, located in the small dene to the north, recently damaged by fire.

Year of Development



Fundamental Character

The fundamental character of Whitburn Bents Conservation Area is derived from its splendid coastal setting and the two distinct and contrasting groups of buildings that comprise it; first, a symmetrical concave crescent of white rendered cottages; and second, South Bents Farmstead including the original farmhouse and "Sandpiper". The farmhouse is the oldest (late 18th Century) and only listed building in the Conservation Area. The intimate relationship between the coast and the cottages gives the conservation area an especially distinctive and pleasant character which can be admired and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.



View of The Bents Cottages from the beach, illustrating the superb coastal location.

Layout

The layout of the Conservation Area is defined by the two groups of buildings; the Cottages constructed in a very much planned format and the former Farmstead in a more ad-hoc fashion.

The Bents Cottages were originally laid out in a linear fashion facing Whitburn Bents Road, rather than the set-back, concave form first established in 1939. The bombings in 1940 badly damaged the cottages and they were rebuilt in the same style and form after the war. In contrast, the former South Bents Farmstead has a much less planned format, with modern houses accommodated between the surviving historic buildings in a largely ad-hoc manner.

The layout of the farmstead has thus been subject to the most extensive changes since the origins of Whitburn Bents. A collection of private houses have been built on the site of the former farm buildings in an informal pattern, loosely reflecting the footprint of the former barns and byers.

The most significant change to the layout of the Conservation Area in post war years has been the modern single storey additions to either side of the Bents Farmhouse and the construction of garage blocks for the new houses.

Unfortunately, the new houses and extensions to the historic buildings have largely failed to contribute to the area's special character, whilst undoubtedly providing desirable residences. Some of these houses have been positioned facing the sea to enjoy pleasant coastal views, unlike the majority of the properties in the Conservation Area which face the main road, although the Bents Cottages have fine sea views to the rear.

Built Form and Style

The scale and massing of buildings is fairly consistent and low-key throughout the Conservation Area, with most properties of a small domestic scale and generally one-two storeys high.



The Bents Cottages showing their distinctive symmetrical concave shape.

The Bents cottages are built unusually in the form of a shallow, symmetrical curved terrace, with the central and end properties being two storeys with distinctive shaped gables that act as a centrepiece and "bookends". The other six cottages are single storey. The cottages are built in a typical post Arts & Crafts 1930's architectural style to a unified design composition akin to that of Almshouses. Although some alterations have been made, the Bents Cottages have retained their essential character and are the most distinctive and dominant feature of the conservation area. The roofscape remains largely as originally built and does much to sustain the character of the group.

South Bents Farmhouse is the oldest building in the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area and was built in the late 18th century. The farmhouse was designated a Grade II listed building in 1978 due to its architectural and historic importance. The setting of the Farmhouse has been compromised in more recent times with the construction of single storey, brown brick bungalows either side of it, these having little regard to the traditional rustic character of the farmhouse. Situated in the south east corner of the Conservation Area is Sandpiper. Sandpiper was originally built in the 19th Century as a pair of farmworkers cottages. The building is quite quaint in its appearance featuring local limestone in its construction and is considered a significant feature in the Conservation Area.



View of the Conservation Area from the south west. South Bents farmhouse and Sandpiper can be seen to the left and right of the photograph respectively.

Materials

The locally quarried magnesian limestone used to construct the original boundary walls to South Bents Farmstead and Sandpiper is a significant feature of the conservation area and gives it a high degree of local distinctiveness. A lower limestone boundary wall runs between the rear of the cottages and the beach and is also evident around the small dene to the north where small fishing boats are still stored.

The extensive use of white render on the Bents Cottages is quite typical of the character of such buildings and their seafront position. Indeed, it is common for render to be used in such exposed coastal locations to provide added weather protection. This bright, striking treatment adds much to the distinctiveness of the group.

Elsewhere, within the former farmstead the choice of materials for many of the modern dwellings has not been informed by their historic context. The brown bricks used to construct most of the houses are particularly incongruous to the materials that traditionally characterised this part of the Conservation Area, as shown opposite.

The roofscape is predominantly characterised by the use of tiles; the plain clay tiles and tall brick chimneys of the cottages making the most significant and interesting contribution to the skyline. Elsewhere, in the former farmstead concrete pantiles tend to prevail and add little to the character of the area.

Landscape

The natural landscape within the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area comprises of a small open green situated in front of the shallow curved terrace that forms the Bents Cottages. The surrounding coastal leas and sands provide the Conservation Area with a remarkable setting that adds considerable drama to the cottages in particular, their roofscape being a familiar reference point for visitors enjoying the beaches.



Communal open space in front of Bents Cottages

Fundamental Character of Whitburn Bents Conservation Area comprises:

- ❖ A shallow curved symmetrical terrace of cottages with unique character as the dominant feature of the conservation area.
- ❖ Distinctive roofscape of the cottages, especially when viewed from the beach.
- ❖ A Grade II listed farmhouse; the main surviving feature of the South Bents Farmstead
- ❖ Use of distinctive locally quarried limestone, most evident in boundary walls.
- ❖ Extensive use of white painted render due to the coastal location.
- ❖ The open communal aspect to the front of the Bents Cottages.
- ❖ Superb coastal setting, facilitating long views of the Conservation Area from the South over the Leas.

All of the above combine to give a high degree of local distinctiveness

The following sections comprise a more detailed appraisal of the Conservation Area's two distinct groups of buildings and views into and out of the Conservation Area.

The Bents Cottages

The existing Bents were built by Sir Hedworth Williamson as a modern replacement for the fishermen's cottages he had demolished in 1938. The original properties were built in the 19th century and included a small bay for the fishing boats. The current cottages, built in a distinctive crescent shape, form a very striking group of great character and are the most impressive feature of the Conservation Area.

The Bents Cottages were built in an unusual form of a shallow curved terrace. The materials used were generally that of bright white rendered walls and traditional clay roof tiles as well as timber doors and metal windows. Only one property has entirely retained its original form and features to the front, including the only surviving traditional timber casement windows (see photo on page 21). In other properties these have generally been replaced by PVC windows in a variety of styles (as illustrated far right). This loss of features breaks the rhythm of the group's frontage and detracts considerably from the overall composition. Each property also has a timber canopy above the front door.



Although some alterations have been made, the Bents Cottages have retained their essential character and are the most distinctive and dominant feature of the conservation area. The roofscape to the front remains as originally built and does much to sustain the character of the group. It plays an integral part in the symmetry of the terrace, characterised by imposing front shaped gables and less distinctive pointed gables to the rear as centrepiece and end features with tall brick chimneys between.

The shaped gables make for particularly imposing features. The tall corniced brick chimney stacks and pots do much to create a rhythm to the skyline that adds interest. Two sloping dormer windows are displayed at either end of the terrace; these are original features of the cottages and reinforce the symmetry of the group. Several properties now have rooms in the roof space with roof lights installed to the rear slopes, although rarely using an appropriate 'conservation' model.



When looking at the properties from the rear of the conservation area, the view is very different. The majority of the properties have been altered significantly with extensions, roof lights and upvc windows and conservatories. A single dormer has been inserted, this being the only significantly intrusive feature to the roofscape

Key characteristics of The Bents Cottages:

- ❖ Concave terrace with imposing shaped front gable features
- ❖ Distinctive roofscape featuring tall corniced brick chimneys
- ❖ Striking white rendered elevations
- ❖ Attractive communal open aspect to the front
- ❖ Splendid coastal setting and sea views
- ❖ Most distinctive and dominant feature of the Conservation Area

The Bents Farmstead

The character and appearance of the former South Bents Farmstead area has changed dramatically over the years. Many of the original farm buildings have been demolished and replaced with modern infill housing. Fortunately, South Bents Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building built in the late 18th Century, has survived along with some other key features to provide a reminder of the farmstead's original character.

South Bents Farmhouse

South Bents Farmhouse is the most significant surviving feature of the former farmstead and makes a prominent visual statement along Whitburn Road, especially when viewed in conjunction with the limestone boundary wall to its front.

The farmhouse is rendered with painted ashlar dressings and quoins. It is probable that the roof was slate or clay pantiles originally but in recent years has been replaced with concrete tiles. The building features water tabling to the gables and the chimney stacks add considerable interest to the skyline.

The building has timber doors as well as sliding-sash windows; these are typical features of small rural buildings of the late 17th and early 18th Century. It is essential that such features are retained.



The boundary wall to the front is constructed from locally quarried magnesian limestone and is very attractive and significant local feature, forming the original enclosure to the farmstead. Large stretches of the wall survive, particularly along Whitburn Road where it provides very strong definition to the Conservation Area's western boundary. It is essential these walls are preserved for the key historic and visual contribution they make to the Conservation Area's character and appearance.

Sandpiper

Sandpiper, also constructed from local limestone, would appear to have originally been built as two farm workers cottages in the mid-late 19th century shortly after the first generation of Bents Cottages. The building retains much of its original charm and character and is significantly the only surviving physical evidence of one of the earlier styles of cottages in the Bents. The exposed stonework and small gabled dormers contribute greatly to its appeal; however, many of the features of the building have been replaced in uPVC, such as the windows, gutters and barge boards. Although they may have been fitted as a measure to help against coastal weather conditions, they diminish this building's historic character. It would be desirable therefore for traditional features and materials to be reinstated wherever possible in the interests of restoring its original form.



Modern infill housing

The South Bents Farmstead area has changed over time with many of the farm buildings being demolished and replaced with inappropriately designed 1970s housing. The features and built form of the housing fail to enhance the original rural character of the farmstead and could be said to detract from the townscape value of the conservation area. The buildings have been built using brown brick, concrete roof tiles and white uPVC doors and windows. Many also include windows which are disproportionate to the main building and appear to over power the elevation. Although the infill housing detracts from the character of the conservation area, much of it is screened to a degree by historic buildings.

Key characteristics of South Bents Farmstead:

- ❖ Grade II listed farmhouse, central to the South Bents Farmstead
- ❖ Sandpiper, attractive stone built former fisherman's cottages.
- ❖ Locally quarried magnesian limestone boundary walls
- ❖ Modern late 20th century infill housing

Landmarks, Views and Vistas

Bents Cottages

The views on the approach to and within the Conservation Area show the Bents Cottages to be a notable and distinguished group.



The Bents Cottages are the first buildings to be seen on the approach from the North, travelling from Whitburn into Sunderland. The end cottages provide a welcoming landmark for Sunderland, as illustrated opposite. There is an unspoilt side view of the Bents Cottages, opening up to reveal the unique concave terrace.

On the approach from the South, the most prominent view is of Sandpiper and the coastline. The rendered gables and brick chimney stacks of South Bents Farmhouse are also notable features when approaching from both the North and South (see photographs opposite and above).



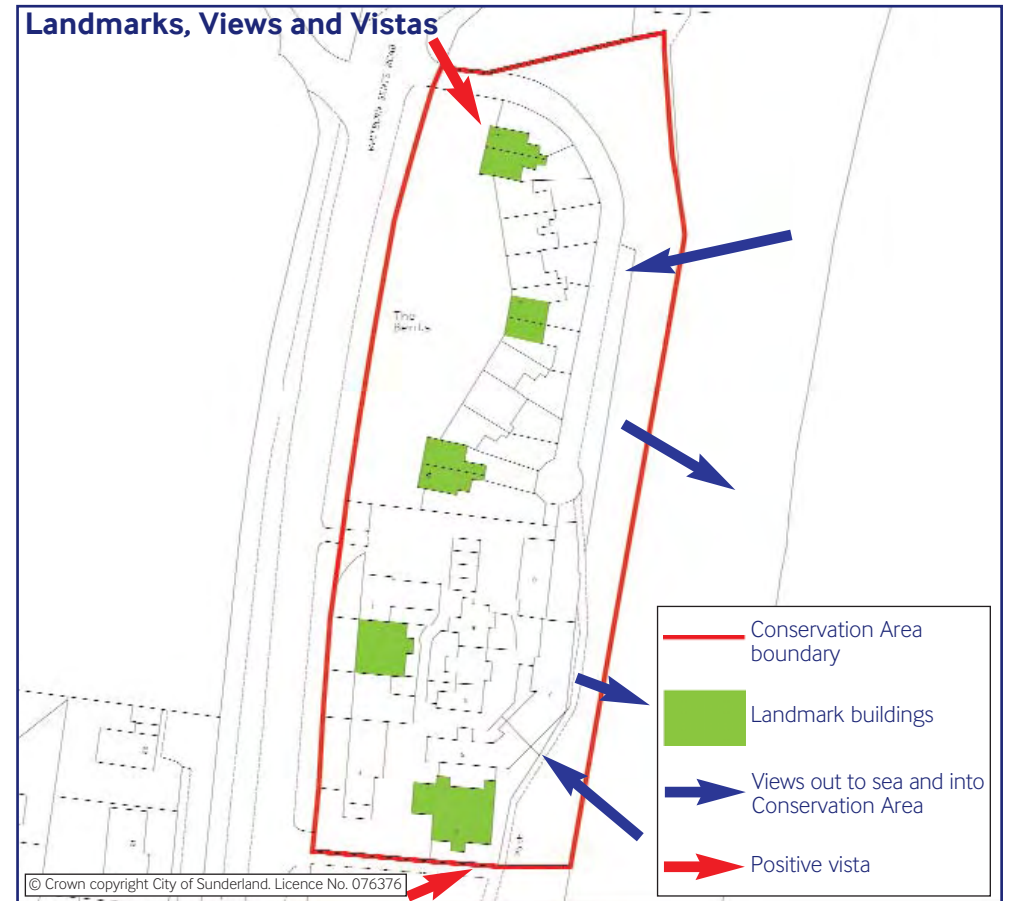
The view from the coast shows the symmetrical roofscape of the cottages with only one small dormer window detracting from the otherwise unspoilt character of the roofline. The views of the front and rear elevations of the cottages are very different.

The front elevation is largely unspoilt with the centre and end properties having distinctive shapes on the sky line. In comparison the rear view has many extensions in evidence, but all sit below the eaves level and are not unduly intrusive as the sand bank screens them from the beach.



Coastal Views

The boundary of the conservation area runs along the coastline and provides beautiful views of the sea. From the rear of the Bents cottages, Roker Pier can be seen in the distance. Similarly, the cottages are a distinctive built presence when seen from afar.



Current Issues and Possible Solutions

Whitburn Bents Conservation Area's historic and architectural integrity is under threat for a variety of reasons. Many properties have been subject to ill-considered and insensitive rear extensions. Continuing pressure for new household extensions are threatening the appearance, character and setting of certain buildings. There are a range of possible options to address these issues. These are outlined below. The Management Strategy in part two of this document considers in more detail the following issues and establishes a series of objectives and proposals for the future management of the Conservation Area.

Extension of Conservation Area boundary

Issues:

- ❖ The boundary of the Conservation Area should include all elements that contribute to the special character of an area. As such a boundary review is recommended as part of the character appraisal. Two areas in particular have been considered for inclusion in the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area, the boat storage area to the north and the open space to the south.

Solutions:

- ❖ The boat storage area is historically linked to Whitburn Bents as part of its fishing heritage. The addition of the boat storage area would allow some evidence of the fishing industry to be sustained. In addition, the boat storage itself is the foundations of the original gasworks built by Sir Hedworth Williamson to light Whitburn Hall. The historic links between the site and the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area warrant its inclusion if the boundary were to be extended. However, the area lies outside the City of Sunderland boundary and therefore it is not feasible to include it in the Conservation Area at this stage.
- ❖ Whilst the open space to the south of the conservation area could be considered as part of a boundary extension, the area does not have any architectural or historic interest. In addition, the area is also allocated in the Council's Unitary Development Plan as protected open space and therefore any proposed development would be prohibited. It is not considered therefore to warrant inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Building Maintenance and Alterations

Issues:

- ❖ Due to the seafront location of the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area, many properties have been subject to unfortunate and often damaging alterations in the past to provide added weather protection, such as the installation of double glazed windows. The general style and design of the Bents Cottages is threatened by insensitive alteration works. It is important, therefore, that the occupiers adopt the right approach to repairs and the design and specification of extensions.
- ❖ One of the main problems within the conservation area is the installation of uPVC double glazed windows to the Bents Cottages, of varying styles to the front that spoil the historic integrity and appearance of the group as illustrated below.



Changes to the window openings and windows to accommodate replacement PVC units have insensitively altered the historic form of the property to the right; the property to the left has retained its original appearance.

- ❖ Potential also exists for spoiling the authenticity of the front elevation through the erection of boundary walls and entrance porches. There is no evidence of this being a problem at this time, however, controls are warranted to prevent such inappropriate additions.
- ❖ Loft conversions requiring dormers or roof lights disrupt the strong clean lines of the roofscape to the detriment of the appearance of the terrace. Some rooflights installed are of a particularly inappropriate size and style.

- ❖ Many properties within the Bents cottages have been subject to rear extensions. Some of these extensions have been sympathetic to the character of the conservation area whilst others have sought to take advantage of the views seaward without giving due consideration to the character of the existing building. There is a particular concern that the end of terrace properties may wish to extend to the side of the cottages which would disrupt the symmetry of the group.



Extensions to the rear of the Bents Cottages

Solutions:

- ❖ Design guidelines for residents on the general approach to be taken when contemplating repairs and alterations are available from the council's conservation team. Owners and occupiers should, always seek the advice of the Conservation Team before carrying out works to their buildings. Consent is some times required.
- ❖ The effectiveness of design guidance is often dependent on the willingness of residents to observe it. Most minor alterations to unlisted dwelling houses do not require permission and the results often compromise their historic interest and architectural integrity. This issue is proposed to be controlled by the Council introducing an Article 4 Direction on the Bents Cottages (see proposal 1a) that will have the effect of requiring owners to gain permission for certain types of development. This process has been facilitated by design principles being agreed by the residents with the local planning authority. Such principles are set out in proposal 2a and include, for instance, controls over replacement windows and doors, works to the roofscape, extensions and the erection of boundary walls.

New Development

Issues:

- ❖ The loss of historic farm buildings to modern forms of housing has irrevocably changed the essential character of the southern half of the Conservation Area. The newer houses which have been built and the materials used do little to reinforce or enhance the quality and character of the conservation area. The map overleaf identifies those buildings which make a positive contribution to the historic character of the conservation area and those which are considered to have a neutral or negative impact on its townscape value.

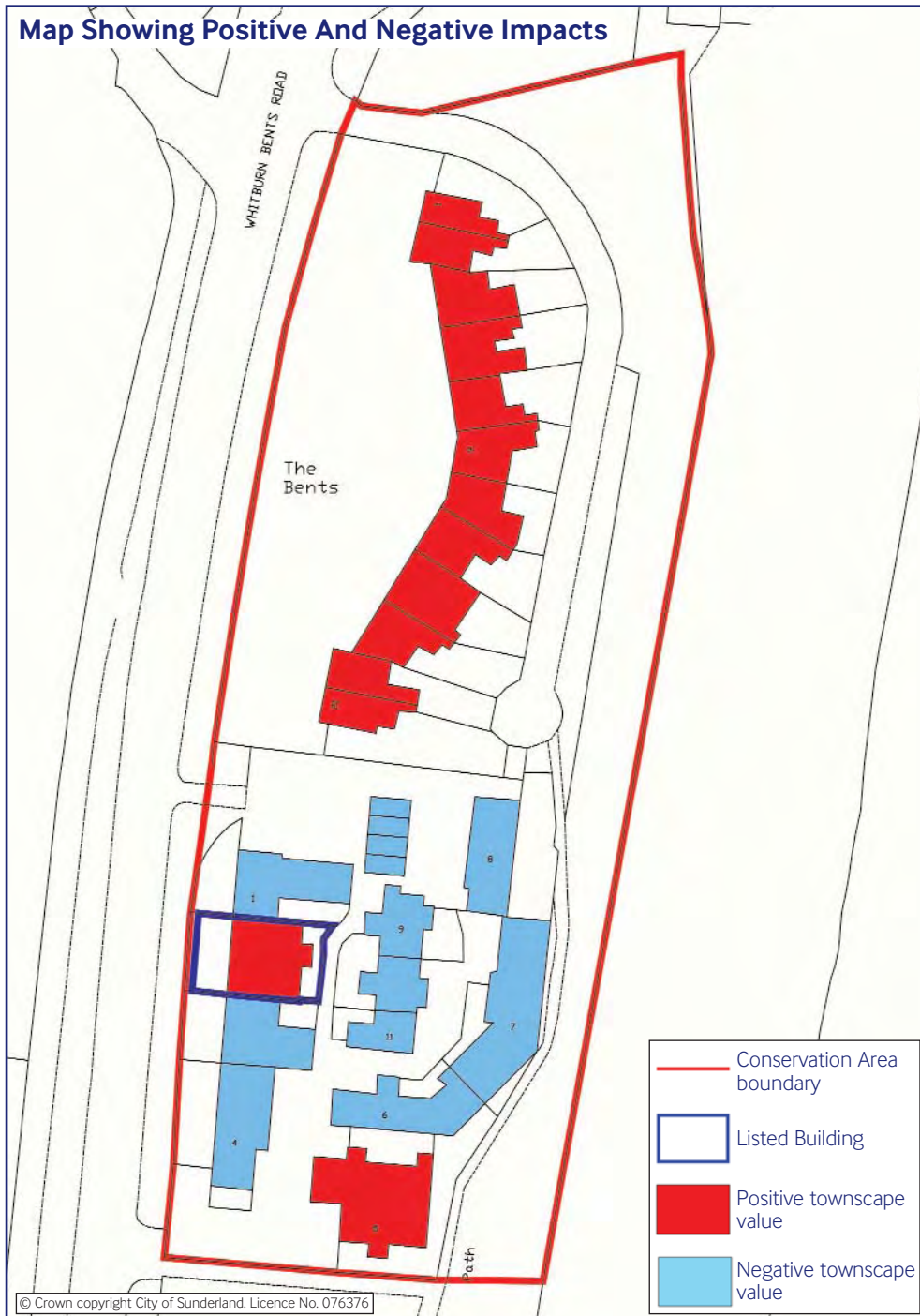


The bungalows built either side of South Bents Farmhouse detract considerably from the setting of this Listed Building. The materials used are particularly incongruous to the traditional character of the conservation area.

Solutions:

- ❖ It is unlikely that any new development will take place in the foreseeable future as space does not allow, unless the demolition and redevelopment of properties is proposed (although this is highly improbable) and considered to be appropriate. However, as noted above pressure for alterations and extensions remains.

Map Showing Positive And Negative Impacts



Parking

Issues:

- ❖ On-street parking is a problematic issue for the Bents Cottages. Increases in the number of cars per household cannot be accommodated at the rear of each property. Most of the Cottages have been extended to the rear and this effectively excludes or limits in-curtilage parking, forcing vehicles to park along the rear lane (as illustrated below) and on the grass verges, blocking the way for traffic and damaging the green space.



On-street parking to the rear of the Bents Cottages

Solutions:

- ❖ Parking should, as far as possible, be provided in the rear gardens of the Cottages. The design of rear extensions should take parking needs into account, leaving enough in-curtilage space to accommodate a vehicle (see guidance note on page 21). Parking on the grass to the front of the Cottages is wholly unacceptable (note: this does not appear to be an issue at this time).



Part 2

Management Strategy

Management Strategy: Introduction

Part 1 of this study has identified and appraised the special characteristics and features of the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area. Part 2, the 'Management Strategy', addresses in more detail the issues raised in the Appraisal. It establishes a number of management objectives and proposals to facilitate the more sensitive and proactive management of the conservation area, thus ensuring its special interest is better preserved and enhanced into the future. Measures through which the objectives and proposals may be achieved are discussed and an agenda is established that will be pursued as resources allow, to secure the future conservation of the Conservation Area. Its primary objective may therefore be expressed as follows:

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area is preserved and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations and for the enrichment of the City's built heritage.

Management Objectives and Proposals

The Primary Objective sets out the overarching vision of the Management Strategy, that is the sustained conservation of the heritage assets that make up the Whitburn Bents Conservation Area. The following strategy, like the preceding appraisal, is divided into sections; each has a Management Objective which establishes the broad vision for that area, followed by several Management Proposals which are the means by which the Objective may be achieved and will be pursued as resources allow. The Proposals seek to address the key issues which threaten the integrity of the Conservation Area. These proposals form the basis of a mid-to-long term strategy for the future management of the Conservation Area and are summarised in the final section of the study, which also discusses the factors that will affect their implementation and the envisaged timescales involved.

N.B. The Management Strategy has been devised as planning guidance to assist the Council in preserving and enhancing the 'special architectural and historic interest' of the conservation area. It is not a management plan for the area in a wider sense. For example, it does not contain proposals for the general management of Whitburn Bents in terms of nature conservation, wildlife habitats etc, nor does it consider social issues in the area such as crime and antisocial behaviour. Such issues are outside the scope of this document.

Management Objectives & Proposals: The Bents Cottages (Article 4 Directions)

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 1: To ensure the preservation of the architectural integrity of the Bents Cottages for future generations

Proposal 1A: The Council will seek to make a Direction under Article 4(2) to preserve the enhance the distinctive qualities and features of the Bents Cottages.

Article 4 Directions

Article 4(2) Directions can be imposed by local authorities to control certain alterations to dwellings and other works that would otherwise be automatically granted consent by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Thus, for example, the replacement of windows, doors, roof coverings etc. can come under planning control, the object being to refuse permission for works that are considered to be damaging or inappropriate to the historic fabric and features of the buildings. Such Directions only apply to properties in use as dwelling houses.

Policy B6 of the UDP states that the Council will preserve the character and appearance of conservation areas by seeking, where appropriate, to control development by the use of Article 4 Directions. To counter the loss of important features in Whitburn Bents, the Council proposes to place Article 4(2) Directions on all of the Bents Cottages, requiring planning permission to be gained for the types of development listed below.

Schedule of Classes of Development covered by Article 4(2) Directions in Whitburn Bents Conservation Area:

- ❖ Enlargement, improvement or other alteration to the public face of a dwelling house
- ❖ Cladding of any part of the exterior with any material including stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles
- ❖ Addition to or material alteration to the roof of a dwelling house
- ❖ Erection or construction of a porch outside an external door of a dwelling house
- ❖ Installation, alteration or replacement of a TV satellite antenna or dish
- ❖ Erection, construction, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure
- ❖ Painting of the exterior masonry of any building

Criteria for Selection of Terraces for Proposed Article 4(2) Direction:

- ❖ Architectural quality and intactness of terrace
- ❖ Importance of features to be protected to the special interest of the conservation area
- ❖ Established or degree of potential threat to such features

The particular elements to be brought under control are:

- ❖ Alterations to the front and rear roof coverings, the addition of dormer windows or roof lights and the removal of chimney stacks.
- ❖ Alterations to the front elevation to form entry porches or to erect boundary walls
- ❖ Alterations to windows and doors to the front elevation
- ❖ Extensions to side and rear elevations.
- ❖ Erection / alteration of rear boundary walls.
- ❖ Erection of satellite dishes
- ❖ Painting of elevations



This property is the only cottage in the group to have retained all its original features to the front i.e. windows, canopy and door, cast iron rainwater goods. The aim of the Direction is to preserve and/or restore the original form and features of the cottages.

The following guidance note has been prepared to inform residents of the Council's proposed design policy to be applied to householder enquiries and planning applications to replace historic fabric and features on properties subject to the Direction. The note is intended to establish consistency and clarity over the Council's general principles in the use of the Direction in Whitburn Bents Conservation Area.

Guidance on the application and use of the Article 4(2) Direction

In all scenarios, where alterations are proposed or are to be enforced, the following practice note will be applied. The Conservation Team will in all cases be afforded the opportunity to require or encourage the reinstatement of original features and materials.

Historic Fenestration

Scenario	Action
Original metal windows and timber door have survived and are in situ	Require retention and repair/refurbishment as necessary. Installation of replicas, in metal or timber, acceptable if originals beyond repair. Modifications may be incorporated to improve ease of operation and heat retention.
Original windows lost, existing are in timber but of poor form	Encourage reinstatement of original windows style, in either metal or timber, replicating original pattern (illustrated in photograph below). UPVC may be acceptable as last resort when designed with regard to original pattern.
Original lost, UPVC put in place	Encourage reinstatement of original window style, in either metal or timber, replicating original pattern (illustrated in photograph below). UPVC may be acceptable as a last resort when designed with regard to original pattern.



The photograph above shows the original window style to the front of the Bents Cottages. Under the provisions of the proposed Article 4(2) Direction original windows and doors will be required to be retained, or if beyond repair the style replicated, and encouraged to be reinstated where lost previously.

Extensions

Scenario	Action
Front/side extensions	Not permitted under any circumstance.
Rear extensions	Only single storey extensions below eaves height are permitted, leaving enough space to allow for a single parking space in the rear garden. Should be of a lightweight construction using traditional materials i.e. timber and glass.

Roofscape

Scenario	Action
Materials	Roof tiles in need of repair should be replaced with matching plain clay tiles only.
Dormers	Not permitted under any circumstances.
Roof lights to the front elevation	Not permitted under any circumstances.
Roof lights to the rear elevation	Should be of a conservative style and a maximum of 2 roof lights per dwelling is considered acceptable.

Boundary Walls

Scenario	Action
Erection of front boundary walls	Not permitted under any circumstances. The open communal aspect of the Bents Cottages should be retained.
Erection of rear boundary walls	Only permitted to a height of no more than 1m and constructed from either timber fencing or natural stone.

Painting Scheme

Scenario	Action
Painting of any elevation	White paint is the only acceptable colour. Other colours will not be permitted under any circumstances.
Window frames	White paint only.
Front doors	Colour of choice
Rainwater goods	Black paint only

Proposal 1B: The Council will survey and monitor all properties in the terrace subject to the Direction on a yearly basis and maintain a photographic and statistical record of all building elements covered by it. Any unauthorised alterations will be identified, investigated and appropriate action initiated where deemed necessary

Maintaining up-to-date survey records of all properties covered by the Article 4 Direction is fundamental to the successful and equitable operation of the Direction. Photographs of the front of each property will be taken on a yearly basis and surviving original building fabric and features noted i.e. windows and doors. In this way a comprehensive database of the architectural and historic integrity of the core of the Conservation Area will be established and monitored regularly in accordance

with recommendations in the English Heritage document 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas' (August 2005). In particular, it will enable unauthorised alterations to be identified and appropriate action initiated as necessary.

Thus, through regular survey work a continuous cycle of monitoring, review and action will be established and used to sustain the distinctive character of the terrace subject to the Direction.

Proposal 1C: The Council will actively investigate sources of funding to provide grant assistance for repair and restoration works to properties subject to the Article 4(2) Direction and to encourage their appropriate enhancement where possible.

The Council recognises that the extra controls imposed by the Article 4(2) Direction can, in some cases, result in additional costs being incurred by owners in properly maintaining and improving their properties to a standard befitting their architectural and historic interest. For example, the costs of replacing like-for-like a metal or timber window typically exceeds the cost of installing modern alternatives such as uPVC double glazed units. As a result, in the past residents have on the grounds of affordability, regularly opted for the cheaper, non-traditional products, which are often damaging to historic buildings.

Whilst the Article 4(2) Direction, if imposed, can prevent further losses of architectural features from the cottages, it does not require owners to reinstate those lost prior to the Direction being put in place. Some residents have expressed a desire to undertake restoration works to their properties, but unfortunately have not had the resources to do so.

The Council will therefore endeavour to make grant assistance available to residents to offset the additional costs involved in the repair and restoration of architectural features. It must be noted, however, that the ability to provide grant is often dependant on the Council making successful bids to funding partners such as English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Funding. In most cases, the Council must provide 50% of the funding for the grant scheme's budget. Thus, the provision of a grant scheme in the area is by no means guaranteed and it may take a number of years before funding can be secured.

Management Objectives and Proposals: South Bents Farmstead

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 2: To prevent the further degradation and secure the enhancement of the former South Bents Farmstead through the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and features.

Proposal 2A: The Council will encourage the reinstatement of historic features to South Bents Farmhouse and Sandpiper to restore the traditional character of these key buildings.

South Bents Farmhouse and Sandpiper are the only two surviving historic buildings within the former South Bents Farmstead group. They provide an important reminder of the former character of this part of Whitburn Bents. Regrettably, both buildings have been subjected to some alterations that have diminished their traditional character and appearance. A range of restoration works would be desirable to return these properties to their original form and enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area. These are summarised as follows: -

South Bents Farmhouse	Sandpiper
Replacement of concrete roof tiles with clay pantiles.	Replacement of concrete roof tiles with clay pantiles.
Replacement of concrete water tables with natural stone ones.	Replacement of PVC windows with timber casements to original pattern.
Reinstatement of traditional style of timber gate to front garden.	Removal of PVC barge board to porch and reinstatement of decorative timber one.

Proposal 2B: The Council will require the retention and, wherever possible, secure the reinstatement of characteristic limestone boundary walls and timber gates.

The original limestone boundary walls to the former farmstead still survive in long stretches adjacent Whitburn Road and along the southern edge of the Conservation Area. These are identified on the map on page 2 and illustrated below. The magnesian limestone used in the construction of these walls is of immense local historic significance. Whilst still quarried locally, the limestones no longer feature the fossilised remains that historically characterised them and makes these walls so distinctive. It is essential therefore that such important surviving features are preserved for their significance to the area's local historic character. Thus, repairs should preferably be carried out in situ as necessary rather than sections rebuilt using replacement stones.



The traditional wide-span timber gate to South Bents Farm survives and still forms the main access to the housing within the former farmstead. It is important this feature is also retained as physical evidence of this part of the Conservation Area's original character.



Management Objectives and Proposals: Views and Open Spaces

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 3: To preserve important views into and out of the Conservation Area and its coastal landscape setting.

Proposal 3A: The Council will resist any proposals for development of open spaces within and around the Conservation Area, these being identified on the map opposite.

Whitburn Bents is surrounded by open spaces which help it to retain some of its historic identity as a small isolated coastal hamlet. These spaces also facilitate key views into and out of the Conservation Area, particularly out to sea and along the coastline. The Council will not allow these spaces to be developed for their importance to the setting of the Conservation Area and their contribution to the wider coastal landscape.

Within the Conservation Area the green space to the front of the Bents Cottages (illustrated on page 9) provides a very pleasant setting for the buildings and reveals fine views of the cottages on passing by them. It is essential the open communal aspect of this space is preserved. Thus, no development will be permitted on the space, including the erection of boundary walls and fences (see also guidance note on Article 4(2) Direction on page 21).



Management Proposals: Summary and Recommended Action

Management Strategy: Summary of Proposals			
Proposals	Timescale: short (1-3yrs) / mid-long (3-10 years)	Financial sources /implications	Recommended Action
Bents Cottages			
1a. Proposed Article 4(2) Direction	Short	None	Consult & Implement
1b. Monitoring & enforcement of direction	Continuous	None	On-going monitoring and action
1c. Grant assistance	Mid-long	Partnership funding required	Identify and pursue funding options
South Bents Farmstead			
2a. Restoration of farmhouse & Sandpiper	Mid-long	Public / private investment required	On-going control advice and guidance
2b. Protection of limestone walls	Continuous	None	On-going control advice and guidance
Views & Open Spaces			
3a. Preservation of key views and green spaces	Continuous	None	On-going control advice and guidance

Timescales

Most proposals require continuous monitoring, control and guidance. Others require implementation, physically or otherwise; the timescales for these proposals are deliberately vague due to the uncertainty of the availability of the finance required to bring them forward.

Whilst the Council can effectively manage and improve aspects of the Conservation Area and achieve certain management objectives through its development control function and providing advice and guidance; the implementation of some proposals will be dependant on factors outside its direct control.

Financial Implications

Some of the proposals will require public and private investment to facilitate their implementation. For example, the opportunity of grant assistance in the area is likely to be dependent on the Council successfully bidding for partnership funding from English Heritage and the availability of match funding from the Council's budget. In both these respects the number of bids / projects always exceeds the resources available and schemes have to be prioritised. Unfortunately, it is often the case that conservation-based projects do not receive a high priority when competing for limited public funds against essential services such as health and education.

Appendix 1 - City of Sunderland UDP Conservation Policies

Conservation Areas

B4 All development within and adjacent to Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance. To this end the Council will issue planning/design guidance for the various areas from time to time.

B6 The Council will preserve and enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas; measures will include:-

- (i) Encouraging the retention of existing buildings and the improvement Of features, open spaces, historic street patterns and plot boundaries
- (ii) Encouraging the retention of existing mature trees;
- (iii) Introducing controls over the display of advertisements;
- (iv) Seeking, where appropriate, to control development by the use of Article 4 Directions;
- (v) Giving special attention to the preservation of important views into and out of the area;
- (vi) Restoring highways and verges by use of appropriate materials and planting, encouraging utility companies to respect such works;
- (vii) Reducing the impact of traffic where possible by diversion and traffic calming measures; and
- (viii) Promoting environmental improvement and enhancement programmes.

B7 Applications for demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area will be determined by the extent to which the integrity, character and appearance of the area is affected, taking into account any replacement proposals. Where unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, the criteria in Policy B8 which concern the demolition of listed buildings will apply.

Listed Buildings

B8 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings. Demolition in whole or substantive part will only be given consent when all other avenues for retention (including preservation or enhancement in charitable or community ownership) have been explored and found not to be feasible or it is considered that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition. Consent will only then be given when planning permission for an acceptable replacement development has been granted, which will also be subject to conditions requiring the letting of a contract prior to demolition.

B9 The City Council will seek to preserve and enhance the character and qualities of those buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest:-

- (i) Refusing permission for extensions or alterations which would adversely affect their architectural or historic character;
- (ii) Giving financial assistance (where available) for appropriate works of restoration or repair in accordance with City policies;
- (iii) Giving favourable consideration to a wider range of uses than might normally be appropriate to help bring otherwise vacant buildings back into beneficial use, providing these do not adversely affect the architectural character or setting of the building or amenity of nearby residents;
- (iv) The acquisition and restoration of important buildings, particularly in Conservation Areas, if this is the only way to secure their preservation.

B10 The City Council will seek to ensure that development proposals in the vicinity of listed buildings do not adversely affect their character or setting.

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