

Houghton's Conservation Areas

Character Appraisal and
Management Strategy

PLANNING GUIDANCE

Houghton's Conservation Areas

Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

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Background

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or 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 the City of Sunderland, ranging from City Centre areas to pre-conquest villages to the Victorian suburb 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. In all cases "special" consideration must be given to the impact that development would have on the character and appearance of the area. Importantly, it requires planning consent to be gained for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas and for certain types of development which are elsewhere classified as permitted development. These generally cover various types of cladding, the insertion of dormer windows into roof slopes, the erection of satellite dishes and radio masts/antennae. Designation also brings extra controls over works to trees.

Appraisal of Character

The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation. The Government's 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. A character appraisal defines and analyses the special qualities and the architectural and historic interest which warranted the conservation area designation. PPG15 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.

Preservation and Enhancement of Character

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). English Heritage guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals encourages Local Authorities to prepare subsequent Conservation Area Studies where there are considerable conservation needs. These studies should contain proposals for preserving and enhancing the character of the conservation area and form supplementary planning guidance to the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) or Local Development Framework (LDF). The study may include guidance on works to buildings for owners and occupiers, consideration of additional development control powers through Article 4 Directions, and design criteria for new development.

Houghton Conservation Area Character Appraisal/ 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.

Introduction

St. Michael's and Nesham Place Conservation Areas were designated in 1975 in recognition of their architectural and historic interest.

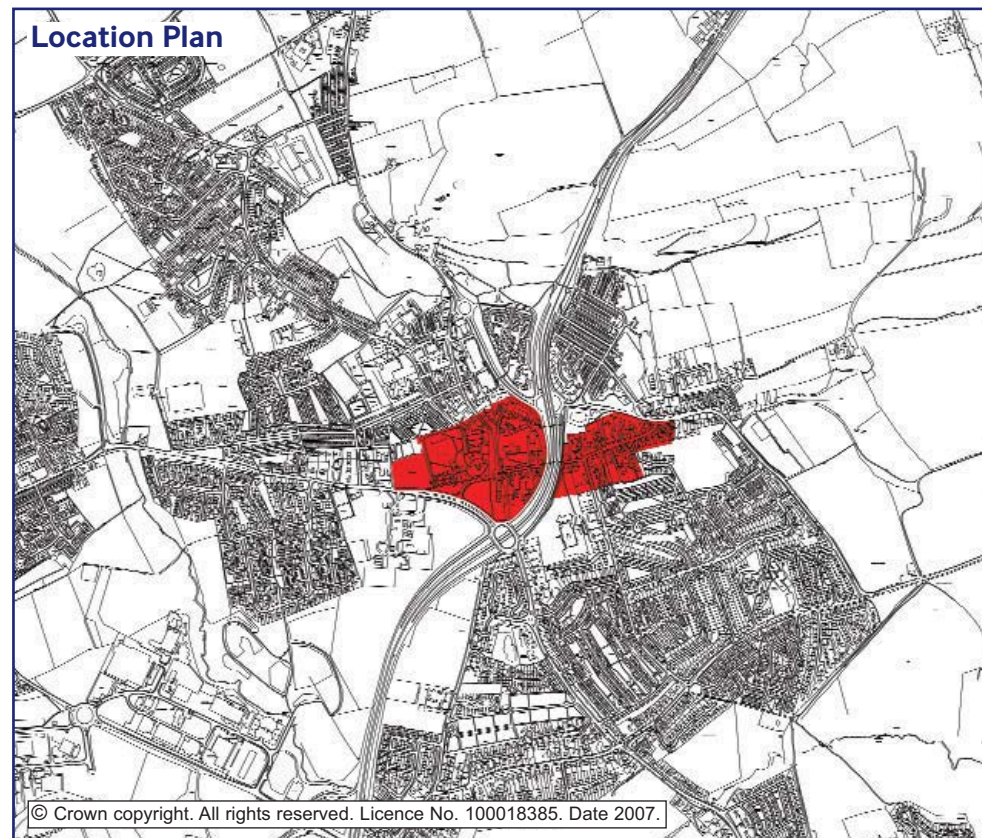
The two conservation areas are addressed together in this document, as they are relatively small, adjacent areas, with broadly similar characters and a shared history. Both are within the settlement of Houghton-Le-Spring; originally forming the historic core of the town the two are now divided by the busy A690, although they remain connected by a well-used footbridge. Throughout the remainder of this document the areas will be referred to as one, to be known as the 'Houghton Conservation Area'.

The two areas are of a similar character, within which sub-areas of special character and/or building styles may be established. St. Michael's Conservation Area is largely focussed around the Grade I listed C12th church of St. Michael's and All Angels and its associated rectory and grounds, and the Broadway - a broad tree-lined street which has remained largely unchanged since the early C19th. Nesham Place - in the Nesham Place Conservation Area - maintains a similar character to the C18th and early C19th parts of St. Michael's. Of particular note in Nesham Place is Houghton Hall, a C17th century manor house built for the Hutton family. All of these elements give the combined Houghton Conservation Area a unique and diverse character.

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 the current issues which threaten its unique quality. 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, further work required and envisaged timescales to implement the management proposals.

Location

Houghton-Le-Spring is located halfway between Durham and Sunderland, some five miles from the North Sea coast.



Boundaries

The western boundary of Nesham Place Conservation Area and the eastern boundary of St. Michael's follow the outermost boundaries of the A690, and are thus clearly defined. To the south and west of St. Michael's the boundary is broadly contiguous with the open spaces of Rectory Park to the north it cuts across Newbottle Street to include Sunderland Street - this boundary is less clearly defined. The boundary of Nesham Place Conservation Area is, in places, also less clearly defined, extending to include buildings to the north and south of Nesham Place, following the line of Lake Road to the north and the Kirk Lea 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 Houghton Character Appraisal is one of a series of such assessments that will cover all of the city's conservation areas.

Certain buildings and structures within the conservation area are Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and are 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, historic street patterns and plot boundaries and for the Council to exercise control over landscape features such as mature trees. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are a good example of this; they ensure that the consent of the Council must be obtained before trees can be cut down, topped or lopped.

However, within Houghton Conservation Area the potential for loss of features, both architectural and natural, 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

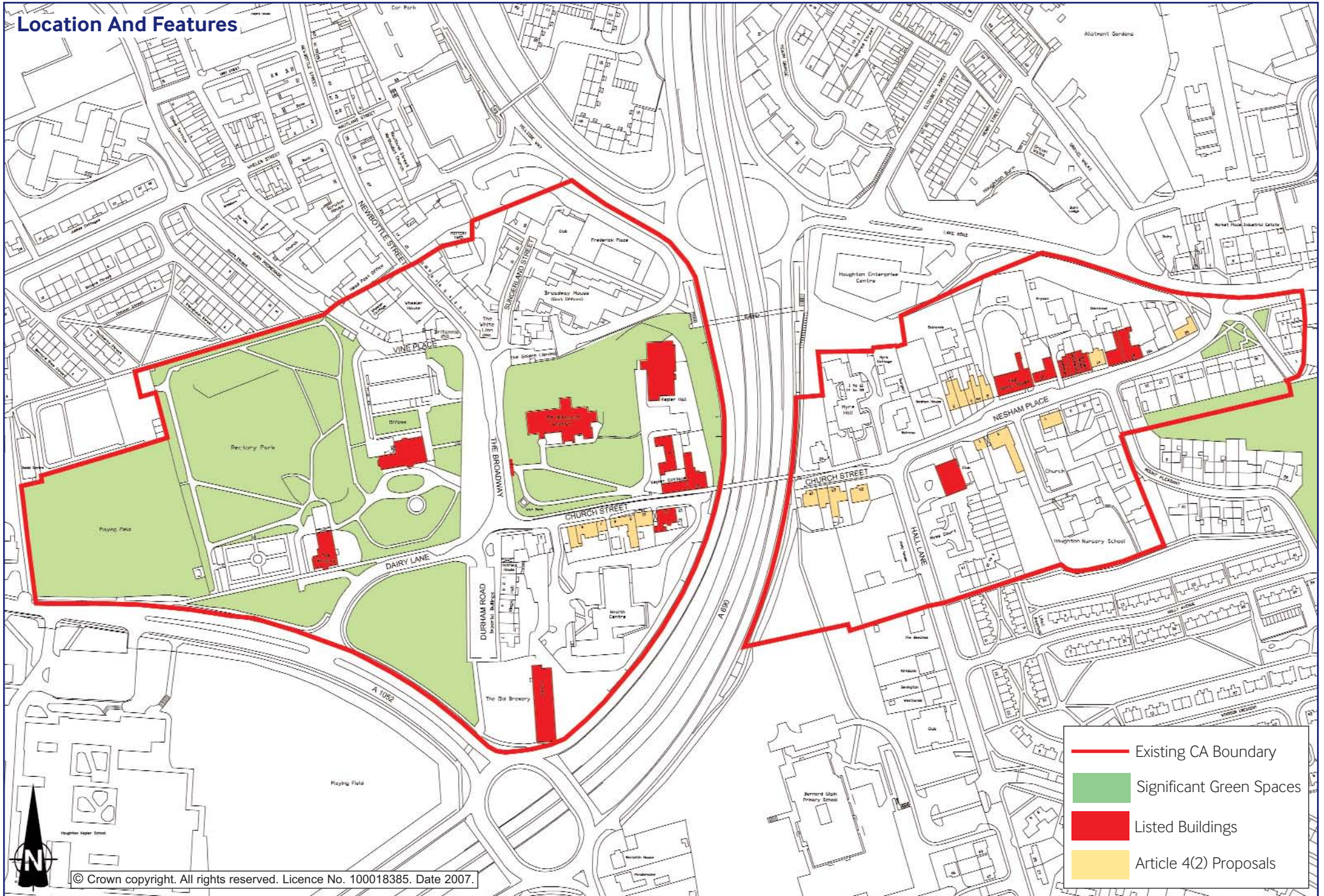
Management Strategy in part 2 of the document expands upon existing UDP policy to give clearer guidance on issues of particular importance to Houghton's Conservation Areas. This includes a proposal for an Article 4 Direction on certain properties.

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

Location Plan



Location And Features

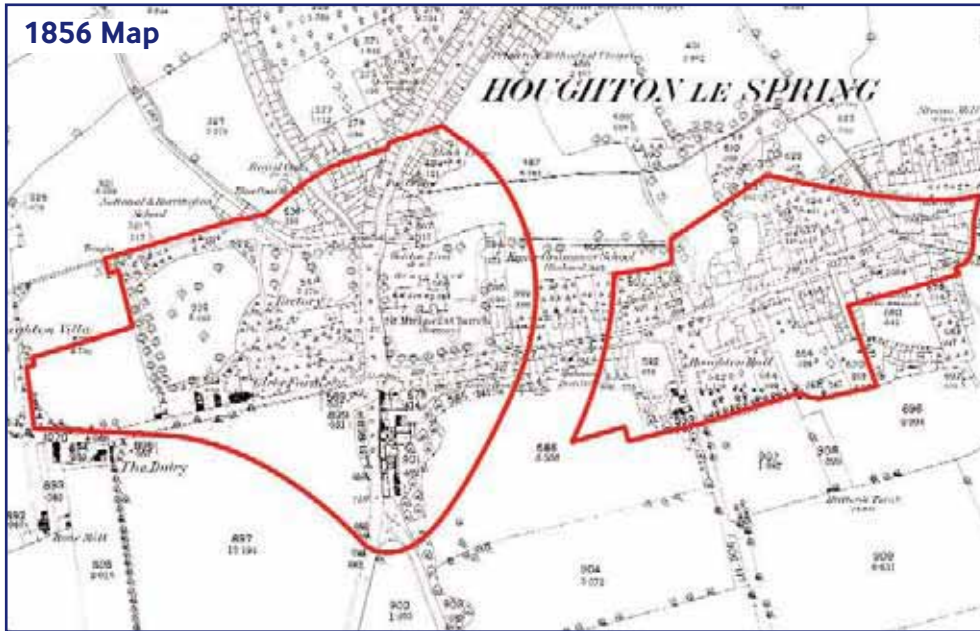


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A photograph of a stone archway entrance to a university campus. The archway is made of grey stone blocks and features a central archway. Several crests and shields are visible on the stone walls. The archway is surrounded by lush green trees and a paved walkway. A black metal railing runs along the path leading through the archway. The text "Part 1 Character Appraisal" is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline.

Part 1 Character Appraisal

Historical Development



The name Houghton derives either from the Anglo-Saxon word Hogh, meaning a point of land projecting into a plain or from Huff, meaning a line of hills. The addition of Le Spring has been credited both to the area's profusion of water springs (reputedly of medicinal qualities) and to the Le Spring family, custodians of the ancient manor of Houghton in the early 14th century, although it is likely that they took their name from the settlement.

The Copt Hill burial site, near to Houghton, is believed to be Neolithic, suggesting that there may have been settlements in the area up to 6,000 years ago. Although little is known of the early development of the town, it is reputed to have been the seat of an Anglo-Saxon bishop. An archaeological survey of the Kirk Lea (church lands) compiled by Tyne and Wear Museums in 1993 indicates the presence of a medieval two-row village, slightly to the east of the Nesham Place Conservation Area, at the Market Place. No evidence of this early development has survived although the original street arrangement can still be discerned to an extent in today's plan form. Elements of the Grade I listed church of St. Michael's and All Angels date from the 12th century; an account of the town (then called Ottona) can be found in the Boldon Book of 1183.



Sunderland Street

"In Houghton are thirteen cottagers, who hold, work and pay rent in the same manner as those of Newbottle; and three other half cottagers who work in the same manner as the three previously mentioned in Newbottle. Henry the Reeve holds two bovates of 24 acres in return for his services. The smith 12 acres for his services. The carpenter one toft and four acres for his services. The pinder 12 acres and gets thraves of corn from the ploughs of the same township, of Warden, and Morton and renders 60 hens and 300 eggs. The mills of Newbottle, of Biddick with half of the mill of Rainton yield 15 marks. The lordship farm, 4 ploughs and sheep with pasture in the hands of the Bishop"

Austen, D (1982) **The Boldon Book: Domesday Supplementary Volume 35**

The church has been fundamental to Houghton's history and development. In the 1500s Houghton Parish (belonging to the Bishop of Durham) encompassed 16 villages, with Houghton at the heart of an extensive rural parish: prosperous and sought after, the King gave the parish to persons in his favour on several occasions. The Parliamentary survey of 1647 highlights the significance of the Rectory, cataloguing barns, stables, outhouses, gardens, orchards, a large ornamental garden and a fishpond. In addition to the formal grounds, the diocese owned the agricultural

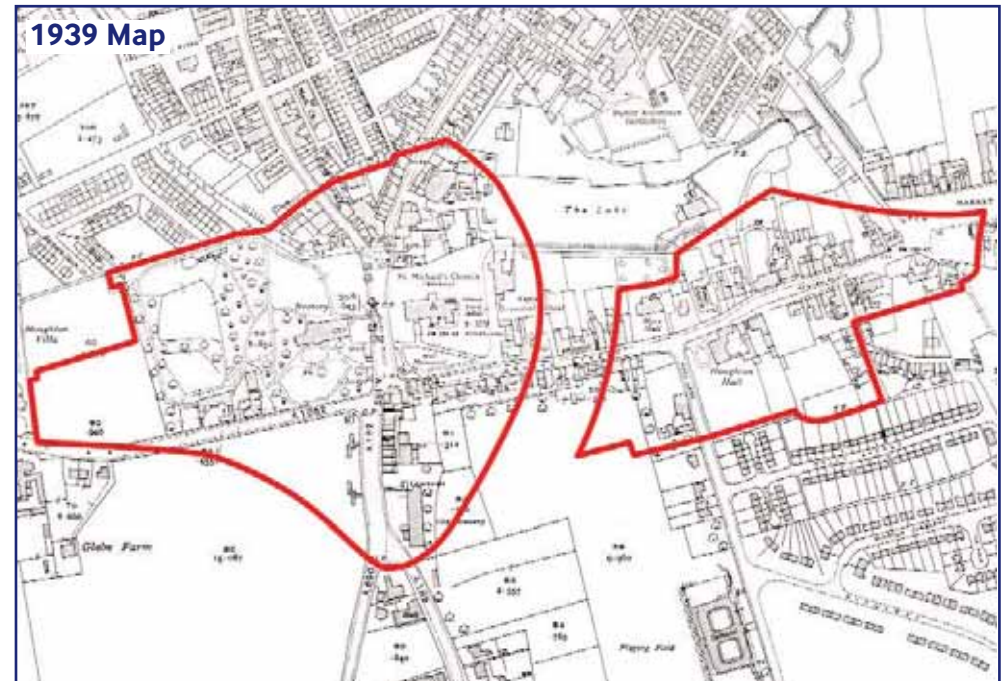
land of the area. Following the Enclosures Act land adjacent to Houghton-Le-Spring was divided into three large fields, the northern boundaries of which remain in evidence as the settlement edge and act as the southern boundaries of the Conservation Area.

Various Rectors of the parish have had a significant influence on the development of the town. Of particular note is Bernard Gilpin (Rector of the parish from 1557-1584), who was known as the 'apostle of the north' and 'friend/father of the poor' due to his generous and philanthropic works within the wider community. Gilpin also founded the Kepier Grammar School and was instrumental in effecting many alterations to St. Michael's and All Angels Church.

Houghton remained a small town within a predominantly agricultural environment until the early 19th century, with a population in 1801 of just 998 people. Following the discovery of rich coal seams beneath the lands of Houghton Parish, 1829 saw the opening of the Houghton Colliery. Employing over a thousand people, the development of the colliery caused the character of the town to change markedly to accommodate an expanded population of nearly 4000 people by 1831. Large areas of terraced housing were built on the north side of the town and along Nesham Place a series of large, handsome houses were built, leading to its former name of 'Quality Hill' (as seen on the 1856 edition OS).

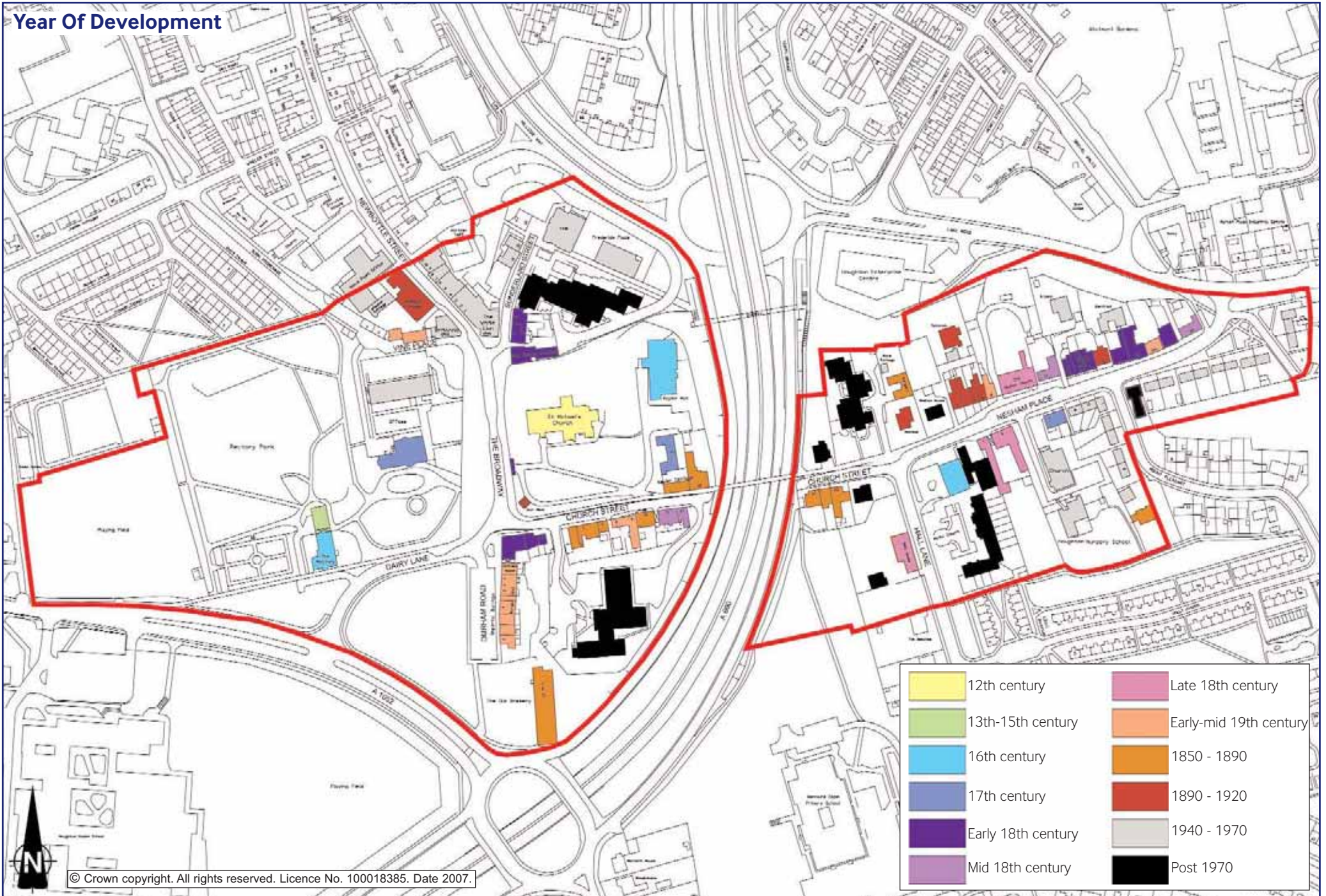
The Broadway, running through the heart of the Conservation Area, has remained largely unchanged in 200 years and there has been limited modern development in the Conservation Area. The form of the area and the settlement as a whole was, however, critically altered by the creation of the A690 Trunk Road in 1970 - a large road that effectively divides the town into two areas, now linked by a footbridge. The creation of this road also curtailed Sunderland Street and severed Church Street, with the loss of many 18th and 19th century buildings. Other than the effects of the A690 trunk road on the plan form of the area, the layout has changed very little since the 1850s. Many buildings in the area survive from the 18th and 19th centuries (several of these are now listed) while others date back to the 17th century or earlier.

It is not just the built environment that has survived so many centuries in Houghton; the Houghton Feast is a traditional annual event that is still enjoyed today, over 800 years since its conception. Rector Gilpin: added the roasting of an ox to the proceedings in the 16th century - nowadays this early October event features 10-days of music, contests, a giant funfair and carnival parade.



Newbottle Street and Sunderland Street

Year Of Development



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Fundamental Character

The fundamental historic character of Houghton Conservation Area is derived in large part from the ecclesiastical enclave comprising 12th century St. Michael's and All Angels Church, its associated buildings and green spaces. The charm and diversity of the buildings in this area is continued into the 18th and early 19th century developments along Church Street and into Nesham Place. Key buildings contributing to the character of the Conservation Area are the Rectory, Church and Kepier Grammar School, all developed between the 12th and 17th centuries. Later development is characterised by fairly grand private residences, particularly in Nesham Place; this area is also home to an imposing 17th century manor house.



The arched entrance to St. Michael's and All Angels church, at the heart of the St. Michael's Conservation Area



Nesham Place, the central street of the Nesham Place Conservation Area

Layout

The layout of the Conservation Area developed in ribbons to the north and east of the focal point and historic core of the church, Old Rectory and The Broadway. Nesham Place is basically an extension of Church Street, to the east of St. Michael's Church. This layout has remained largely unchanged since the 1850s, by which time all of the streets (with the exception of the A690) were in their current locations. The layout is an important component of the special character of Houghton, with more recent development continuing to reflect the historic development of the settlement. The main changes to the area have involved later additions and alterations to the grain and footprints of buildings, while the creation of the A690 in the 1970s fundamentally altered Church Street, Durham Road and Sunderland Street.

Built form

The scale and massing of buildings in the two areas is highly varied, ranging from large properties set in grounds, such as the Rectory, to small series of non-uniform terraced properties, such as those on Church Street. There is a strong sense of harmony among the diverse houses, to which the size and proportion of windows, traditional materials and chimney stacks all contribute. Despite the variety of the properties, they tend to be unified through the close alignment of the building line to the street plan, and in some cases (for example along Nesham Place) by a reasonably uniform roofline. The scale of the areas is human: there has been no large scale commercial development, despite its proximity to the town centre. The only exception to this is the Old Brewery, a fine stone structure that dominates the approaches from the south.



Street fronting properties on Church Street

Architectural Style

Two key periods of development in this settlement were the 17th and early 19th centuries; these two periods can be clearly identified in the simple architecture of the Conservation Area. Decorative features are kept to a minimum, with simple doorcases and stone dressings above windows; an exception is the decorative stone strings and elaborate attic gables of Wheeler House. Throughout the two areas the buildings tend to be quite eclectic, featuring a limited palette of traditional materials and styles. Houghton Hall, an early 17th century manor house, is unique to the area, built in the plain style of architecture in a simple square form. Other styles include the Tudor-style Old Rectory.

Building materials

The range of architectural styles is further compounded by the wide range of traditional building materials used for the buildings in Houghton. This variety makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, reflecting different yet harmonious periods in its historical development and the availability of local materials. These styles range from local sandstone (in rubble, or squared and coursed), to the rare local magnesian Limestone rubble with brick and sandstone dressing, to red brick, with some properties rendered. The roofscape is primarily Welsh slate with occasional clay pantiles on the older properties and evidence of early use of green lakeland slates to the rear of at least one property. In many cases timber window frames and original glass panes survive, usually in the form of a sliding sash. The occasional use of uPVC strikes a discordant note.



Variety of traditional building materials on Nesham Place

Landscape

Standing at the foot of a range of Magnesian limestone hills the town is sheltered to the north and east, and enjoys dramatic views across the plains towards Durham. Houghton Cut was dug through these hills and has had a significant effect on the town as this was selected as the location for the A690, the cutting required to accommodate the dual carriageway that severs the town.

Open spaces play a significant role in the character of the area, particularly in the St. Michael's Conservation Area, where Rectory Park, the church grounds and the informal space in front of Durham Road help to maintain Houghton's traditional rural town feel. These open spaces are graced by mature tree cover, which also contributes significantly to the area's character.

The Conservation Area is built on gentle slopes that lend themselves to gradual changes in perspective as one moves through them, adding to the enjoyment of the experience and revealing new views and vistas throughout the journey.

Usage

Nesham Place developed as a predominantly residential area and remains so today. St. Michael's is more varied, with some residential use combined with the traditional retail core of the town. The town centre (which continues beyond the Conservation Area) is vital and vibrant in the daytime, with several pubs that provide an evening economy. The proximity of residential units to the centre also adds to the vibrancy of the area throughout the day. Some changes of use have occurred, such as the alteration of the Old Rectory into council offices, and the conversion of industry to residential apartments at the Old Brewery (restored from a ruinous state of disrepair, in the 1990s).

General Condition

The Conservation Area is generally well-maintained in terms of both private dwellings and the public realm, the latter having benefited from recent environmental improvement works that have had a positive effect on the historic character of the area. There are, however, a small number of properties that have unfortunately been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair.

Fundamental Character of Houghton Conservation Area Comprises

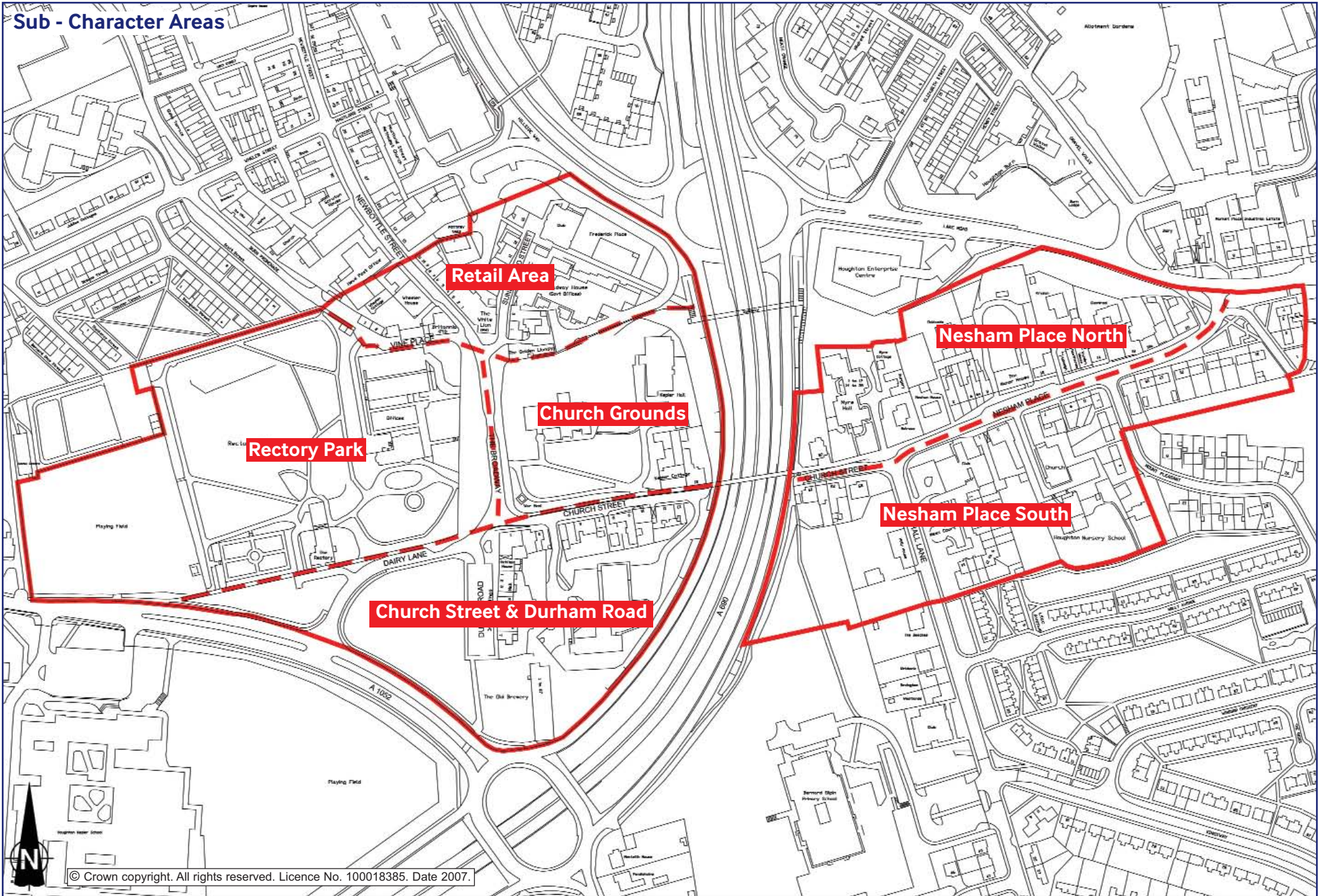
- ❖ The impressive 12th century St. Michael's and All Angels church, built of local sandstone, and its associated grounds.
- ❖ The 17th century manor house; Houghton Hall.
- ❖ The Old Rectory and its associated Rectors who have influenced Houghton's development over the years.
- ❖ Rectory Park and other well-maintained open spaces with mature arboreal planting.
- ❖ A variety of 18th and 19th century dwellings in a range of styles and materials, some quite grand, which lent Nesham Place the name 'Quality Hill'.
- ❖ Range of surviving original features such as timber sliding sashes, Welsh slate roofs and doorcases.
- ❖ Survival of the historic street pattern that continues to influence the plan form of the settlement.
- ❖ The distinctive historic commercial and community core of Houghton-Le-Spring.
- ❖ A sense of tranquillity and charm in the Church grounds, to which the extensive mature tree cover makes a significant contribution.

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

Key Components of Character

For the purposes of a more detailed study of its character, the two conservation areas have been divided into 6 sub-categories that take the form of areas of broadly similar character (influenced in most cases by building type or usage), which combine to create the special character of the Conservation Area as a whole.

Sub - Character Areas



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Landmarks, Views and Vistas

The Houghton Conservation Area contains a number of buildings which, combined with the strong central landmark of the church and subsequent development of the street pattern from this point, create a legible townscape. A series of landmark buildings are easily identifiable, providing a sense of location within the town. Houghton-Le-Spring's location within the wider area, with its elevated position to the north of a flat plain, adds to its landscape value; this vista reveals itself periodically and is most notably made evident when approached from the Houghton Cut, as the square tower of St. Michael's is glimpsed above the tree canopy.

Key Characteristics of the Landmarks, Views and Vistas of Houghton Conservation Area.

- ❖ Series of built features of individual character/ styles that are easily identifiable as local landmarks.
- ❖ Grade I listed St. Michael's and All Angels Church focus of settlement and seen on approach to the Conservation Area from the north and south.
- ❖ Elevated position in the wider area with views of the plain to the south and Houghton Cut to the north.
- ❖ Sinuous and sloping street patterns creating vistas that reveal themselves gradually.
- ❖ Strongly defined, yet unfortunate, boundary between the two conservation areas due to the presence of the A690.
- ❖ Despite dividing the two Conservation Areas, the A690's location within a cutting facilitates views between them.

St. Michael's and All Angels Church

A focal point for the historic development of the settlement and its community, parts of the church date back to the 12th and 13th centuries. Said to be one of the most impressive churches in the county and, according to Pevsner "the only surviving parish church of this type in the North-East", it is of local sandstone to a cruciform plan. Now dominated by an imposing square tower with pinnacles, the tower was originally smaller with a simple wooden octagonal spire, sheathed in lead. The tower



was heightened in the 1820s. The nave's west window features delicate flowing tracery dating to around 1349 and a rare style in this part of the region.

The church is a dominating feature of this area and provides a quite iconic image of Houghton when viewed by motorists, seen from the A690 when approaching, or passing through, Houghton-Le-Spring.

Houghton Hall

Built in the early 17th century as the manor house to the Hutton family, the building is a striking example of simple yet imposing architecture. Built in the plain style of architecture in a large, square form, the building provides an impressive focal point for the Nesham Place Conservation Area, and a dramatic counterpoint to the C18th residential properties on Nesham Place.



“Old Brewery”

Standing on the edge of the Conservation Area and clearly visible from the A690, the former malting house of Robinson's Brewery is an impressive 4-storey building of limestone blocks with brick and sandstone dressings. Built in the mid C19th the malting house was latterly used as a nightclub, but fell into disuse and became derelict. It was restored from a derelict state and converted into residential apartments in 2000. Of particular interest is the weatherboarded hoist with barge boards and wind vane that projects from the third floor to the roof.



Views

Views into and out of the conservation area help to indicate its significance within the wider landscape setting, and adds to its special character.

Elements of the St. Michael's Conservation Area, such as the Church and the Old Brewery, may be seen from afar, making the area locally prominent, visually, while the special character of Nesham Place Conservation Area is enhanced by its relative seclusion on approach.



View into the St. Michael's Conservation Area from the footbridge to Nesham Place

Views out of the Conservation Area are either of rural fields and trees or the hills of the Houghton escarpment. Such views out provide a sense of continuity with the mature trees of the Conservation Areas, and remain in large part very similar to the views that might have been enjoyed from the same spots hundreds of years ago. In some cases modern highways signage unfortunately now intrudes into such views, as below.

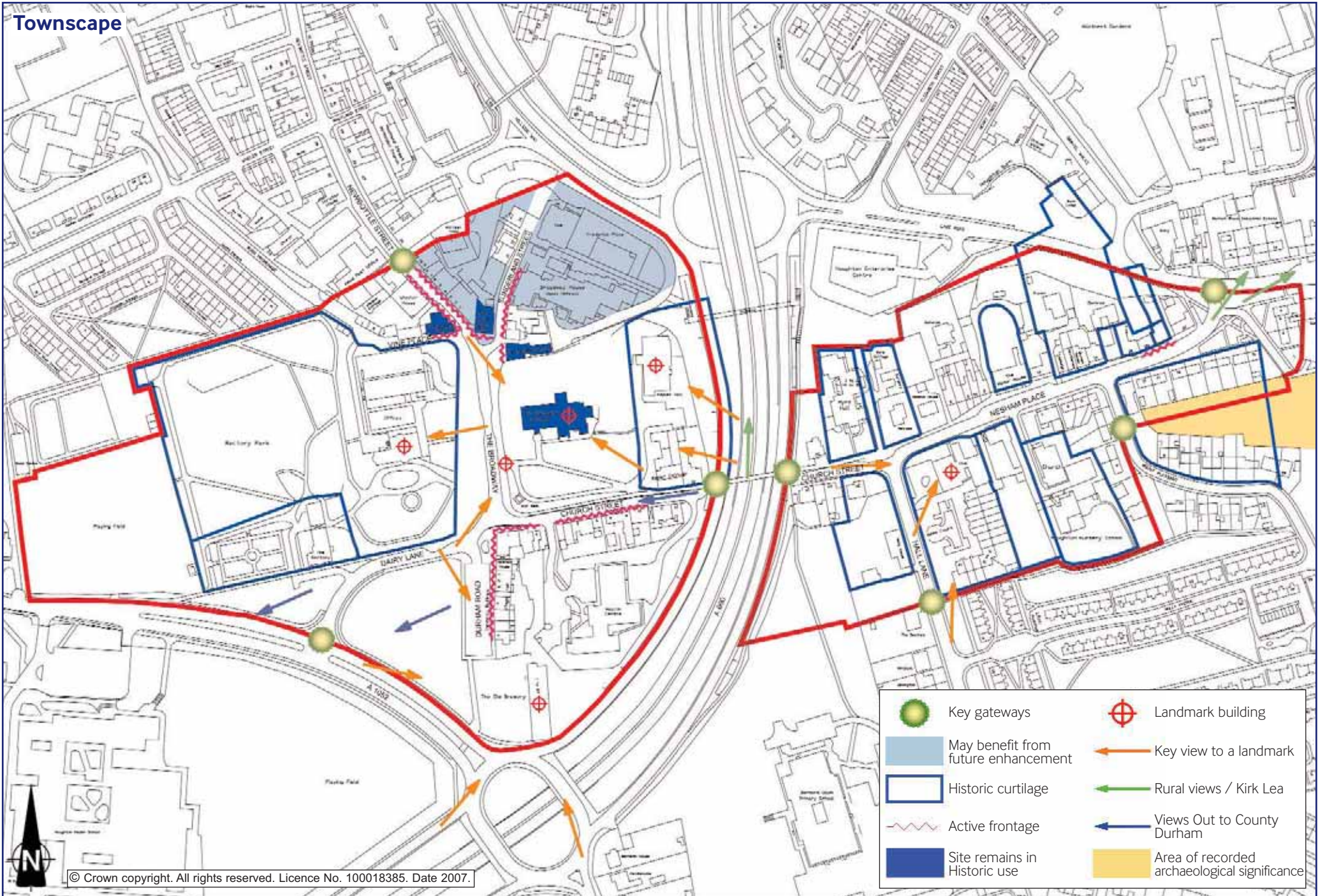


Views across the plain and towards the City of Durham, from Durham Road.

Vistas

The settlement's slightly sloping nature and gently curving streets combine to gradually reveal its vistas as one travels through the Conservation Area. As a result of this, there are few dramatic surprises within the area, rather landmarks and features are hinted at through trees or from a distance, before being revealed fully, often only from close-up. In the case of the church, one is aware of its presence from numerous locations, catching, perhaps, a glimpse of its pinnacles, yet even standing close-by, the church is partially screened by trees and a clear view is only revealed from the north end of the Broadway.

Townscape



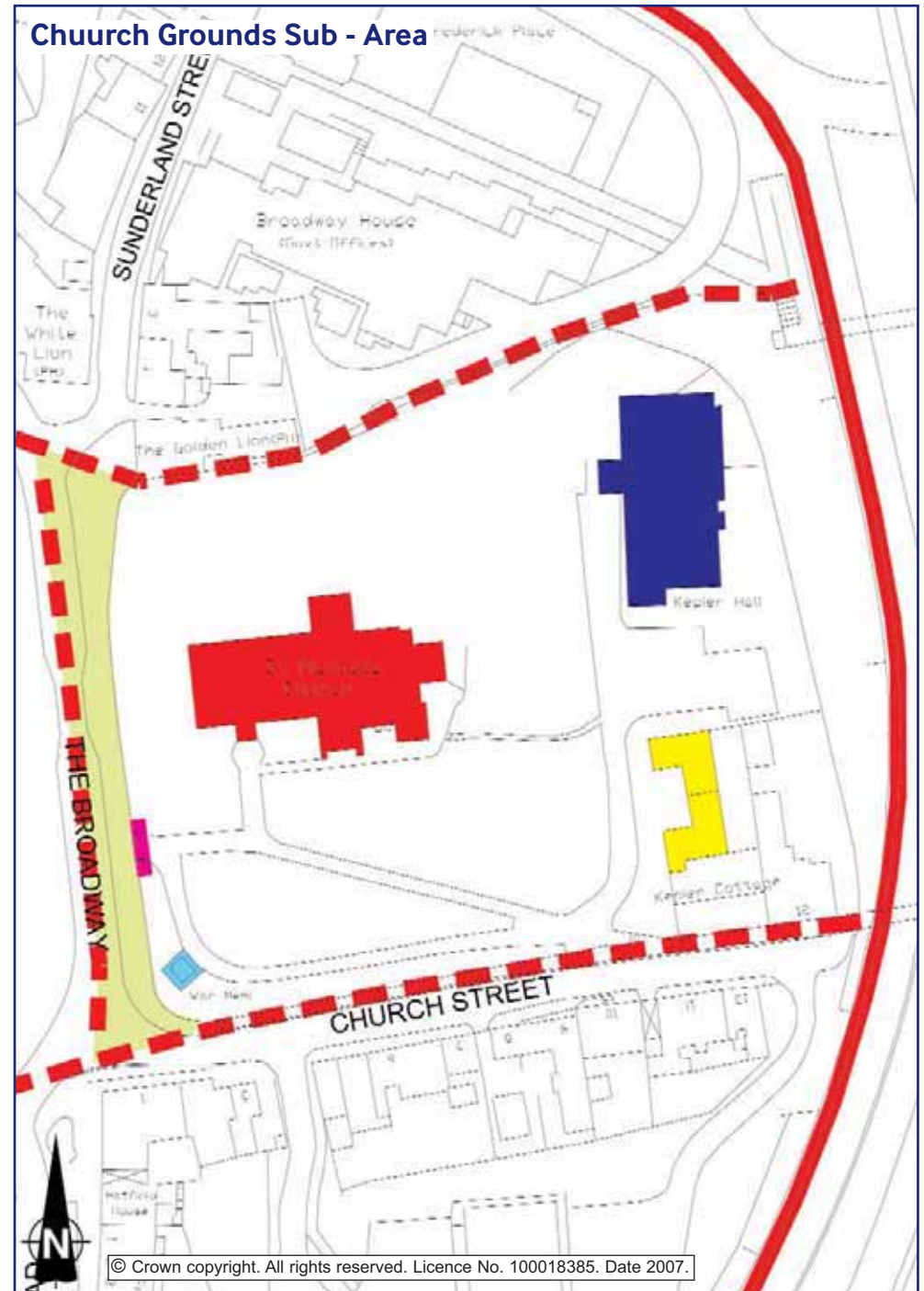
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Church Grounds

This tranquil sub-area with many fine trees is the heart of the historic core around which the town developed in later centuries. The sub-area encompasses the C12th church and its grounds, and C17th buildings associated with the church and its former incumbents. The character of this area is quite distinct from the retail and residential parts of the town, and its character influences the remainder of the settlement, in terms of its historic development and townscape value.

Key Characteristics of the St. Michael's and All Angels sub-area:

- ❖ The impressive grade I listed C12th St. Michael's and All Angels church, built of local sandstone
- ❖ The Broadway, over which the listed Rectory Arch stands prominently
- ❖ Kepier Hall (formerly Kepier Grammer School), grade II* listed
- ❖ The Kepier / Davenport Almshouses
- ❖ The tranquillity of the area, and the significant contribution the War Memorial makes to the atmosphere of the sub-area
- ❖ Informal grassed areas of the church yard and Kepier Hall grounds, under mature tree cover
- ❖ The arched former entrance to the Rectory
- ❖ Quiet and leafy area in close proximity to the current retail centre of Houghton-Le-Spring



Kepier Hall (former Kepier Grammar School)

Founded in 1574 by Bernard Gilpin, this Grade II* listed magnesian limestone building operated as a grammar school until 1922. In the 17th and 18th centuries the school became a fashionable place for the country's gentry to send their sons to be educated. The school was extended, with grant assistance, in the 1980s to provide a community hall to the rear.



Kepier/ Davenport Almshouses

Now two individual homes, the Grade II listed almshouses are of coursed, squared sandstone with red clay pantiles. Erected in 1666 by G. Lilburne for the maintenance of six poor people of the parish, the south wing was added by Rector George Davenport. The buildings fell into disrepair until 1978 when restoration works were carried out with grant aid. The building was entirely re-roofed with pantiles, parts of the walls were rebuilt, and the eaves were strengthened.



Rectory Arch

The Grade II listed Rectory Arch provides a dramatic and somewhat imposing entrance to the church grounds from The Broadway. This crenelated arch was originally located on the other side of the road, with a gatehouse to each side, and was dismantled and rebuilt in its new location in the 1940s when the old Rectory's high boundary walls were removed. Amongst the shields affixed to the arch is that of the Gilpin family, which features a wild boar.

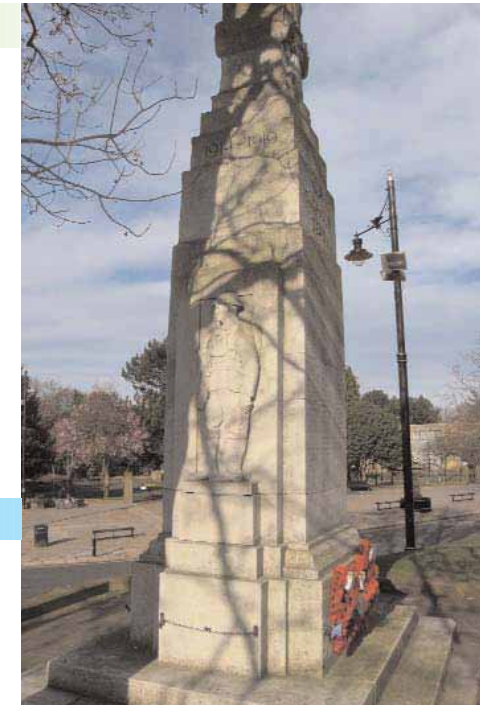


The Broadway

A wide tree lined street that was once attractively planted and now features a hard landscaping scheme. Formerly part of a local tram route (1905-1925) the road is still well-used by buses and some private vehicles. Still a focal point of Houghton the street has public seating and several bus-stops that provide opportunities for people to stop, congregate and enjoy the change of pace that occurs between busy Newbottle Street and the quieter heart of the Conservation Area.

The War Memorial

This important community feature is beginning to display the effects of weathering, but nonetheless makes an attractive and poignant contribution to the sub-area.

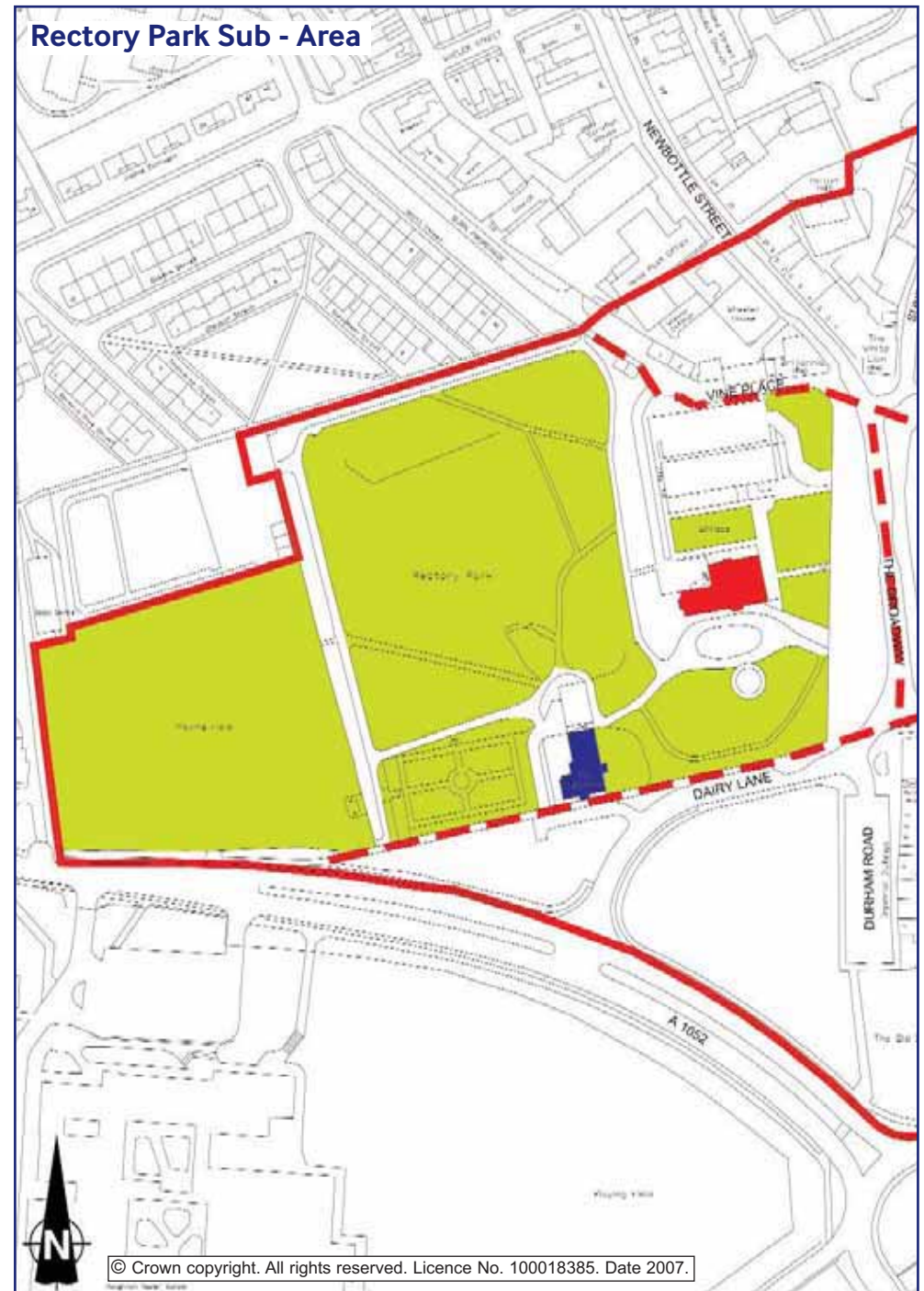


Rectory Park

Rectory Park was landscaped in the 1940s when the Old Rectory became council offices and its grounds became a public park. The park benefits from mature arboreal planting and a formal garden. Backing onto playing fields it appears to extend further than it truly does, due to the continuation of green space that occurs. This sub-area contains the Old Rectory and The Rectory (soon to be a dental surgery), plus modern additions to the council offices. The character of this area is heavily influenced by its greenery (the majority of land remains undeveloped), combined with the grand vernacular sandstone buildings, which have long historical associations with the parish church on the other side of The Broadway.

Key Characteristics of the Rectory Park sub-area:

- ❖ Mature trees and green/ open spaces of high townscape and amenity value make a positive contribution to the character of the area as a whole
- ❖ The impressive Grade II* listed Old Rectory (now council offices)
- ❖ The current Rectory, utilising stone from outbuildings of Glebe Farm and the Old Rectory
- ❖ The Gilpin Thorn, with its historical associations to Rector Gilpin and the wider Church community



Old Rectory

The building as it stands was built in the 17th century, with alterations in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. There is written evidence that the town had a rector in the 12th century so it is likely that there was an earlier building on the same site. Part of this building was demolished in the 1940s when it became council offices; the remainder was refurbished, and the grounds were opened and designated a public park. The crenelated design reflects the building's former entrance which comprised an embattled and fortified tower. This defensive measure was designed to protect the incumbent from Scottish raids throughout the C14th and C15th, during which times previous rectories suffered substantial damage.



Mature trees/greenery

The substantial grounds of the Old Rectory provide an attractive expanse of mature, well-maintained greenery with seating and playing fields. The maturity of the park reflects the historic character of the Conservation Area, and complements the buildings within it, providing them with an interesting and aesthetically pleasing context. The park follows the original curtilage of the Old Rectory, thus essentially retaining its historic land use, and is bounded by a low wall of rubble with brick coping.



The Rectory, Dairy Lane

The Rectory (formerly Glebe Farm) until recently continued the long tradition of accommodating the incumbent of the church within this vicinity. Built of sandstone rubble and utilising former outbuildings, the house makes an impressive statement on entry into the Conservation Area from the south east along Dairy Lane. The house also comprises part of Rectory Park and its southern boundary wall and its gardens are mature, adding to the townscape value of the park. Of interest is the chimney - to the street it is corbelled out (see detail, below).



The Gilpin Thorn

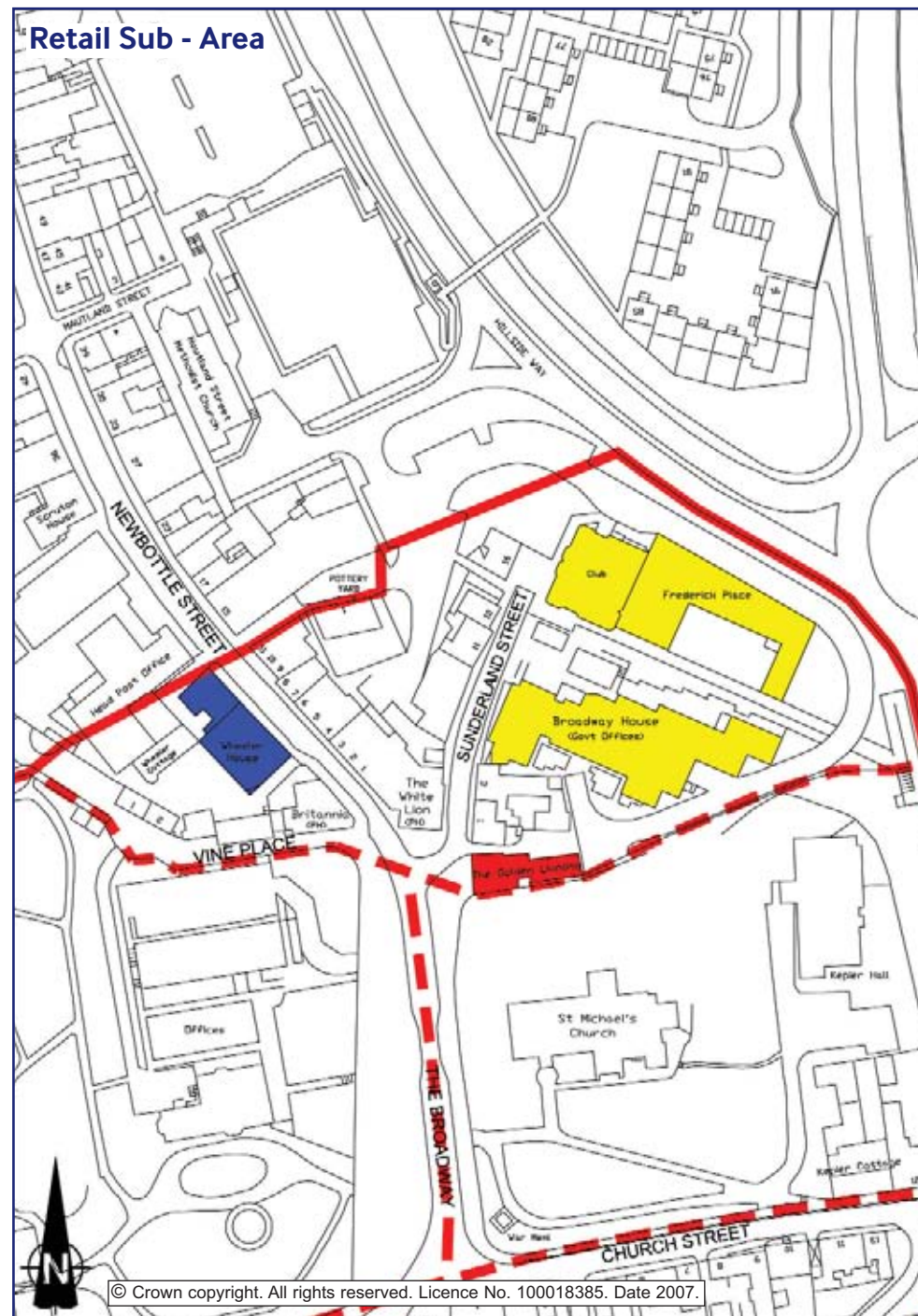
The Gilpin Thorn was grown by Rector Gilpin from a cutting of a tree at Glastonbury that reputedly sprang from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, who tended the body of Christ after the crucifixion. Of great local significance for around 400 years, the tree unfortunately suffered from old age and vandalism, so council workers have since taken a cutting from it, in order to grow a new one. A plaque on the site records the tree's history.

Retail Area

This sub-area is dominated by retail and leisure uses, focussed around the junction of Newbottle Street and Sunderland Street. The buildings in this area are extremely varied in style and materials, ranging from the painted frontage of the C18th sandstone Golden Lion Pub, through early C20th red brick 3-4 storied properties, to the modern Buffs Club and Job Centre. Formerly the main road to Sunderland, via the Houghton Cut, the creation of the A690 abruptly terminated Sunderland Street and resulted in the demolition of several buildings. Some buildings in this area are not maintained to the high quality of the rest of the Conservation Area; some are in a state of disuse and disrepair. This lends the sub-area a slightly peripheral and shabby air in places, despite its importance as the limit of the historic core and containing several extremely interesting buildings.

Key Characteristics of the Retail Area sub-area:

- ❖ Retail and leisure use (including three public houses) with a vibrant market town character that is distinctly different from the rest of the Conservation Area
- ❖ Dramatic, decorated red-brick units on Newbottle Street
- ❖ Range of styles, materials and features adding to an already diverse character
- ❖ Modern developments, distinct from the rest of the Conservation Area, without detracting from its character



The Golden Lion Public House

There have been three pubs in this vicinity since at least the 1930s - The White Lion and The Golden Lion appear on the 1856 OS map of the town, on their current sites, although The White Lion is a modern building. The historic land use of the three pub sites has been retained, despite alterations to the buildings over time. Well-frequented public houses have traditionally added to an area's character and vitality, providing a somewhat contrasting community role to that of the church.



Wheeler House

This dramatic Victorian red-brick building contrasts vividly with the older sandstone properties of the area and is unique in the Conservation Area. Although the building has been subject to some alterations, it retains its sense of grandeur, partly due to its scale and interesting decoration, such as its shaped gables and sandstone strings and dressings. The historic shop fronts survive to an extent, and could feasibly be reinstated in the future.



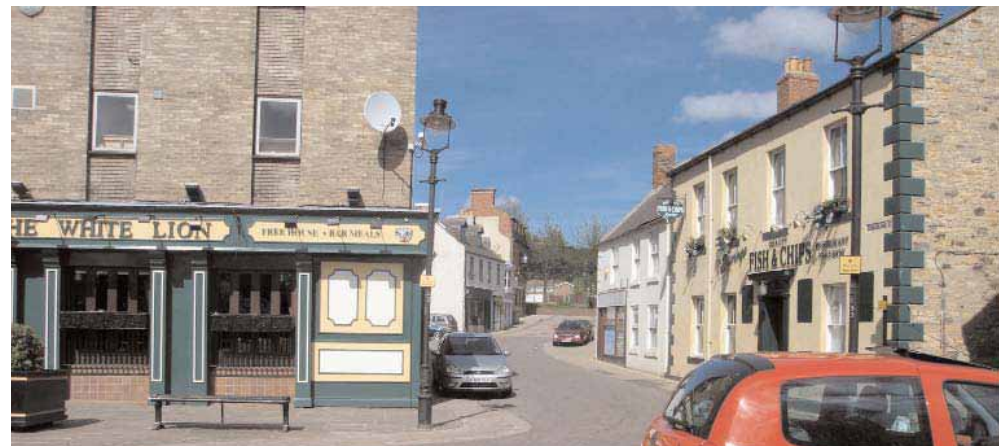
Modern buildings

Following the creation of the A690 much of Sunderland Street's C19th development was cleared, making way for modern buildings with large footprints, such as Broadway House and Frederick Place. These buildings are of a modern style in brick and do not reflect the historic development of the area, thus altering the character of this part of town substantially (footprint, scale, etc.). Older buildings remain on the opposite side of Sunderland Street, thus retaining a measure of the street's former grain and style.



Sunderland Street

Some properties on Sunderland Street, while generally still making a positive contribution to the area, are in need of some maintenance and repair works in order to enhance the special quality of the Conservation Area. Sunderland Street was formerly a long, vibrant shopping street, with various shops including Palister's drapery. When the road was truncated by the A690 works, a large number of buildings were demolished and the character of the street dramatically altered. Once an integral part of the core of the town and a focal point of the community, Sunderland Street now has a more peripheral character and function, despite its proximity to the core.



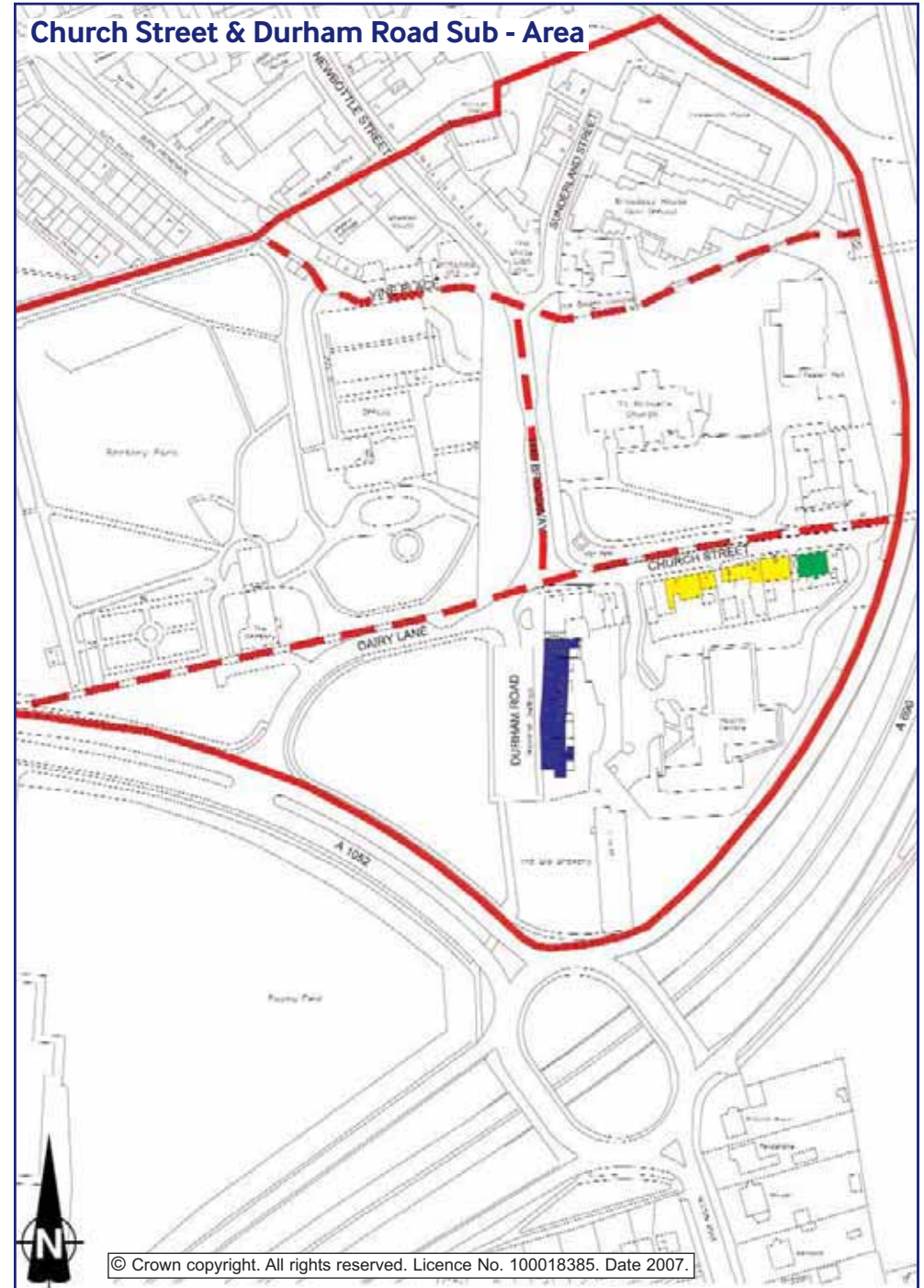
Church Street and Durham Road

This part of the Conservation Area is heavily influenced by its proximity to the church, but retains a character distinct from that of the church grounds. A mixture of Georgian housing, shops and the Old Brewery lend the two streets a more vibrant feel. The presence of the pedestrian bridge that links St. Michael's with Nesham Place results in a steady flow of foot traffic passing through this area, and serves to enhance its vitality and relationship with the rest of the settlement.

The variety of properties creates a sense of a jumble of buildings that almost appear to have developed organically, despite their close linear alignment to the street layout.

Key Characteristics of the Sunderland Street and Durham Road sub-area:

- ❖ Dramatic landmark of the Old Brewery, seen on approach to the Conservation Area from the A690 (northbound)
- ❖ Variety of heights, styles, materials and features creating an attractively jumbled street scene, with a unified building line and street-fronting facades
- ❖ Important open space to west of Durham Road provides visual amenity and views across the plain towards Durham
- ❖ Proximity to the A690 and spaces for car-parking makes it a key gateway to St. Michael's Conservation Area
- ❖ Modern development has generally been sympathetic to the area
- ❖ A series of small shops add to the area's vitality and vibrancy, but many have unsympathetic modern frontages



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Dwelling Houses

Church Street comprises a charming jumble of 18th and 19th century houses and shops of a variety of styles and sizes that are unified by a common building line. Overlooking the church and its grounds, these properties benefit from mature landscaping and a sense of openness along the north side of the street. Number 10 (in the far right of the picture below right) adds particular interest to the street with its projecting bay windows and additional storey.



Lilburn House

This Grade II listed property (built in 1800) with carriage entrance to the right is possibly named in recognition George Lilburne of Offerton, who was responsible along with Rector Davenport for building the Almshouses across the road in the church grounds, some 200 years before this property was built. Somewhat dwarfed by its neighbour it is nonetheless an attractive limestone property.



Church Street

The creation of the A690 trunk road resulted in a significant change of character to the top end of Church Street with the demolition of 'The Quay' - a series of buildings that included council offices, townhouses, a public library, shops and the Mechanic's Institute. The street is now much quieter, with traffic predominantly limited to pedestrians and stationary vehicles.

Durham Road

Durham Road was severed by the A690, leaving the bulk of the street disconnected from the town centre and thus outside the Conservation Area. The part of the street that falls within the Conservation Area is developed only to the east side, with a valuable, large open space to the west that facilitates views across the distant plain. The Imperial Buildings line this street - an assortment of units of various styles and sizes. Many of these buildings were originally part of the Robinson's Brewery, converted into shops and offices in the 1920s when the brewery closed down. There is also some modern infill development on this street, and a series of unfortunate modern shop fronts and signs.

To the rear of Durham Road, the 1970s Health Centre is thoughtfully designed to sit among fine trees, using materials sympathetic to the Old Brewery.



Public realm

Church Street has benefited from recent public realm works, including the reinstatement of traditional-style streetlamps, railings, flag paving and the resurfacing of the highway with setts.

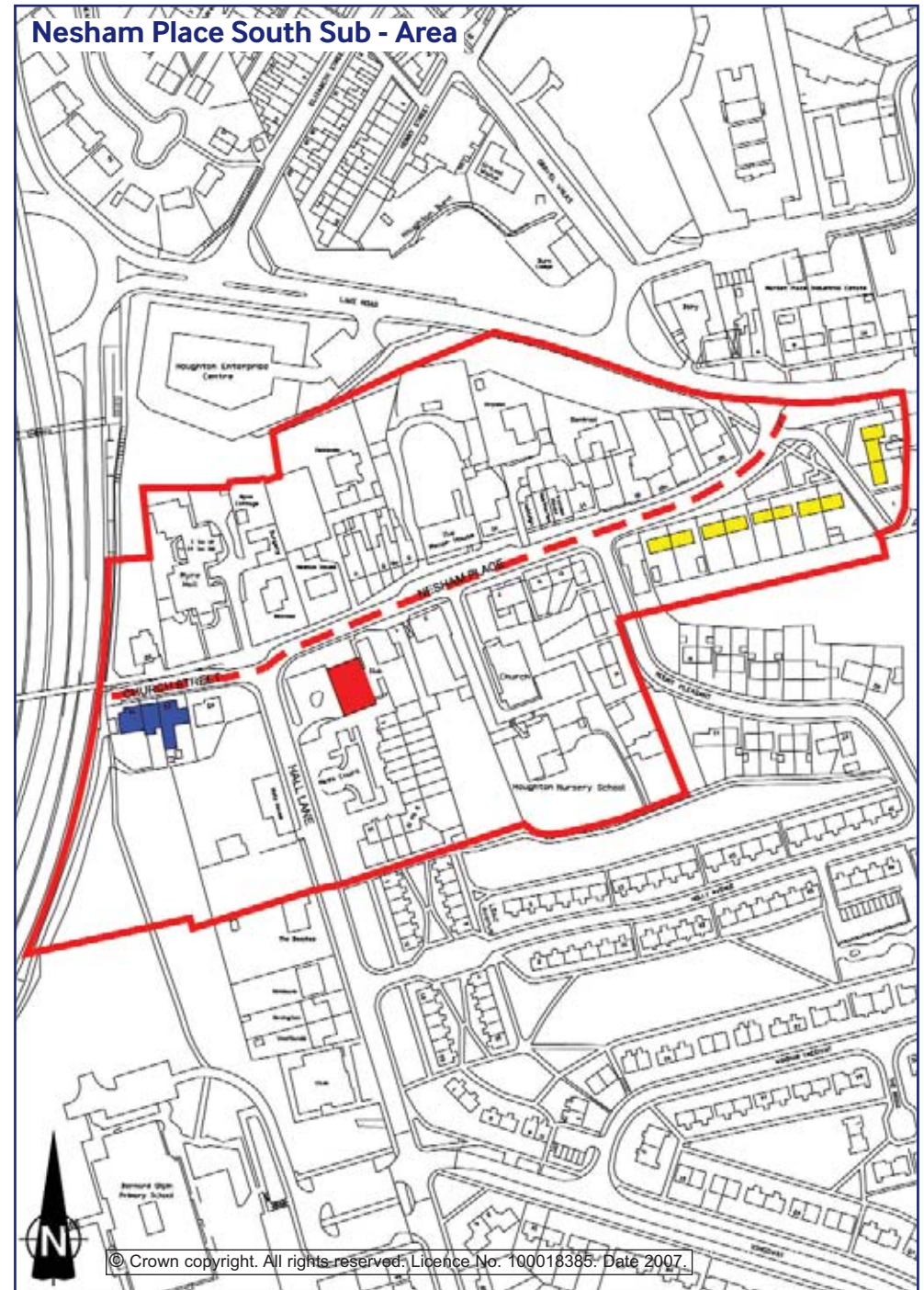


Nesham Place South

Predominantly (and historically) residential in nature, Nesham Place features many large, attractive properties which earned the street the name 'Quality Hill' for a time. Some of these houses remain; others were cleared to make way for post-war social housing units. Also within this area, and adding considerably to its character, is the large and imposing Houghton Hall, an early C17th manor house. Set within grounds that have been diminished by extensions and a modern residential development, the Hall nonetheless retains a dramatic sense of grandeur and influences the character of the Conservation Area considerably.

Key Characteristics of the Nesham Place South sub-area:

- ❖ Houghton Hall, an impressive and dramatic interlude in a street predominantly comprising 18th and 19th century residential two-storey properties
- ❖ Attractive brick townhouses with some original features
- ❖ Mews Court - a modern residential development on what was once the grounds of Houghton Hall
- ❖ Well crafted inter-war social housing, built upon land that formerly comprised dwellings and the Methodist Church
- ❖ Attractive and interesting linear streetscape with gradually unfolding vistas



Townhouses

To the right as one exits the footbridge onto Church Street, these three charming townhouses make an attractive welcoming statement to the Nesham Place Conservation Area. The houses have a rhythm that is only slightly disrupted by fenestration from different periods.



Houghton Hall

Built for the Reverend Hutton (Reverend from 1589- 1623), the Grade II* listed Elizabethan Manor house is quite unique. Of immense historical and townscape value, the Hall had fallen into a degree of disrepair until recent works were undertaken to restore it to its former status. The building is now in excellent condition and once more in residential use.



Streetscene

The street scene of the south side of Nesham Place, while still pleasant, is less unified than that of the north side, with a wider variety of sizes and styles of properties, and a sense of interruption due to a series of wide gaps between buildings as well as changes of rhythm induced by, for example, the transition from 18th and 19th century properties to post-war semi-detached social housing. Houghton Hall also acts as a strong punctuation mark within the scene.



Views

Views from Nesham Place (below) contribute significantly to its character, locating it within its wider rural context and providing significant visual amenity. In addition to its aesthetic value, these views help to maintain the area's links with the historical development of the settlement, acknowledging its rural past and the importance of the Kirk Lea.



Social Housing

Post-war council houses (to the right hand side of the image above) replaced a series of properties, including a Victorian Methodist church. The houses are attractive and of a quite distinctive style, and reflect positively on the quality of the area, even though they are of a different style and scale to the rest of the street.

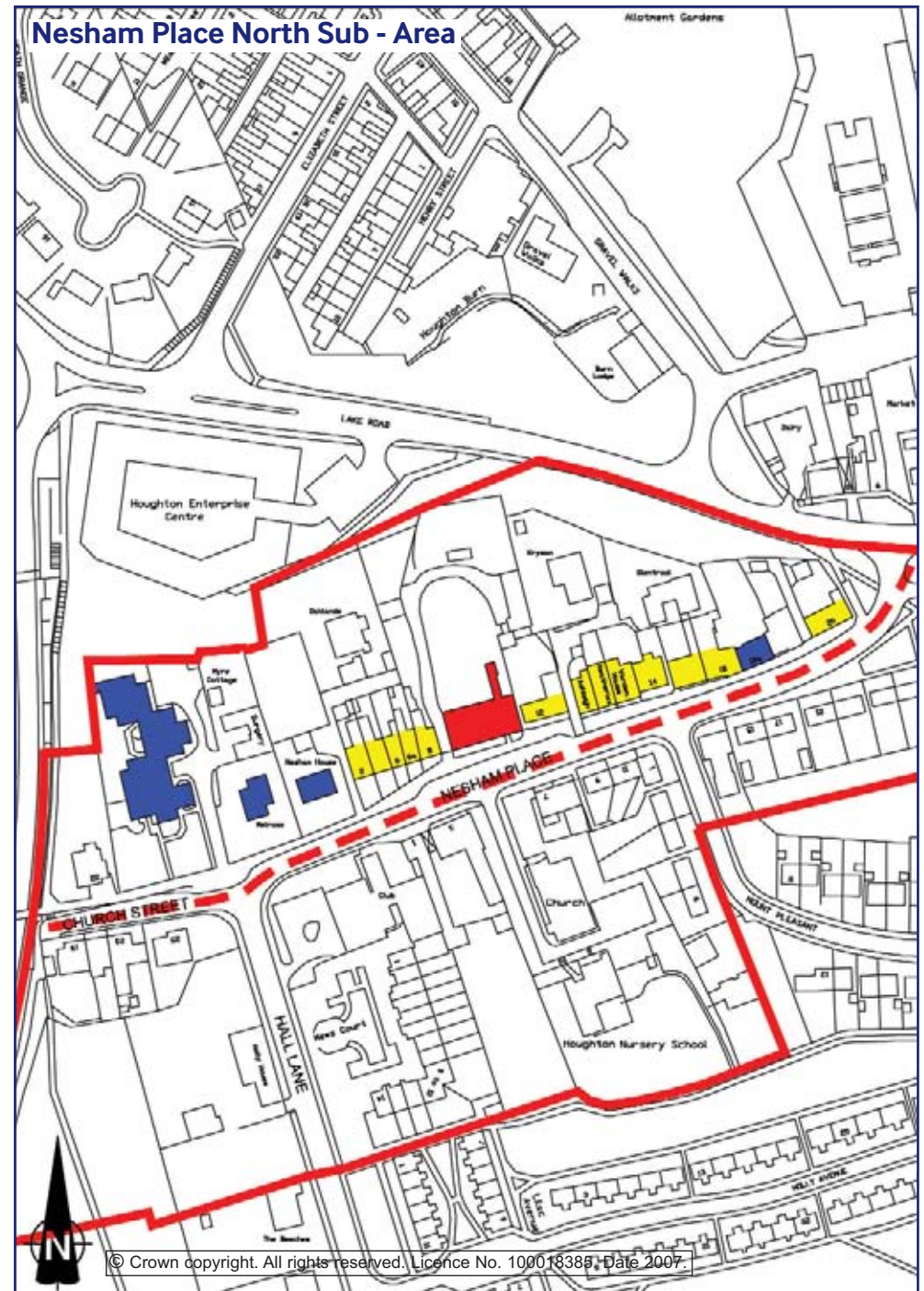
Nesham Place North

Despite its obvious historical and townscape connections, this part of the Conservation Area has a distinct character from the previous sub-areas. Predominantly residential in nature, with handsome properties lining Nesham Place, this sub-area has a quiet, pleasant suburban feel to it.

The severance of Nesham Place from the heart of Houghton must undoubtedly have had an effect on its character, particularly due to the fact that vehicular traffic can no longer travel directly along Church Street into the town centre, compounding the suburban nature of the area and obscuring its immediate proximity to the town centre.

Key Characteristics of the Nesham Place North sub-area:

- ❖ Grand 18th and 19th Century properties lent the street the early name of 'Quality Hill'
- ❖ A cluster of listed buildings, including Manor House, an impressive Grade II listed private dwelling
- ❖ Attractive, rhythmic, linear streetscape, with a number of properties diverting the eye through variations in roof heights or plot width
- ❖ Quiet residential character
- ❖ A well-maintained area contributing to the quality and sense of grandeur of this area
- ❖ Sympathetic C20th buildings that generally have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area's character
- ❖ Significance of the market place to Houghton's early historic development



Streetscape

Despite variations in size, style and materials the properties on this street display a rhythmic pattern of window sizes and locations and unified roof pitch. Despite variation in plot widths the depths of the buildings are all similar, providing a fairly uniform roof ridge line. Their scale and simplicity unifies them while accommodating a range of detailing to eaves, doors and window surrounds and materials.

Nesham Place is quite a wide road with some properties bounded by cast or wrought iron railings, backed by hedges, with narrow front gardens that contribute to the special quality and add a unifying splash of colour. These features add to the feeling of grandeur that originally lent the road the name 'Quality Hill'.



Manor House

Grade II listed, this is possibly the most imposing and dramatic component of the street scene in Nesham Place. The grandeur of the house contributes very positively to the character of the area, understandably once known as Quality Hill. The first and second floor windows follow the rhythm, alignment and proportion of other properties along the street, allowing the extra height to be accommodated in the form of a storey of smaller attic windows. The retention of timber sliding sashes and general high level of maintenance of the exterior of the property and its gardens contribute positively to the character and quality both of this property and of this part of the street.



Modern Development

This sub-area features a number of modern developments, including Myre Hall, a 1970s residential home built for the Anchor Housing Association, and a number of bungalows to the rear of Nesham Place.

To the east of Nesham Place, toward the eastern limit of the Conservation Area are two single-storey units that do not fit in with the size, scale or character of the Conservation Area. These may be appropriate sites for redevelopment in the future. The shop has previously been in a state of decline, but is under new ownership.



The Market Place



Although the market place does not fall within the Conservation Area, and contains no buildings of sufficient character or historical merit to justify its inclusion, it is worthy of mention here due to its historic association with the early development of Houghton. Pictured above is the location of the medieval two-row village that constituted Houghton's early settlement, although this evidence remains only in the plan-form.

The 1856 OS identifies three pubs on this site; The Wheatsheaf remained a pub until the 1950s, but has now been converted into a private house following the vernacular to create a most impressive residence.



Local Details

Local details, some of which may be unique to the area, contribute to the special character of an area, reflecting its historical development and availability of locally sourced materials. Locally quarried magnesian limestone is used in boundary walls and some notable buildings. The combinations in Nesham Place of grand but reasonably simple styles and features give the Conservation Area its distinct character. All these features should be retained and where appropriate restored in order to enhance and preserve the special character of the Conservation Area.

Windows

Windows in the Houghton Conservation Area are of a variety of styles and sizes; in the majority of cases they comprise timber frames and sliding sashes, which contribute positively to the historic character of the areas. Many of the properties have stone lintels and cills to the windows, which add a sense of continuity to the various units. Houghton Hall, the Old Rectory and the Almshouses have stone mullioned windows, typical of earlier building practices, which have a distinctly different character and appearance to the timber sashes.



The Gilpin Boar

The Gilpin family crest is fixed to the Rectory Arch and replicated on lampposts: it was granted to Richard Gilpin (an ancestor of Rector Bernard Gilpin) by King John in commemoration of the slaying of a ferocious boar that had been terrorising the district.



Roofing materials

The prevalence of original roofing materials in the area also makes a positive contribution to its character. The attractive contrast of Welsh (or in some cases Cumbrian) slate against red brick or sandstone is a common feature of north east towns and villages, while older properties (such as the almshouses above) feature red clay pantile roofs. In this case, the pantiles were reinstated during restoration works in the 1980s.



Red clay pantiles on the Almshouses



Welsh slate on Nesham Place

Doors

The majority of the residential properties in the Conservation Area have wooden panelled doors with simple pilastered and architraved doorcases and surrounds in a classical style that nonetheless convey the impression of grandeur and quality. These features are generally painted in white/off-white throughout the Conservation Area, lending a sense of continuity to the streetscape. The doors tend to be of a similar scale, which also helps to tie the variety of styles together. The detail to the far right, above, is one of two entrances to the Golden Lion Pub.



Crenellated features

A number of buildings associated with the church and rectory feature crenellation, giving roofs and walls a castle-like appearance. Originally these embattlements were introduced to the area as a defence against marauding Scots in the 14th and 15th centuries; permission was given by Bishop Dudley to Rector Keling in 1483 to fortify the rectory. Today's buildings, however, are largely from later periods, suggesting that the influence was carried through into subsequent architectural development.



Boundaries

Although few of the residential properties in the Conservation Area have boundary walls to the front (because many front directly onto the street), there are still boundaries of local significance, particularly around the historic curtilage of larger and older buildings such as Rectory Park and the Churchyard. Dwellinghouses on Nesham Place have narrow strips of land to the front, bounded by low walls surmounted with railings and/or low hedges.



Carriage entrances

A small number of properties in the Conservation Area have carriage entrances, originally opening onto a passage through to the rear of the buildings. Such features are of historical significance, representing the wealth of the owners of the properties, and are attractive architectural elements.



Decorative Hopper Heads: The Old Rectory

The Old Rectory features highly unusual pink rainwater goods, and decorated hopper heads. These idiosyncratic fixtures are subtle in size and scale, but contribute to the distinctive character of the area nonetheless.

Gables and Chimney Stacks

The Britannia Pub and Wheeler House feature interesting shaped gables that add significantly to the character of the roofscape of Newbottle Street.



Current Issues and Possible Solutions

The historic and architectural interest and integrity of the Houghton Conservation Area are potentially at risk of degradation through, for example, the unsympathetic alteration of residential properties. As with most attractive historic locations, the Conservation Area is seen as a desirable place to live and in which to develop property, giving rise to potential development pressure. The protection of mature trees and open spaces in the Conservation Area is a particularly important issue, given their contribution to the fundamental character of the area. There is, however, 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 many of the following issues and establishes a series of objectives and proposals for the future management of the Conservation Area.

Boundary review

Issue:

- ❖ Boundaries of conservation areas should include all elements that contribute to the special character of an area. In the past some boundaries were, in English Heritage's view, drawn too tightly. As such, a boundary review is recommended as part of a character appraisal. Houghton's Conservation Areas were designated in 1975, so a review is particularly appropriate as the setting of the area may have changed in the past 30 years.

Solution:

- ❖ The existing boundary of the Conservation Area remains broadly justifiable, with no clear reason to alter it. There is an argument that an extension to Nesham Place Conservation Area could incorporate the market place and the Kirk Lea, both of which are of archaeological significance.
- ❖ The market place: formerly the site of a medieval two-row village, this area has a strong historical connection to the early settlement of Houghton and to St. Michael's Church. Sadly the site no longer contains buildings of sufficient architectural merit or historic character to justify its inclusion in the Conservation Area.
- ❖ The Kirk Lea: still a significant open space adjacent to the Conservation Area, the Kirk Lea also has strong associations with the early settlement. The area has been the subject of some archaeological study and it is believed that an 11m earthwork,

first surveyed for the 1952 OS map, was most likely house platforms on which part of the medieval settlement was built (Tyne and Wear Museums, 1993). The 1647 Parliamentary Survey refers to a cottage and garth (enclosed space), probably on this site. The Lea was once part of the enclosures owned by the Church, and was used in the 14th and 15th centuries to protect cattle from parties of marauding Scots. Modern developments of council housing have encroached upon the outskirts of the Lea, diminishing its size. The area also now contains a football pitch and children's play park. It should be noted, however, that designation as a conservation area would not necessarily preclude any further development of the land.

- ❖ The council has considered the potential for extending the boundary of the Conservation Area, but, all things considered, the existing boundary is considered sufficient to protect the special character of the area. In accordance with English Heritage guidance, the council does not consider that the extra protection that Conservation Area designation would provide to the Lea is sufficient reason to undertake a boundary alteration.
- ❖ Newbottle Street falls partially within the Conservation Area; extending the boundary to incorporate an additional stretch of the main shopping street has been considered. The shopping street still features a number of historic buildings, and has retained the occasional historic shop front feature. It is the view of the Council, however, that the remainder of the street is not of sufficiently special architectural or historic interest to warrant its inclusion in the conservation area.

Building Maintenance and Alterations

Issues

- ❖ There are a number of buildings in the Conservation Area that are currently suffering the symptoms of a general lack of maintenance, which can lead to the degradation of historic fabric and features. Some owners are, unfortunately, reluctant to devote the necessary resources to maintain their premises to a standard befitting their architectural or historic importance, or that of their surroundings. This is particularly likely to be the case where the viability of a business concern is already marginal and no gain can be seen in spending money on a building's external elevations.

- ❖ Relatively minor alterations to buildings can, over time, have a significant effect on the street scene and overall quality of character and appearance of an area. Many modern alterations, such as the replacement of timber sliding sash windows with uPVC alternatives, appear harsh and are damaging to the historic fabric.



- ❖ Important historic features to protect in Houghton Conservation Area include panelled doors and doorcases, original windows, natural slate roofs, chimney stacks and pots, cast iron rainwater goods and boundary enclosures.

Solutions:

- ❖ In the first instance, regular maintenance should be carried out to prevent or at least delay the need for repairs. Repairs should only be undertaken where considered strictly necessary to slow down the process of decay without damaging the character of the building. A guide on how to assess the maintenance needs of historic buildings is available from the council's Conservation Team.
- ❖ Where repairs are considered, a traditional approach should be adopted, replacing decayed material on a like-for-like basis. In certain circumstances, the fabric may be beyond repair and the replacement of features necessary. It is imperative, however, that the unnecessary loss of historic fabric is avoided. In some cases original windows have been replaced when they could have been more appropriately repaired. The discreet insertion of modern draught seals can greatly enhance the performance of sash windows in respect of heat retention and ease of use. There are local contractors that can undertake such work far cheaper than the cost of replacement.
- ❖ Design guidelines for residents on the general approach to be taken when contemplating repairs and alterations is 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.
- ❖ 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. The Council can place Article 4(2) Directions on residential

properties that require owners to obtain permission for certain types of development. The Management Strategy in Part Two of this document includes a proposal to make an Article 4(2) Direction covering parts of the Conservation Area, as well as guidelines that aim to establish clarity and consistency in the operation of the Direction.

Shop Fronts and Signage

Issues:

- ❖ Traditional Victorian shop fronts on Newbottle Street and Durham Road have been replaced with poorly designed and, in some cases poorly maintained modern frontages, using poor quality materials that detract considerably from the character and appearance of the individual buildings, the street scene and overall appearance of the Conservation Area.
- ❖ Inappropriate signage, particularly signs that use unsympathetic modern materials and colours, have a negative visual impact upon the area.
- ❖ Shop front security measures can have a major impact on the appearance of the historic street scene and character of the Conservation Area. Typically, external roller shutters have been used in the past but these create unattractive 'dead' frontages when lowered in the evening, much to the detriment of the character of the buildings and general ambience of the area.



Above: modern shopfronts on Durham Road with unsympathetic signage and unattractive roller shutter security measures.

Solutions:

- ❖ Design guidance is set out in the Management Plan and will form the basis for future decisions on planning applications.
- ❖ All signs should clearly relate to the building to which they are attached and there should be consistency over the type of signage within a particular street or character area.

Mature trees

Issue:

- ❖ Given the maturity of the trees in the Conservation Area there is a risk of their coming under threat from death or disease, and of their becoming dangerous.

Solutions:

- ❖ The Council is responsible for a large number of trees of townscape significance in the Area; as such it monitors and manages the green canopy and undertakes appropriate replanting schemes when and where it becomes necessary.
- ❖ The Council can also consider placing Tree Preservation Orders on specific trees that are deemed worthy of individual protection.
- ❖ Local landowners are responsible for trees on their own land, and are encouraged to maintain their green cover to a high standard.

Public realm

Issues:

- ❖ The footbridge linking the two conservation areas does not fall within the boundary of either area, but is none the less an important feature of the areas, given that it is the only remaining link between the two following the severance of the settlement by the A690. While the footbridge is not historic, it is in need of maintenance and possibly some improvement works.
- ❖ Houghton has enjoyed a series of public realm improvements in the past, including some reinstatement of historic features. Such improvements serve to further highlight the poor quality of the public realm in other parts of the Conservation Area, which detracts somewhat from its special character and interest.
- ❖ Rectory Park is reasonably well-maintained, but given its historical importance and status as a significant green space in the Conservation Area it could benefit from improvement. The furniture is shabby and inappropriate to the historical character, and it would appear that a bandstand and the former flower beds have been lost

- ❖ Excessive signage and cluttering of pavements with street furniture and temporary advertisements is (in some parts of the conservation area) detracting from the special character of the conservation area and causing a hazard.

Solutions:

- ❖ The Council is responsible for the upkeep of both highways and Rectory Park and can therefore consider the possibility of instigating improvement schemes, resources permitting.

New development

Issues:

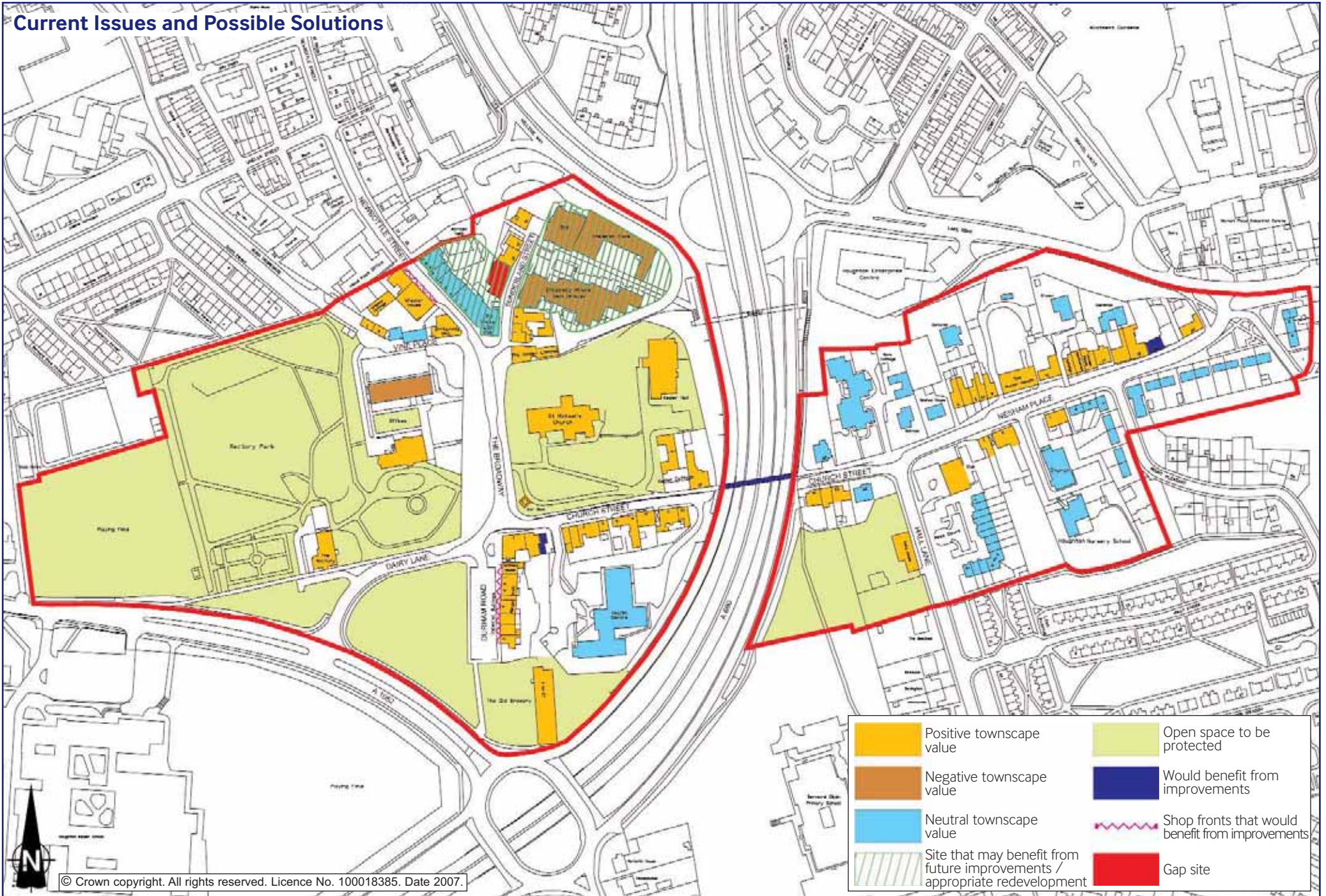
- ❖ New development can pose a significant threat to the historic environment. The Conservation Area has little available space for new development, as most gap and infill sites have already been utilised; for example, the grounds of Houghton Hall with the Mews development.



Solutions:

- ❖ New development may make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, but not if it involves the loss of historic buildings of significance. A building or feature that is contemporary to Houghton's key periods of development (early 19th century or older) will, therefore, contribute to the Conservation Area's special interest and hence proposals to demolish will generally be resisted in accordance with UDP policy. The following map identifies those buildings and spaces which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and will not normally be considered by the Council as appropriate for redevelopment. It also identifies buildings that have a negative impact on the area's townscape value where redevelopment may be welcomed in the future and the few remaining vacant sites that may prove to have development potential.
- ❖ The Management Plan provides guidance for new developments, to be applied in specific cases by the Conservation Team.

Current Issues and Possible Solutions



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Part 2

Management Strategy

Management Strategy Introduction

Part One of this study has identified and appraised the special characteristics and features of Houghton Conservation Area. Part Two, 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 sustainable future 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 Houghton's Conservation Areas 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 Houghton's Conservation Areas. The following Strategy is divided into sub-sections that reflect the nature of the proposals, e.g. those that apply to the public realm. Each sub-section has a Management Objective which establishes the broad vision for that topic, followed by several Management Proposals which are the means by which the Objective may be achieved and which will be pursued as resources allow. The proposals seek to address the key issues that threaten the integrity of the Conservation Areas and vary in their nature, ranging from enhancement of the public realm to protecting individual properties by imposing Article 4(2) Directions: additional controls over what are often considered minor alterations. These proposals form the basis of a mid-to-long term strategy for the future management of the Conservation Areas 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 Houghton 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 Strategy & Proposals: Public Realm

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 1: To continue to maintain and enhance the historic public realm of the Houghton Conservation Area

PROPOSAL 1a: The Council will seek to secure further public realm improvements for the Houghton Conservation Area, investigating the possibility of undertaking works to various streets, including both hard and soft landscaping schemes.

To date there has been an impressive programme of public realm improvements in the Conservation Area. This work has included reinstatement in some areas of historic street surfaces, such as granite setts and street lighting in Church Street. It is desirable to see such work continued throughout the area, enhancing the area's historic integrity and its environment as a whole. Sunderland Street and the eastern side of Church Street have suffered since they were severed for the creation of the A690 and as such would particularly benefit from such works.



The photographs above illustrate the variation in quality of the public realm in the Conservation Area. Improvements to Church Street, to the left, have restored and enhanced the historic streetscape; other streets in the Conservation Area, such as Sunderland Street to the right, would benefit greatly from similar improvements.

PROPOSAL 1b: The Council will seek to upgrade the quality of furniture, lighting and general environs of Rectory Park, reinforcing its historic association with the former Rectory.

Existing benches and litter bins in the park are in poor condition; and fail to contribute positively to the special historic character of the area, but more specifically of this historic park. Landscaping and maintenance of the park should be carried out to the highest possible standard. While it is acknowledged that the park was only made public in the 1940s when the Old Rectory was converted into Council Offices, it would nonetheless be preferable to introduce a historic/traditional style of seating as the park was originally the private grounds of the Grade II* Old Rectory and provides a very attractive setting to some of the area's key listed buildings.



PROPOSAL 1c: The Council will investigate the possibility of improving legibility in the Conservation Area. This will be carried out in conjunction with local amenity groups and will include means of interpretation.

Policies HA3 and HA33 of the UDP support the provision of visitor facilities to enhance the attraction of the Conservation Area throughout the year, and to this end a member of the local community has approached the Council about the feasibility of introducing signposting to the Conservation Area. This seems to be an appropriate means of increasing legibility in the area, but it is important that this is done in a sensitive and stylish fashion. Existing signage (unless it is historic itself) should be rationalised in order to minimise clutter, preferably providing one or two 'fingerposts' in central locations. Other means for improving legibility and interpretation will be explored, including blue plaques, town trails or town maps with heritage assets described.

PROPOSAL 1d: The council will continue to carefully manage mature trees to ensure that a desirable tree canopy is sustained throughout the Conservation Area.

The green cover in the Conservation Area is fundamental to its special character. As such, it is vital that the council continues to afford this feature the highest possible protection, whilst also managing the canopy to prevent trees from becoming too large or potentially dangerous. This green canopy falls within both public and private spaces. Trees in Conservation Areas are under limited controls, in that notice must be given to the local planning authority before works can be carried out to them (this includes lopping as well as felling). Local landowners are responsible for trees on their own land, and are encouraged to maintain their green cover to a high standard.

PROPOSAL 1e: The council will continue to ensure that the grounds of St. Michael's and All Angels Church are kept to a high standard, maintaining the tranquil character of the area.

This part of the Conservation Area has a very high group value in terms of both the buildings and the landscape in which they sit. It is vital that the various interested parties (e.g. the Diocese, Kepier Trust, the City Council and residents) continue to work in partnership to maintain such a high quality environment. There may be scope for restoration of the railings surrounding the church-yard in future.

PROPOSAL 1f: The council will investigate the possibility of rationalising highways signage in accordance with English Heritage guidelines, in order to limit the impact such signage has on key views and vistas.

Over-provision of street signage can cause cluttering of the street scene and may disrupt key views into/out of and vistas within Conservation Areas. As such, English Heritage recommends rationalising such signage, and redesigning it to fit more appropriately in its context.



Cluttered street scene: advertising, street furniture and signage create an untidy image



An example of the intrusive nature of some highways signage - here interfering with a key view out of the Houghton Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL 1g: No development will be permitted on the open space opposite the Imperial Buildings to protect its value to the setting and views of the conservation area.

This valuable open space provides fantastic vistas across the Durham Plain, and is an attractive gateway into the Houghton Conservation Area. It will be important, in future, to ensure that this open space continues to be afforded protection from development, in order to preserve the character and quality of this part of the Conservation Area.

Management Objectives and Proposals: Key Buildings for Action

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 2: To secure the preservation of the architectural integrity of historic buildings in the area.

PROPOSAL 2a: The council will continue to work with the Kepier Trust to sustain the fabric and use of the building for the community, into the future

Kepier Hall is currently used predominantly as a community and education facility, maintaining to an extent the historic use of the building (which was built as a school). The Trust is currently seeking funding to restore parts of the building and increase its functional capacity. It is vital to the continuing preservation of the building and enhancement of the fundamental character of the Conservation Area that historic buildings are put to sustainable use, and to this end the council supports the work of the Kepier Trust at Kepier Hall.

2b The council will monitor the erosion of the War Memorial, in conjunction with the War Memorials Trust and the local community

War Memorials are important historic community features and should be treated as such. While some natural weathering is to be expected and is not necessarily a negative process, care should be taken to preserve the valuable information held upon them.

The council will continue to monitor the state of the memorial, in part through creation of a photographic record, and if the memorial is deemed to be at risk then the council will further investigate appropriate methods of preservation/restoration and potential funding sources.

PROPOSAL 2c: The council will continue to support the owners and managers of key buildings in the Conservation Area, offering design guidance with a view to "informed conservation"

Such key buildings include Houghton Hall, the almshouses, the Old Rectory, the Old Brewery and others, and are all (listed or otherwise) significant to the character of the area. It is imperative that all of these buildings continue to be managed, repaired and protected in order to preserve their quality. Informal design guidance can encourage owners to undertake even those works that are normally permitted development to appropriate conservation principles.

PROPOSAL 2d: The council will approach owners of properties that are vacant and/or in need of maintenance to encourage appropriate improvements.

A number of properties in the Conservation Area have been allowed to fall into a degree of disrepair. This, in itself, is a shame - particularly when they are of historic significance - but the impact on the special character of an area as a whole can be seriously detrimental. On the other hand, simple maintenance works, such as repainting facades and window frames, can make a dramatic positive contribution to the street scene.



Left: this building has been deteriorating for some time and is in need of some repair work; right: a small cluster of relatively modern flat roofed buildings create a contrast against the historic properties of Nesham Place; these properties could benefit from improvement works

Management Objectives and Proposals: Shop Fronts

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 3: To secure the preservation, restoration or improvement, as appropriate, of shop frontages in Houghton Conservation Area through the application of the following design guidelines.

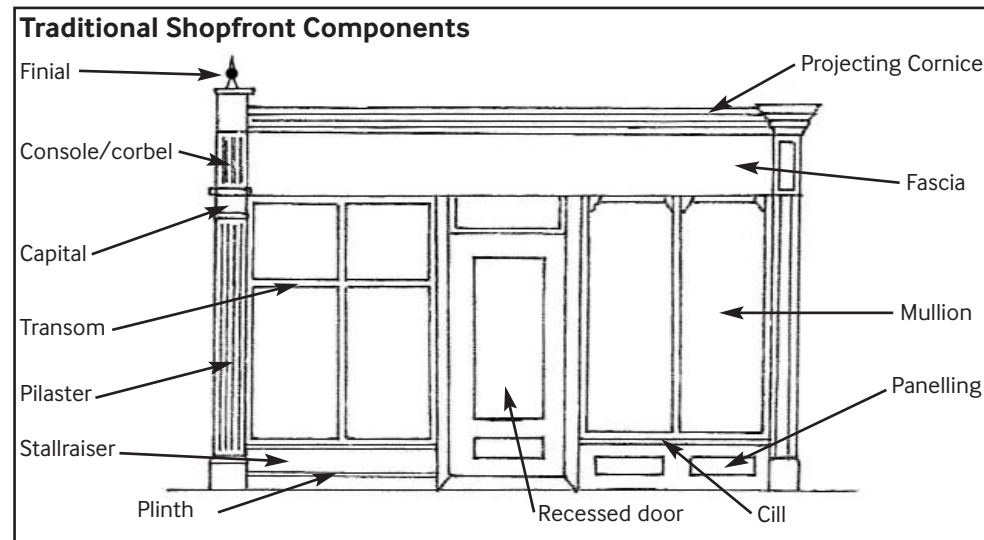
The quality of shop fronts in Houghton is generally poor and detracts considerably from the historic street scene. Wheeler House has retained its historic frontage, albeit with a modern infill frontage added; elsewhere in the Conservation Area shopfronts are rarely suited to the historic character of the area. Hence, some parts of the Conservation Area would benefit from shop front improvements. The following design guidelines have been formulated, based on archive images, to ensure that:

- ❖ High standards of design and workmanship are evident in all replacement and improved shop fronts in the area
- ❖ The new/improved shop front is appropriate to the host building and benefits the appearance of the wider street scene
- ❖ A consistent approach is achieved in particular streets that will enhance the Conservation Area as a whole

These guidelines refer specifically to the Houghton Conservation Area and primarily to Durham Road, Church Street, Sunderland Street and Newbottle Street. They build upon UDP policies S8 and HA30.

General Guidelines

The first decision to be made when proposing to improve/replace a shop front is whether the current shop front is authentic and of significance and hence warrants careful conservation rather than replacement, and whether to opt for a traditional or contemporary approach. In the majority of cases, a traditional approach will be required to reinforce the historic character of the area, especially where evidence of the original shop front exists either in the form of surviving features or old photographs / drawings. The main components of a typical Victorian shop front are illustrated in the drawing opposite. These should be incorporated into all new or improved traditional shop fronts.



PROPOSAL 3a: The council will require the retention of surviving traditional shop fronts and features and seek to secure their reinstatement wherever possible.



Traditional shopfront fascias on Wheeler House have been retained but altered, significantly affecting traditional proportions and the scale of the frontage. The deep fascia and roller shutter housings detract from the historic appearance and character of the shop front.

The individual components of a traditional Victorian shop front can, for the purposes of these guidelines, be divided into two groups. Firstly, the 'surrounding framework' that is generally made up of the pilasters and entablature. Secondly, the 'shop front infill' which is broadly comprised of the stall riser, door and fanlight, window display and glazing bars.

Along Newbottle Street and Imperial Buildings, these being the two main groups of retail outlets in the Conservation Area, many of the traditional Victorian frameworks survive but unfortunately most shop frontages have been spoiled by inappropriate, poor quality modern infill schemes, as illustrated above and opposite. It would be highly desirable for this situation to be rectified. Thus, any improvement proposals for shop fronts will normally be required to adopt a traditional approach, reinstating Victorian style infills into the surviving frameworks, as detailed in the preceding diagram. The council will investigate sources of potential funding to assist shop owners with the cost of reinstating traditional shop fronts (see also proposal 4c).

Well-designed and constructed modern shop fronts can, in some instances, make a positive contribution to the historic street scene. Such an approach will normally only be considered where all evidence of the original shop front has been lost.

PROPOSAL 3b: The council will exercise strict control over the display of advertisements in Houghton Conservation Area to ensure that signs are designed and located to respect the character and appearance of the host building and historic street scene.

Special attention will be given to the size, form and location of adverts in the Conservation Area in the interests of conserving and improving its character and appearance.

The main name sign for the premises should be restricted to the shop front fascia and should be well proportioned in relation to the length and depth of the fascia and its position within it. Only two types of name sign are considered appropriate. These are painted lettering or cut-out freestanding metal or wood letters fixed individually to the fascia. The height of the lettering should be no more than two-thirds the height of the fascia and normally centred about its horizontal and vertical axis. Whole fascias of plastic, whether illuminated or not, such as those shown in the photograph opposite, will not be permitted. Likewise, projecting 'box' signs are not acceptable as they appear clumsy and obtrusive. Traditional hanging signs, which take the form of a signboard hanging from a metal bracket, are generally acceptable but should be limited to one per property to avoid creating clutter.

Illumination, where necessary, should be low key and any lighting carefully integrated into the design of the shop front. For free standing letters, only halo illumination will be permitted. Traditional hanging signs should be lit from above via a light source concealed within an appropriately designed fitting attached to the bracket of a sign. Miniature spotlights discreetly fixed to the ground, or to the building without causing damage, may in some cases be used to illuminate signs or architectural features.

PROPOSAL 3c: The council will seek to ensure that shop front security measures are designed to cause no significant harm to the character and appearance of historic buildings and general street scene.



Preferred methods of security are those that do not affect the appearance or styling of the exterior of the shop front; products such as laminated glass or internal lattice grilles behind the shop window will enable this.

External roller shutters, which have commonly been used in the past, will no longer be permitted in the Conservation Area as they detract from the historic character and appearance of the buildings and have a deadening effect on the street scene when lowered in the evening, and contribute to a fortress mentality becoming endemic, enhancing public fear of crime. Removable mesh grilles that are fitted over window and door openings without obscuring fascias, pilasters and stall risers may be used, especially where they are designed as an integral feature of the shop front. Occasionally, external roller grilles may be permitted provided they are of the open lattice type, cover the glazed areas only, and form an integral part of the overall shop front design. The shutter box must be fully recessed behind the fascia and any runners, retainers and fixings suitably concealed within the shop front structure i.e., pilasters, sills; however, these are not recommended and can only be adequately installed when the whole shop front is being replaced.

Management Objectives and Proposals: Article 4(2) Directions

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 4: To ensure the preservation of the architectural integrity of historic houses in Houghton's Conservation Areas.

PROPOSAL 4a: The council will seek to make a Direction under Article 4(2) to require that houses of historic importance are the subject of additional planning controls, thus safeguarding features of significance.

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 be brought 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.

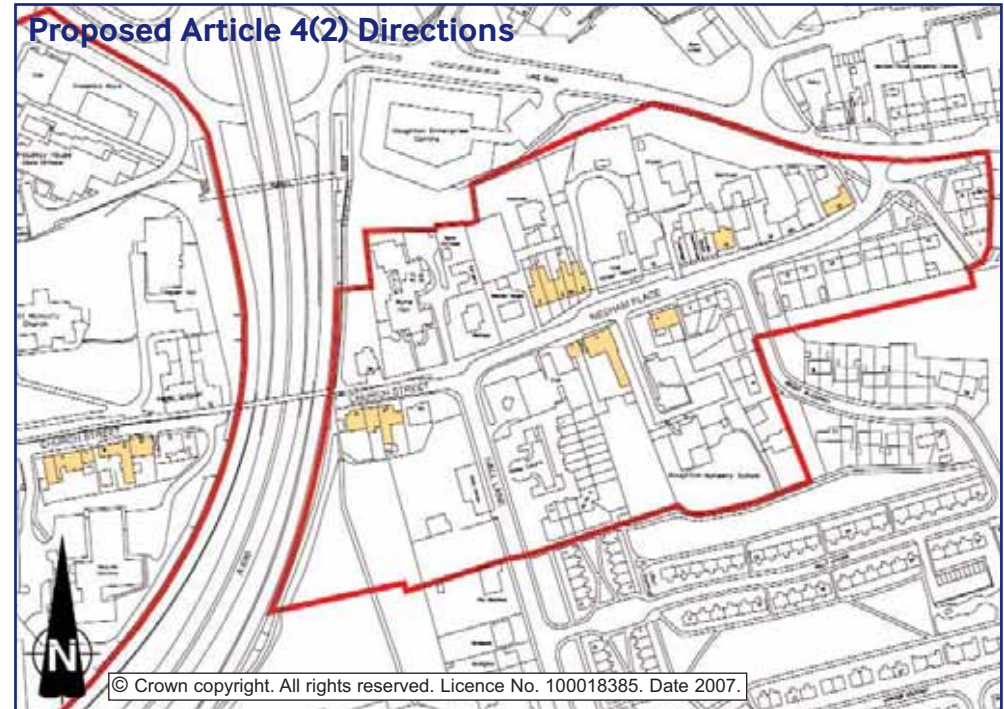
Policy B6 of the UDP states that the council will preserve the character and appearance of conservation areas by seeking, where appropriate, to control development by the use of Article 4 Directions. To counter the loss of important features in Houghton's Conservation Areas, the council proposes to place Article 4(2) Directions on the following properties: these houses are considered to be of such architectural and historic merit to warrant additional protection. These are listed below and identified on the following map.

2, 3, 4, 6, 6a, 7, 8, 14 and 20 Nesham Place

19, 21 and 23 Church Street (Nesham Place Conservation Area)

6, 6a, 7, 8, 9 and 10 Church Street (St. Michael's Conservation Area)

Planning permission will subsequently be required to be gained for the classes and types of development listed below, affecting the public face of the buildings i.e. those elevations fronting the street or significant side streets:



Classes of Development covered by Article 4(2) Directions in Houghton Conservation Area

Part 1 (GPDO)

- ❖ Class A :- The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house
- ❖ Class C :- Any other alteration to the roof of a dwellinghouse
- ❖ Class D :- The erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse
- ❖ Class H :- The installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwellinghouse or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse

Part 2 (GPDO)

- ❖ Class A :- The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure
- ❖ Class C :- The painting of the exterior of any building or work

The particular elements the Council is seeking to bring under control are:

- ❖ Alterations to the front and rear roof coverings and erection of dormer windows or roof lights
- ❖ Alterations to chimney stacks and pots
- ❖ Alterations to the front elevation to form entry porches or to erect boundary walls
- ❖ Alterations to the windows to the front elevation
- ❖ Extensions to the side elevations
- ❖ Erection of satellite dishes
- ❖ Alterations to rainwater goods to the front elevation
- ❖ Cladding of any part of the exterior with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles
- ❖ Painting of previously unpainted exterior elevations
- ❖ Erection of solar arrays on the front roof slope

Criteria for Selection of Properties for Proposed Article 4(2) Direction

Architectural Quality and Intactness

Nesham Place was originally known as Quality Hill, a name that clearly implies the quality and status of the properties there. The majority of properties on Nesham Place have retained their original character and appearance. Despite variations in size, style and materials the properties exhibit a rhythmic pattern of window sizes/locations and unified roof pitches.

The three townhouses on Church Street are integral to the Nesham Place street scene and are of value in their own right. These three attractive properties have retained a uniformity and rhythm that makes a positive termination to Church Street.

Importance of Features to be Protected to the Area's Special Interest

The preceding character appraisal establishes that the features of Houghton are of key significance to the character, quality and special interest of the Conservation Area. It is the value of original features in the area that is a key factor in proposing the Article 4(2) Direction.

In many cases original or traditional sliding-sash windows have been retained, along with panelled doors, Welsh slate roofs and chimneys; these must be protected into the future.

Timber sliding sash windows lend older properties much of their style and character, and tend to be of slender proportions, with a vertical emphasis. Glazing bars are delicate and narrow, allowing the emphasis to sit with the glazed components. The current fashion for uPVC replacements is destructive of important fenestration



The replacement uPVC window to the left fails to match the slender proportions and historic detailing of the traditional sliding-sash in the property to the right. Such alterations are inappropriate for historic buildings and contrary to the aims of the Article 4(2) Direction.

patterns; despite advances in uPVC technology it remains impossible to accurately replicate such proportions - or the qualities of timber.

Degree of Established or Potential Threat to Features

Relatively minor alterations to buildings can, over time, have a significant effect on the street scene and overall quality of the character and appearance of an area. Many modern alterations, such as the replacement of timber sliding sash windows with uPVC alternatives, appear harsh and will damage the historic fabric.

It should be noted that Article 4(2) Directions are not retrospective and thus can not be used to effect the reinstatement of features such as sliding sash windows where these have already been lost. Nevertheless they can be used effectively to prevent further losses of architectural features and encourage sympathetic restoration.

The roofscape along Nesham Place is of particular quality and should be protected from intrusion in the form of bulky rooflights or dormer windows, which are inappropriate to the age and style of many of the properties. The three townhouses on Church Street have dormers, which are a feature of the properties and lend further symmetry to them. It is desirable to ensure that these features are retained and not added to, enlarged or inappropriately altered.

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 windows have survived and are in situ	Require retention and repair/refurbishment as necessary. Installation of replicas 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 (usually working sliding sash timber frame) windows using surviving original windows as model for style.
Original lost, UPVC put in place	Encourage reinstatement of timber frame windows using surviving original windows as a model for style. UPVC may be acceptable as a last resort when designed with regard to original format.

Roofscape

Scenario	Action
Rooflights to front elevation	Not permitted under any circumstance.
Rooflights to rear elevation	Should be of the conservation style and kept to a minimum in terms of size and scale.
Original Welsh slates have survived and are in situ	If large scale repairs become necessary require retention of all good slates to be reused on front elevation. Rear elevation may be recovered in other natural slate, such as Spanish slate. Slates should not be mixed on an elevation.
Original Welsh slates have been replaced with artificial tiles, e.g. Eternits	Encourage reinstatement of natural slates where re-roofing has become necessary.
Original chimney stack and pots have survived and are in situ	Require retention and repair/refurbishment as necessary. Installation of replicas acceptable if originals beyond repair.
Original chimney stack or pots lost	Encourage reinstatement of chimney/pots using surviving original chimneys/pots as models for style.

Dormers

Scenario	Action
Dormer to front elevation	Not permitted under any circumstance..

Doors

Scenario	Action
Original timber panelled doors have survived and are in situ	Require retention and repair/refurbishment as necessary. Installation of replicas acceptable if originals beyond repair.
Original doors lost, existing are in timber but of poor form	Encourage reinstatement of timber panelled doors using surviving original doors as model for style.
Original lost, UPVC put in place	Encourage reinstatement of timber panelled doors using surviving original doors as a model for style.
Original timber architrave has survived and is in situ	Require retention and repair/refurbishment as necessary. Installation of replicas acceptable if originals beyond repair.

Extensions

Scenario	Action
Extension to front or side elevation (end terraces)	Not permitted under any circumstance.

Painting Scheme

Scenario	Action
Colour scheme in place	Require continued use of colour scheme for all future maintenance work
Colour scheme not in place	Encourage change to approved colour scheme and require use of colour scheme when future maintenance work arises.

Proposal 4b: The council will survey and monitor all properties in the Conservation Area that are subject to the Direction on a regular 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 taken where it is 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, for example, sliding-sash windows, timber doors, Welsh roof slates etc. 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). The table below provides a sample of the statistical information compiled from the current survey of properties prior to imposition of the Direction.

Sample results of survey of Article 4 Properties - 2007

Street	Window type	(%Properties in terrace)		Roof Covering (%Properties in terrace)	
		Timber casement	uPVC	Welsh Slate	Artificial slates
Nesham Pl	11	33	56	78	22
Church St	100	-	-	100	-
Overall%	42	16.5	28	89	11

The photographic record and statistical database of the Article 4(2) properties will be used to measure change and help the council to effectively manage the impact of changes on its character and appearance. In particular, it will enable unauthorised alterations to be identified and appropriate action initiated as necessary. In other conservation areas in the city this has already been implemented, with the council's enforcement team taking action against the owners of several properties for carrying out unauthorised works.

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 terraces subject to the Direction. As resources allow, the remainder of the Conservation Area will also be surveyed and a comprehensive photographic record of the whole area

created which will similarly be regularly updated, although not with the same frequency as the Article 4(2) Direction properties.

Proposal 4c: The council will actively investigate sources of funding to provide grant assistance for repair and restoration works to properties, particularly those that are listed or 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 timber sliding-sash window will often exceed the costs of installing inappropriate modern alternatives such as uPVC double glazed units. As a result residents have, in the past, opted for cheaper, non-traditional products - despite them being damaging to historic buildings - on the grounds of affordability; or chosen to not fully address their property's maintenance needs, leaving important features at risk from continued deterioration.

Whilst an Article 4(2) Direction can prevent further losses of architectural features from the properties concerned, it does not require owners to properly maintain such features or reinstate those lost prior to the Direction being put in place. Many 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 funding is difficult to secure and conservation must compete with other funding priorities. The ability to provide grant is often dependent 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 be a number of years before funding can be secured.

Management Objectives and Proposals: New Development

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 5: To ensure that new development in the Conservation Area does not compromise its special character and enhances the overall quality of its built environment.

Proposal 5a: New development in and around the Conservation Area must have regard to, and enhance, its special character and interest

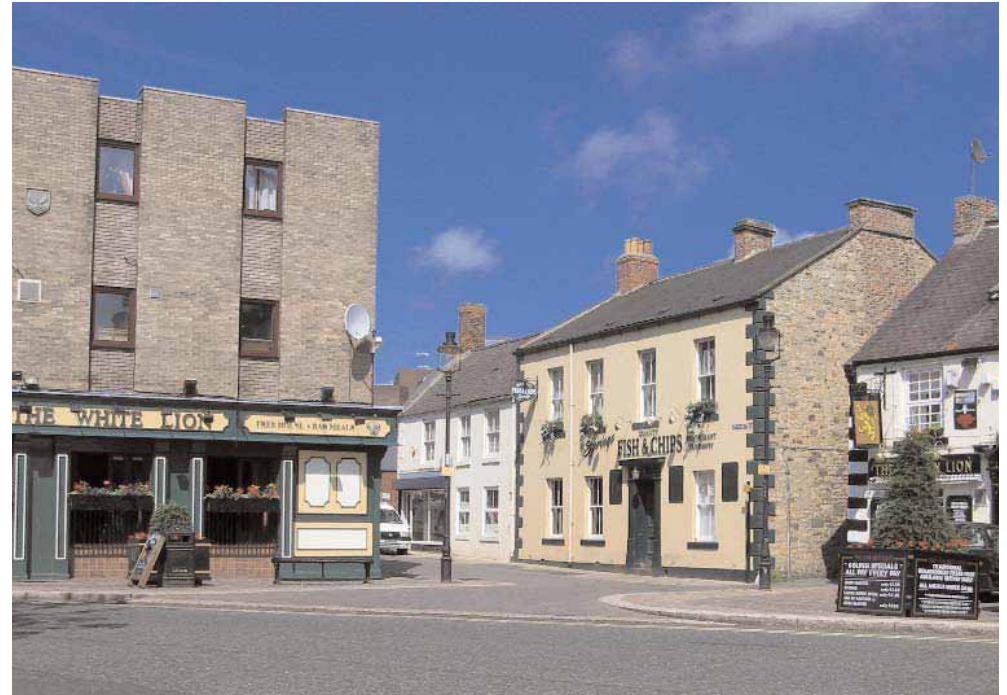
An archaeological appraisal is likely to be a preliminary requirement in any proposals for redevelopment in the Conservation Area, as recommended in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning and the Sunderland Unitary Development Plan.

The council will provide guidance for new developments in the form of consultation with the Conservation Team. Applications should have respect for the materials, scale and mass of existing development, particularly historic buildings. New developments must have regard for their setting within or near to the Conservation Area.

While there do not appear to be many obvious opportunities for new development within the conservation area, there may at least be scope to make better use of the currently unattractive open space to the rear of the White Lion, on Sunderland Street.

While regard must be made to the surroundings of a new development, care should be taken to avoid pastiche. Modern developments in historic areas can complement traditional buildings, without jeopardising the setting of a listed building or an area of established character type. A modern design must, however, be carefully thought out and high quality materials chosen. The Council's Planning Service provides a pre-application service that allows applicants to liaise with development control, urban design and conservation planners prior to the submission of applications.

Applicants and architects may find it useful to consult the CABI / English Heritage guidance: "Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas".



The contrast of unsympathetic modern development immediately adjacent to historic properties. The White Lion is a storey higher, with a flat roof, which gives it a dominant presence over the older buildings. The materials used in this property do not fit with the character and appearance of the conservation area, although some effort has been made to make the pub entrance appear traditional.

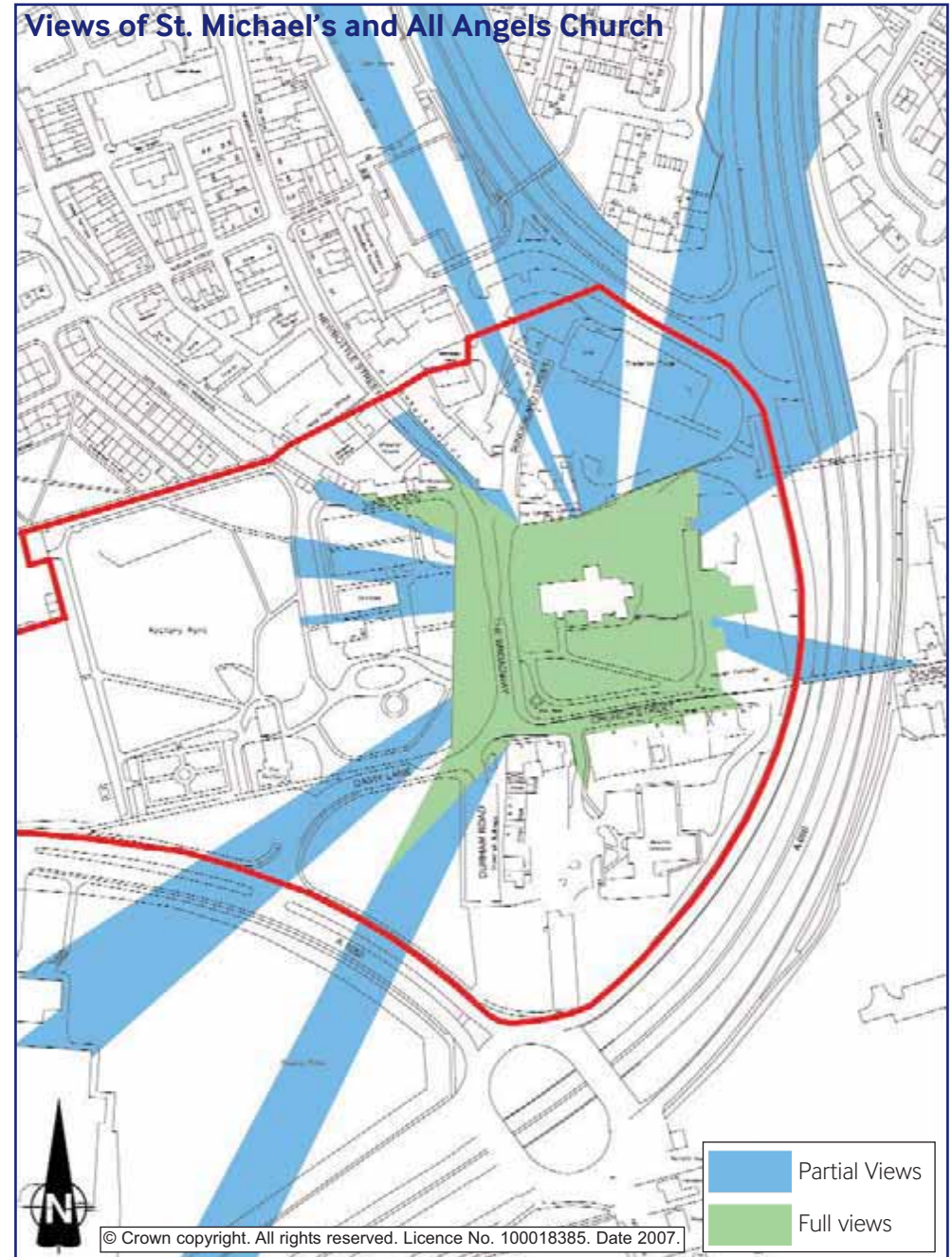
Management Objectives and Proposals: Views and Landmarks

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 6: To protect important views into, out of and within the Conservation Area and the settings of St. Michael's and All Angels Church and other landmark buildings.

PROPOSAL 6a: The council will resist developments within and near to the Conservation Area that will adversely affect views into, out of and within the Conservation Area - particularly views to St. Michael's & All Angels Church.

Views into and out of conservation areas help to indicate their significance within the wider landscape area, and can be fundamental to an area's character. The importance of such views and vistas are highlighted in Part One of this document, and in PPG15, which states that the effect of a proposed development on the setting or views of a conservation area is a material planning consideration.

It is vital to the protection and enhancement of the Houghton's Conservation Areas that all key views and vistas are safeguarded from the effects of future development. Of particular concern is the potential for proposals that include tall buildings, which may diminish the impact of the iconic local landmark of St. Michael's & All Angels Church. The spire is the only prominent feature of significant height in the area and it is fitting that it dominates Houghton, given the importance of the church in the origins of the town and its subsequent development. Due to the topography of the wider area, any building of more than 3 storeys may have a significant effect on the church's dominance of the roofscape and hence the impact on the skyline of any proposed building of more than 3 storeys will require careful evaluation and justification. The 3 storey limit is a guide to ensure that proposed new development does not sit above the existing tree canopy.



Management Strategy: Summary and Recommended Action

Proposals	Timescale: Short (1-3 yrs) Mid-long (3-10 yrs)	Financial Sources/ Implications	Recommended Action
Public realm			
1a Public realm improvements	Mid-long term	Public/ partnership funding required	Consult and investigate
1b Upgrade park furniture	Mid-long term	Public funding required	Research and investigate
1c Improve legibility	Mid-long term	Public funding required	Further dialogue with community, investigate funding
1d Tree management	Continuous	Ongoing maintenance budget	Continuation of careful management
1e Church grounds	Continuous	Ongoing maintenance budget	Continuation of careful management
1f Rationalisation of street signage	Mid-long term	Public funding required	Consult highways, investigate funding
1g Protect open space to Imperial Buildings	Continuous	None	Use planning system to continue to protect this space
Individual buildings			
2a Kepier Trust	Short term	Charitable Trust	Assist in preparation of Conservation Plan. Ongoing dialogue and support
2b War Memorial	Short-mid term	Public/partnership funding requirement	Ongoing monitoring of memorial, action if necessary
2c Informed conservation	Short-mid term	Private investment	Circulate "A Stitch in Time" (English Heritage) with covering letter
2d Encourage maintenance	Short term	Private investment	Circulate "A Stitch in Time" (English Heritage) with covering letter
Shopfronts			
3a retention/ reinstatement	Continuous	Private investment	Control and guidance
3b Control over advertisements	Continuous		Control and guidance
3c Shop security guidance	Continuous	Private investment	Control and guidance
Article 4(2) Directions			
4a Make Article 4(2) Direction	Short term	None	Consult residents
4b Surveying/monitoring	Continuous	None	Ongoing monitoring and enforcement
4c Grant assistance	Mid-long term	Partnership funding required	Identify & pursue funding options
New development			
5a Regard to conservation area	Continuous	Private investment	Produce guidance
Views and Landmarks			
6a Protection of views	Continuous	None	Control and guidance

Implementation of Management Objectives

Whilst the Council can effectively manage and improve aspects of the conservation area and satisfy certain management objectives and proposals through direct physical measures, its development control function and providing advice and guidance, the implementation of several proposals will be dependant on factors outside its direct control.

Financial Implications

Many of the proposals will require significant public and/or private investment to facilitate their implementation. For example, the implementation of further public realm improvements and other environmental enhancement works will require considerable public investment. Such funding is difficult to secure, especially in the current financial climate with the Council facing increasing budgeting constraints from Central Government.

The provision of a grant scheme in the area to assist property owners with repair and restoration works is likely to be dependant on the Council making a successful bid to English Heritage for partnership funding 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.

Further Work Required

Further and more detailed work will, in addition to securing funding, be required to bring forward certain objectives. In particular, further research and design work will be needed to inform any further environmental improvements.

Envisaged Timescales

The timescales indicated in the table for the implementation of the management objectives are deliberately vague due to the uncertainty surrounding the factors they are dependant upon. Some of the objectives may not be achieved in the next 10 years, whilst others might be implemented sooner than envisaged. In the final analysis, the availability of financial support will be the key factor in expediting many proposals.

Appendix - 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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