

# NORTHUMBERLAND SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL NOVEMBER 2020



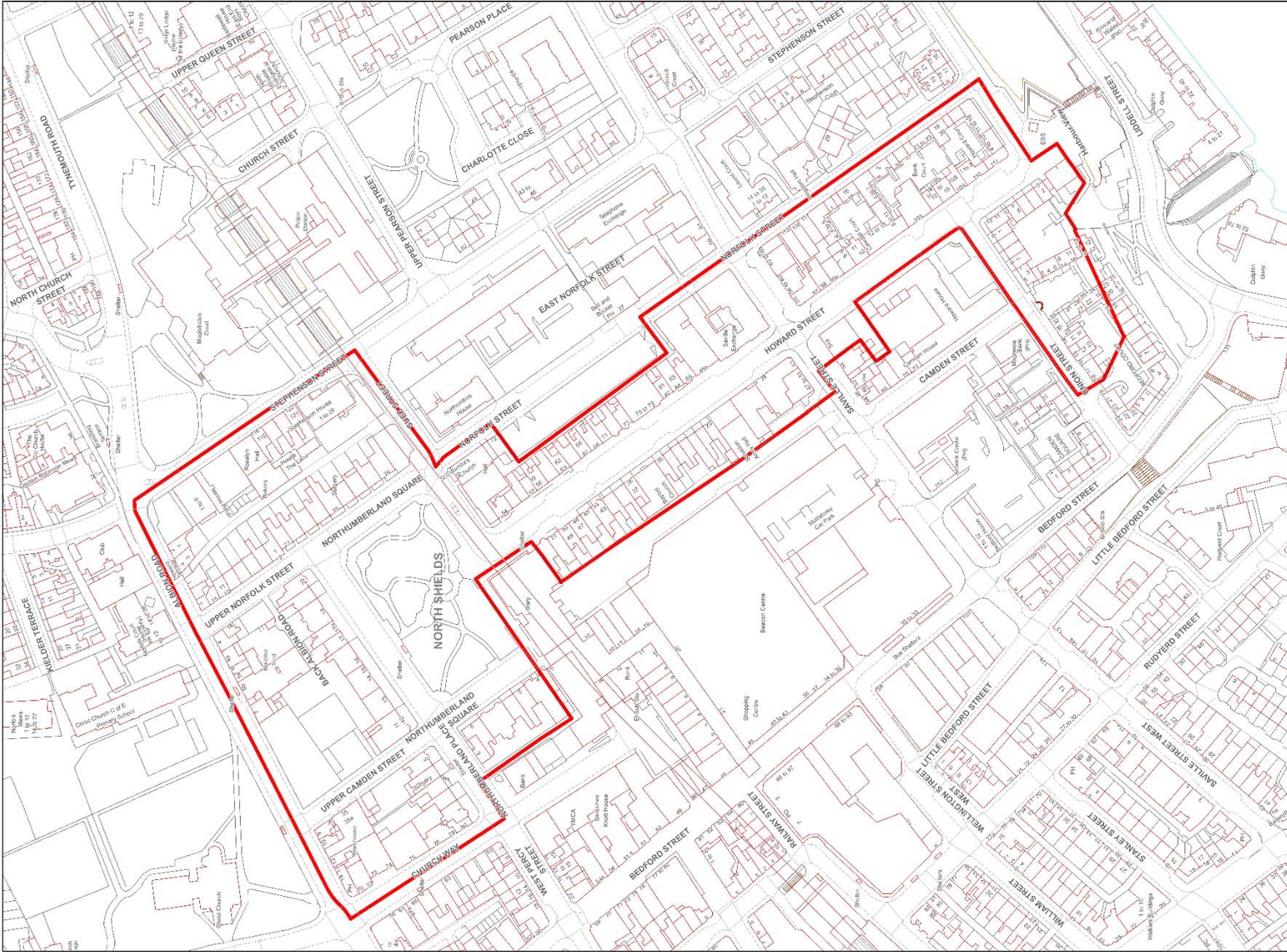
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**NORTHUMBERLAND SQUARE  
 CONSERVATION AREA**

## Introduction

### Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”<sup>1</sup>. They are designated by the local planning authority.

Conservation areas are about character and appearance, which could be derived from many factors including individual buildings, building groups and their relationship with open space, architectural detailing, materials, views, colours, landscaping, street furniture and so on. Character can also draw on more abstract notions such as sounds, local environmental conditions and historical changes. These things combine to create a locally distinctive sense of place worthy of protection.

Conservation areas do not prevent development from taking place. Rather, they are designed to manage change, and the way new development and other investment reflects the character of its surroundings.

The first conservation areas were created in 1967 and now over 10,000 have been designated across England and Wales, varying greatly in character and size. There are currently 17 conservation areas in North Tyneside.

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

### Planning Policy Context

Current government policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and includes paragraph 187 that requires local planning authorities to “have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area”. The NPPF sets out that conservation areas are “designated heritage assets”, that is, they have “a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of [their] heritage interest.”

The development plan for North Tyneside is the Local Plan 2017. Within the Local Plan are policies S6.5 *Heritage Assets* and DM6.6 *Protection, Preservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets*, which set out the authority’s approach in guiding decisions affecting heritage assets. The approach is one that aims to sustain, conserve and enhance the significance, appearance, character and setting of heritage assets.

The Council has a duty in exercising its planning powers to pay special attention to the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas. It also has a duty, from time to time, to draw up, consult upon and publish proposals that would assist in the enhancement of such areas. The local planning authority also has extra powers in conservation areas over demolition, minor developments, and tree protection<sup>2</sup>.

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

## This Character Appraisal

This Character Appraisal was prepared by North Tyneside Council in the summer of 2020 and was subject to public consultation in the autumn of 2020. Previous versions of the Character Appraisal adopted in 2006 and 2014 will be superseded by this revision.

This document cannot be exhaustive. Omissions should not necessarily be regarded as having no special interest or making no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

Historic England guidance advises that it is good practise for conservation area reviews to be carried out around every five years, depending on available resources and development pressure within an area<sup>3</sup>. This Character Appraisal may benefit from a review soon after High Street Heritage Action Zone programme has ended (see page 53 for more information).

Reviews can help to identify threats and opportunities that can be developed into a Management Strategy. A Management Strategy is currently being prepared for this conservation area that will look to set out a framework for preservation and enhancement based on the elements of special character and appearance, and threats and opportunities, discussed in this Appraisal. Management for Northumberland Square conservation area is discussed from page 53.

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<sup>3</sup> Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1 (2019) Historic England

## Location and Setting

### Location

The conservation area is part of North Shields, one of the principal towns of North Tyneside, part of the Tyne & Wear conurbation in the northeast of England. It is in the south-east of the Borough, just north of the river bank, at the mouth of the Tyne. The Fish Quay conservation area adjoins it immediately to the south and Camp Terrace conservation area adjoins to the north.

Northumberland Square conservation area is part of the mixed commercial and residential quarter, east of the town centre's main retail section. It has an economy based on offices, plus support retail. The area is part in Riverside ward and part in Tynemouth ward.

### Boundary

Northumberland Square conservation area was designated in 1975 and the boundary has not changed since designation. The boundary is based on the best surviving elements of the Georgian “new town” that became North Shields town centre after its early riverside beginnings. It excludes other development of a similar age and pattern to the north-west, which has less surviving, intrinsic, special interest (Map, page 4).

Starting in the north-west corner at the junction of Church Way and Albion Road, the boundary heads east following the centre line of Albion Road, then turns south down Stephenson Street to Suez Street where it turns west to the corner Northumberland Square at Norfolk Street. The boundary then turns south to follow the centre

line of Norfolk Street, apart from turning to exclude a car park on the west side behind Nos. 58-85 Howard Street.

At Tyne Street the boundary turns west and briefly south to include the Stag Line Building (but not all of the open space to the front) where it runs contiguous with the boundary of the Fish Quay conservation area. It then follows a somewhat arbitrary line through late twentieth century housing development on the south side of Union Street at Union Stairs and Bedford Court, generally excluding those parts facing out of the conservation area towards Liddell Street and Bedford Street. The boundary turns back east along Union Street and then north along Howard Street, including the streets themselves but excluding development on the north and east sides, until turning briefly west to include buildings on the corner of Saville Street.

The boundary then runs north along the back lane of development on the west side of Howard Street until the North Shields Customer First Centre, which it turns to exclude. It then follows the back lane of development on the west side of Northumberland Square to Northumberland Place, where it turns briefly west before continuing north along the centre line of Church Way back to Albion Road.

### Geology

The local geology has influenced the character of the conservation area. Local sandstones are the basic building material used for several buildings and early boundary walls, with brick largely taking over in the nineteenth century, much probably made locally from the glacial clay deposits.

The impact of coal-related industries and transport routes in wider North Tyneside is important to understanding North Shields' growth as an affluent nineteenth century town.

### Setting and External Relationships

The conservation area's setting is characterised mostly by eighteenth and nineteenth century terraced development on a grid-iron pattern, mostly ordinary and altered. There has also been considerable twentieth century redevelopment, much of it undistinguished and visually over-dominant.

Along Howard Street, the junction between the conservation area and adjoining development is anonymous back lanes, but to the north and south of the conservation area the boundary tends to follow the centre line of roads, meaning development inside and outside the conservation area faces each other across the street. Only at the north-west and south-west edges are these facing developments similar in character.



The Beacon Centre, to the west of the conservation area



Magistrates Court and surrounding open space, to the east of the conservation area

The commercial town centre core around Bedford Street and Saville Street to the west sees nineteenth century terraced shops and dominant twentieth century insertions. The dominance of the blank boxes of the Beacon Centre shopping mall and multi-storey car park is overwhelming compared to the more traditionally styled brick properties surrounding it. The side of the Centre also feels out of place opposite the small-scale rears of Howard Street. To the north, across Albion Road, is Christ Church in its large green churchyard, plus eighteenth and nineteenth century suburban housing beyond. To the east is mainly mid to late twentieth century housing redevelopment and large municipal buildings including the Magistrates' Court in a large open space. To the south are the

steep green banks and sections of dense trees down to the lively riverside between the Fish Quay in the east and the New Quay in the west.

There are several interesting buildings with strong townscape presence immediately on the boundary of the conservation area, for example the Garrick's Head on Saville Street, Magnesia Bank on Camden Street, Bell and Bucket (a converted nineteenth century fire station) on Norfolk Street, Nos. 59-61 Saville Street, and a hall, club and church on Albion Road at the end of Stephenson Street. Parts of Bedford Court and Union Stairs adjoin the boundary in the south-west corner due to the arbitrary nature of the boundary here. There are also some fragments of similar eighteenth and nineteenth century terraces further to the north-west and similar late twentieth century development to the south and east.

The conservation area's streets are part of the town centre's main road network with east-west through traffic along Albion Road, and north-south traffic along Northumberland Square and Howard Street. Local traffic feeds off these onto Northumberland Place, Stephenson Street, the lower end of Howard Street and Union Street. Some of these are bus routes and were once shared with trams. The coast-bound Metro line runs in an east-west tunnel underneath the south side of Northumberland Square.

### Views out of the Area

Due to the introspective nature of the development pattern, and the inferior character of much surrounding development, views out of the area to the east and west are not significant. Views out along Saville Street, Northumberland Place, Suez Street and Union Street

are not notable apart from emphasising the grid-iron development pattern and the relative quality of the conservation area's appearance to that around. Long views along Norfolk Street and Stephenson Street are particularly disappointing. The assortment of cleared plots, intrusive boxy buildings and more recent housing here fail to generate an appealing scene in dramatic contrast to Howard Street's sharp north-south enclosed vistas.

Views out of the area to the north are enlivened by trees, green space and landmark buildings along Albion Road and Tynemouth Road, notably the former memorial church tower and spire at Brandling Terrace. The view of Christ Church and churchyard north of Upper Camden Street is particularly pleasing, framed by the bow-fronts of No. 5 Northumberland Place and No. 12 Northumberland Square, and channelled by their brick return elevations.



Christ Church, to the north of the conservation area

The distant horizon of the channelled vista along Howard Street is formed by the Cleadon Hills, far across the river south of South Shields. Nearer views south from Tyne Street are much more striking. At the Stag Line Building vantage point, 180° panoramic elevated views east, south and west are extensive and exciting, dominated to the east by the lighthouses and ice tower of the Fish Quay, but partly obscured by riverside development at Dolphin Quays directly below. The detail of extensive commercial and residential development on both sides of the river and lively river traffic is a considerable attraction at this point and a reason to linger before being drawn east along Tyne Street towards views of the river mouth.



Fish Quay, to the south of the conservation area

## Historical Development

### Early Development of North Shields

Although the earliest spelling of the place we now know as North Shields was Chelis in 1268 (from the Middle English *schela* meaning a temporary hut or shed), the area may have been of some importance at a much earlier date. The county Historic Environment Record mentions (HER 179 and 180) the possibility of a Roman camp or fortlet at a place near North Shields called Blake (Black) Chesters. Its actual site is unknown but possible locations are near Billy Mill farm, north or west of Preston Colliery, or near to Camp Terrace. Tomlinson, writing in 1888, reports that the remains of the fortlet “were to be seen till lately”.

However, the documented story of the town begins c.1225 when Prior Germanus of the monastery of Tynemouth began a village of fishermen’s huts, or shielings, around the natural harbour at the mouth of the Pow Burn, in the area now known as Fish Quay. The land surrounding the monastery at Tynemouth had been in the ownership of the monastery even before the Norman Conquest and, after 1083 when Robert de Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, invited the Benedictine monastery at St. Albans to take control at Tynemouth, even more lands were granted to the Prior.

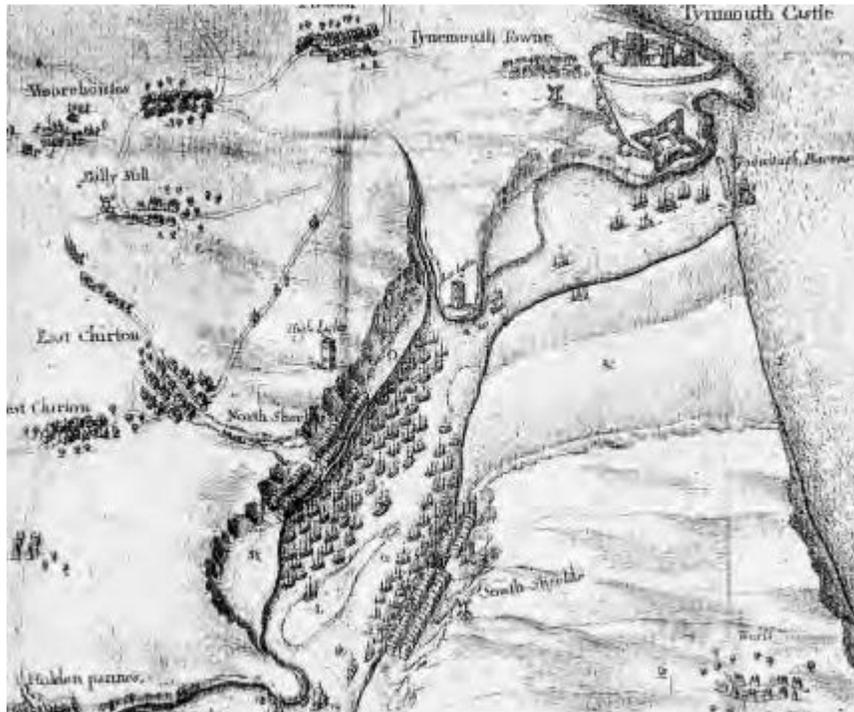
In a relatively short time, this village of shielings had grown beyond just use by the local fishermen, who regularly supplied the Priory, into a small port visited by traders taking advantage of its closeness to the mouth of the Tyne. This growing competition was not acceptable to the merchants of Newcastle, further upstream, who began legal as well as physical attacks on the town that were to last

for centuries. A legal attack in 1290 claimed that the Prior was building a town “where no town ought to be” and was consequently depriving both Newcastle and the Crown of their just revenues. Although the Prior lost this case, it did not stop expansion and, by the end of the century, there were a hundred houses huddled in the Pow Burn valley and along the banks of the Tyne.

The continuing depredations of the burgesses of Newcastle and the Dissolution of the Tynemouth monastery on 12 January 1539 saw gradual decay of the town on the banks. The constraints on trade were getting the better of the town and severely overshadowing its future.

### Ralph Gardener's Map of 1655

Ralph Gardner, a brewer of nearby Chirton Village, was the hero of his time as far as the people of “North Sheels” were concerned. After personal battles and periods in Newcastle jails, in 1655 he took the case for free trade on the Tyne to the government in a pamphlet with the stirring title of England’s Grievance Discovered. This treatise included a decorative bird’s eye view of the Tyne and its surroundings that illustrated clearly the size and busyness of the inland settlements and ports trading within the river corridor. “North Sheels” appears as a single street of buildings crowded along the riverside, with little or no development between the High and Low lights and up Pow Dene. The banktop – where this conservation area now sits – is shown totally devoid of development except for the main Newcastle to Tynemouth road far from the river, and the High Light clinging to the edge of the river scarp.



Ralph Gardener's Map of 1655

At exactly the same time as Gardner's petition was being served, the town took one of its earliest steps in the eventual colonisation of all of the banktop – it began the construction of Christ Church, a new parish church to replace the decaying parish chapel at Tynemouth Priory, on a new site above the town on the main road, a location more central to the whole of the Parish of Tynemouth.

### John Fryer's Map of 1773

Over one hundred years later, the town was still mainly confined to the narrow riverside strip at the bottom of the steep banks. Clifford's Fort of 1672, replacing previous makeshift defences of 1642, had occupied an excellent low-level defensive position between the Pow Dene and the Tyne. But, on the banktop above both town and fort, were the first signs of the Georgian "new town" which, although never laid out to an overall masterplan like Edinburgh New Town, would progressively transform both the size and the image of North Shields over the next 50 years.



John Fryer's Map of 1773

The names of the banktop landowners on Fryer's map are a catalogue of the prime movers who were to shape the future of the town. Already on Rev Dr Dockwray's land is the beginnings of

Dockwray Square, one of Tyneside's great Georgian squares which, after 150 splendid years of being in favour, was eroded between the Wars and finally cleared by 1960, just too late for the national "age of conservation" to effect any kind of rescue. The square has been rebuilt twice since then – the latest in 1986-7 – and survives in plan form within the Fish Quay conservation area.

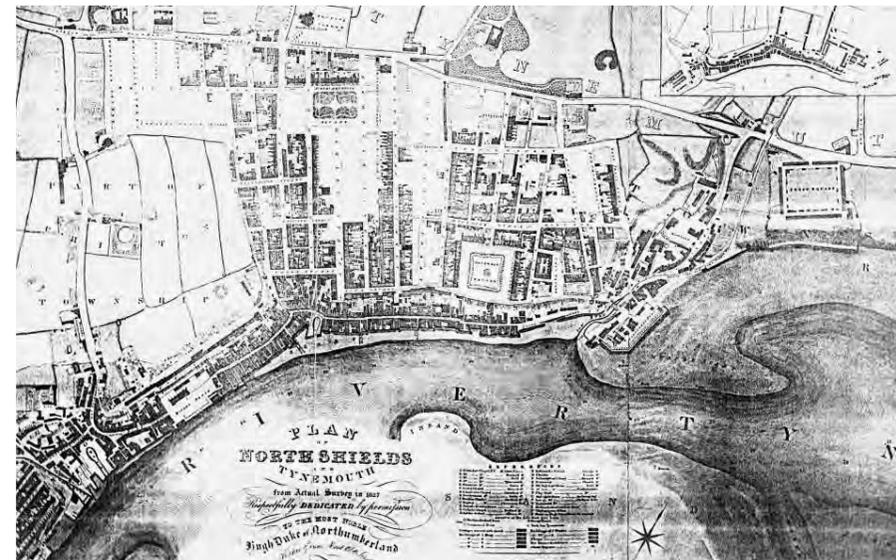
### John Rook's Map of 1827

In the top right-hand corner of this map is an earlier one of 1789 that shows further progress in the development of Dockwray Square. The rest of the banktop has only a few long, narrow rope-works established there during the eighteenth century. The rope-works were all orientated north-south to suit the pattern of local field ownerships, a pattern that was soon to determine how the forthcoming new town would be laid out on the banktop.

Rook's map is drafted at the half-way point of the new town's development and, comparing it with Fryer's map of 50 years earlier, the huge part played by individual ownerships in determining the Georgian town's plan form can be seen.

To the east, Rev Dockwray had subdivided the rest of his land into a simple grid iron with its longest dimensions orientated north-south; the grid squares slowly filled up with buildings and gardens from the back of Dockwray Square northwards. Next west are two long narrow plots of Mrs Pearson's and Mr Stephenson's "grounds and ropery", which would become cleared and replaced with what would finally become very long, continuous terraces, mainly of houses, running north-south. The Earl of Carlisle owned the next few plots to the west that gave him a much wider holding, so that

when he sold on to John Wright in 1796, Wright was able to plan a more ambitious townscape that included a grand processional way starting at the dramatic banktop edge and terminating in an elegant Georgian square. This is the first glimpse of Howard Street (named after the Earl's family name) and Northumberland Square in this series of historic maps.



John Rook's Map of 1827

After these grand planned gestures, the development pattern, still governed by individual land ownerships rather than an overall masterplan, rather peters out into another grid-iron, this time of fairly small units. The grid finally grinds to a halt at the boundary of the township of Chirton. Development crept northwards from the old town through this grid and, within 30 years, had filled almost all the

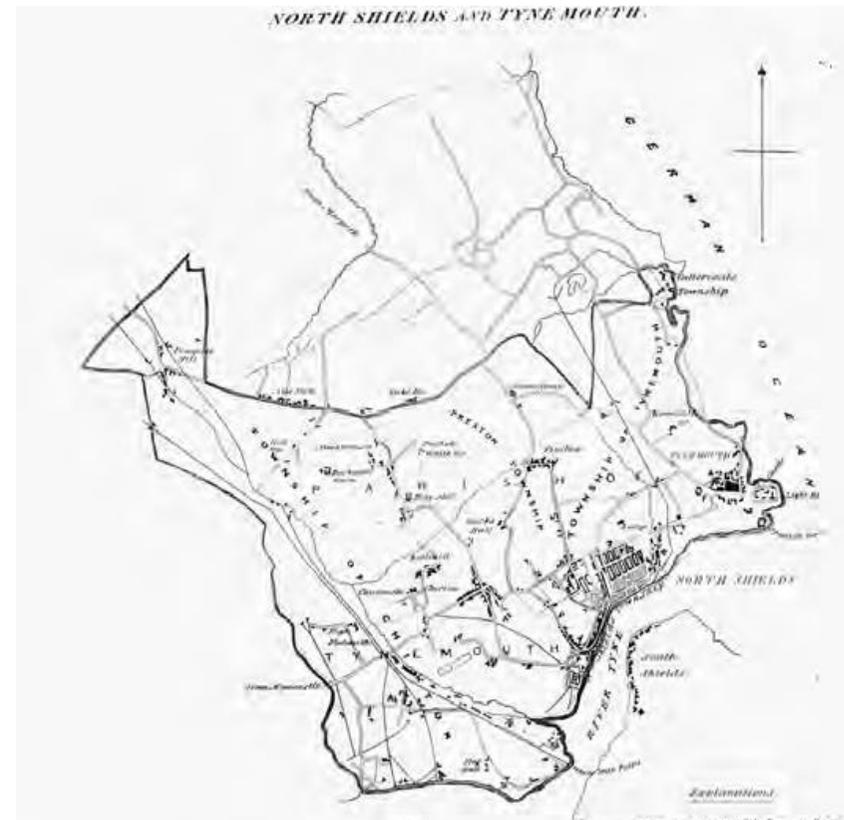
waiting development plots at Howard Street and Northumberland Square, starting at the south end of Howard Street. Street after street of the “new town” received two storey brick housing with stone doorways of Tuscan pilasters and heavy straight entablatures. Within this, grander statements were made at Northumberland Place, the north side of Northumberland Square (in polished ashlar with quoins) and around, into this sea of housing, the most famous local architects of the time would soon be called upon to insert public buildings and those of high street commerce such as banks and friendly societies.

Although similar in age and concept, North Shields new town cannot compare with Newcastle’s Grainger Town for grandeur, drama and imagination, but its beginnings do pre-date Richard Grainger’s work by over 50 years. The North Shields new town is surprisingly successful on the ground considering it was never in a single ownership and was the product of several different minds and budgets, operating over a good number of years – all of this at a time when new development was generally only controlled by the Building Acts. Grainger was at least able to own all the sites that he developed, keep personal control of the whole scheme, and attract sufficient capital to complete in about seven years.

### Cooper's Map of 1831

Although this map is at a small scale (2 inches to 1 mile) and was produced for the purpose of assessing administrative boundaries, it clearly shows the pattern and spread of settlements and individual developments across the whole of the Parish of Tynemouth, as it was known in 1831. The size and nature of North Shields’ growth is not matched anywhere else in the area, easily overtaking the size

and importance of Tynemouth itself, which had been the local spiritual and temporal power base for so many years. North Shields was now so much the economic centre and soon, in 1849, the Council of the new Borough of Tynemouth would sit in John Dobson’s 1844 Town Hall on the corner Saville Street and Howard Street for the very first time.



Cooper's Map of 1831

### First Edition OS Map c.1865



First Edition OS Map c.1865

On this map, the new town was virtually finished. Howard Street was all but complete and several important buildings by prominent local architects had added both formality and considerable visual interest. Northumberland Square was finished on the north side and almost finished to the east, but the west and south sides remained unfinished, stifled by the insertion beneath it of the tunnel for the railway that had arrived in the town in the early 1840s.

This map also shows a fault in the town's plan layout at the time, probably the result of that lack of an overall masterplan. It proved a

great irritant that there was no east-west route through the dominant north-south linear footprints originally defined by field ownerships and rope-works. The route of the railway tunnel provided the opportunity to lay out Suez Street to the north, but it was not until after the Council came into existence that, in 1884, land could be acquired to break through and connect Charlotte Street with Saville Street.



Looking east along Saville Street at the junction with Howard Street with no through-route, c.1880.

### Second, Third and Fourth Edition OS Maps c.1899 and c.1937

The Second Edition shows all sides of Northumberland Square were as complete as the railway tunnel would allow, with the west side and the east end of the south side in place. The convention of maps of this period to show public buildings in solid black clearly indicates the preponderance of North Shields' public buildings on or

close to Howard Street and Northumberland Square. Some significant alterations to terraced buildings were made during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Third and Fourth Editions show little fundamental change, although development adjoining the area to the south and east was beginning to get more sparse, with some cleared gap sites appearing in the tight industrial development around Tyne Street and Stephenson Street.



Second Edition OS Map c.1899

### Modern Map, 2020

For map, please see page 4. Except in one case, the layout of Howard Street and Northumberland Square remained unchanged, although modern buildings had been inserted into it. The single case is the final completion of the south side of Northumberland Square by the insertion of a new public library at its south-west corner (now known as the North Shields Customer First Centre). Its siting encroached into the space of the Square itself, damaging its essential formal integrity. Further modern public buildings were dropped into the periphery of the conservation area (for example, on the corner of Suez Street and Stephenson Street), as failing industry and commerce continued to be cleared.

The demise of industry to the east and south of the area continued apace during later decades of the twentieth century and it was partly this economic downturn which prompted the designation of the conservation area, to help protect what was left. It was also to prompt a period of major capital regeneration by the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation (TWDC), one of a series of autonomous development quangos established in the 1980s, which heralded significant development change to the city regions in which they were established, change not always well received locally. But TWDC's impact here in the conservation area was overall to be enhancing, with stylish new housing inserted around the southern end of Howard Street and Union Street, even if many buildings, particularly smaller rear buildings, were cleared as a result.

## Conclusions



Aerial photograph c.1974

Northumberland Square and Howard Street are undoubtedly the flagship developments of North Shields new town, laid out in the Georgian tradition and pre-dating Newcastle's Grainger Town by over a quarter of a century. Even into the twenty first century, the

streets, Square and much of their original fabric have remained generally intact, despite the process of replacement and modification which has happened since the end of the nineteenth century.

## Archaeology

There are no scheduled ancient monuments in the conservation area and no other known archaeological remains. There are several entries in the Historic Environment Record within or on the edge of the area (see page 56) but many of these relate to existing listed buildings or lost chapels. Most of the area is too far north to relate to the medieval settlement on the riverbanks of North Shields. Some parts, for example, the far south edge on Tyne Street, could however have some below-ground archaeological potential where early development was cleared incrementally in the second half of the twentieth century.

## Spatial Analysis

### Development Pattern

The conservation area is based on a formal Georgian road layout, designed as a grand gesture amongst a more regular grid iron of street, but not to an overall town-wide masterplan.

The development pattern has two axes:

- a north-south axis, originally defined by nearby land ownerships and ropeworks. Howard Street, Norfolk Street and Camden Street follow this axis;
- an east-west axis, originally defined by the main Newcastle to Tynemouth road in the north that runs parallel with the river. Albion Road, Union Street, Saville Street, Northumberland Square and the railway beneath follow this axis.

The street layout is caught between the riverbanks in the south and Albion Road in the north. Howard Street was to become the principal north-south axial route through the burgeoning town centre, starting at the best vantage over the riverbanks on a prominent scarp overlooking a slight bend in the river below, and leading north to enter the rectangular Northumberland Square centrally on its south side. The Square, the finale of Howard Street's ceremonial rise from the river view, was laid out as a classic Georgian square, a simple rectangle of formal gardens enclosed on all sides by streets to be lined with elegant townhouses. The shorter sides were intended as parts of continuous north-south streets (Norfolk Street and Camden Street)

which ran through the square from Albion Road, emphasising the prevailing north-south development pattern, despite the east-west shape of the square itself.

The dimensions of Howard Street, Saville Street (this part), and the road around the Square are generous, and notably wider than any around, including streets feeding the Square. The building line even steps back at the end of Upper Norfolk Street as it enters the Square. The impact of the open spaces at either end of Howard Street is definitive of the area – the river vantage point at the south end, and the substantial gardens at the north end afforded by the wealth the river created. Together, the roads and spaces combine to create a sophisticated urban place laid out with great ceremony and status.

Northumberland Square is one of only a very small number of Georgian squares built on Tyneside and is now the most intact in the conurbation. It was the natural next step after nearby earlier Dockwray Square, to which it was similar in concept but without the need for an open south side for river views. Dockwray survives in plan form only, essentially the same fate as Newcastle's once-grand Eldon Square. Newcastle's Charlotte Square was never as complete, whilst a range of other sub Georgian squares across the conurbation are either not as ambitious in planning (for example, Sunnyside Gardens, Sunderland) or are more ad hoc amalgams of terraces rather than formal squares with designed gardens in the middle (for example, at Summerhill or Brandling in Newcastle). Northumberland Square's basic planned form is a classic example of these simple but highly effective urban spaces, rare in the region

and the closest thing on Tyneside to the iconic Georgian squares of Edinburgh, Dublin, London and Bath.

The impact of the road layout is profound but, despite its invisibility, the line of the railway is also crucial to the development history of the area. The railway arrived in North Shields in the 1840s, continuing on to Tynemouth and, like many Victorian railways, drove through the existing development pattern to do so. However, in North Shields its route was largely hidden in an east-west tunnel which, in the conservation area, runs beneath the south edge of Northumberland Square and Suez Street, at a slight angle to them. As the tunnel is relatively shallow it has stifled development along its line ever since, with three key negative impacts:

- Suez Street (laid out over the top of the tunnel) altered the north-south dominance of Norfolk Street, and has never had any substantial buildings lining it, creating a poorly defined corner at Northumberland Square compared to the emphasised corners on the north side and on Northumberland Place.
- The long south side of the Square could not be developed with the same unity of statement as the north side, robbing Howard Street of strong symmetrical corner developments at its entrance into the Square.
- It left a gap in the south west corner of the Square that lay undeveloped (and set out as gardens) until engineering advancements of the late twentieth century made development over the railway tunnel viable. The building that resulted, the 1960s Central Library (now known as the North Shields Customer First Centre), finally finished off the

south side of the Square. However, through a combination of the prevalent planning ethos and architectural tastes of the period, and the position of the tunnel beneath, the building is forced to straddle the tunnel, spread over the line of both roads in the south-west corner of the Square, and truncate Camden Street. But, even though it breaks the Square's intended symmetry and confuses its formal plan, overall the Customer First Centre is neutral to the area (see page 45). It is currently outside the conservation area boundary.



North Shields Customer First Centre

### Layout, Grain and Density

The layout is typical of the late Georgian and early Victorian periods, particularly north of Saville Street. Terraced buildings wrap around the outer edges of blocks, presenting a formal face to the street and functional rears to back lanes and enclosed courtyards. This communal layout, with most buildings sited openly to the front of their plots and facing each other across the streets, creates a strong townscape edge. This edge is generally continuous and is characterised by strong right-angled corners. Around the Square and the top end of Howard Street, the perception of density is reduced by giving each plot a front garden – terraces elsewhere are to the back-of-pavement.

The grain of this layout is small-scale and regular due to the original residential use of most buildings. Peppered into this is a slightly coarser grain of landmark buildings intended to create the public focus of the new town.

North of the formal core is a fringe of more informal layout along Albion Road. Here, a mix of plots, many once gardens, have been developed incrementally to leave a jumble of buildings and artificial spaces that struggle to create a coherent urban edge to balance the large open space opposite, at Christ Church.

Elsewhere, the consistency of the development pattern is generally good, but it does vary. The buildings were developed incrementally by separate landowners and builders over many decades. Nonetheless, there was a crucial understanding that each development should be true to the overall ideal, with buildings designed together to form uniform terraces, and terraces in turn

planned together (with landmark buildings) to form consistent streets. Each component part was laid down with an understanding of the contribution it made to the whole layout. In such formal development it is impossible to separate the building from the contribution it makes to the street without causing harm to the whole.

This has proven true in some of the later alterations to layout and grain. The North Shields Customer First Centre, discussed above, not only interrupts the development pattern but has the largest building footprint around. Similar intrusion has come from Stephenson House on Suez Street (and others just outside the conservation area) discussed below (starting page 45). The loss of buildings and plot sub-divisions also causes harm to the development pattern, notably in the courtyard between Upper Norfolk Street and Stephenson Street where a large barren space has replaced a once dense group of buildings and yards. However, late twentieth century regeneration changes have respected the development pattern at the south end of Howard Street and Norfolk Street, and enhanced its layout and grain by inserting intricate, organic courtyard layouts behind (re)created urban terraces with strong edges and corners. Similarly, the recently completed development on Albion Road and Upper Camden Street's junction has introduced a strong corner in the place of a weak, harmful gap site.

### Views within the Area

Views within the conservation area are controlled by the introspective, grid-iron development pattern. The two main types of view are:

- linear views along streets and terraces, and,
- wider scenes across the open space of the Square.

The linear views are generally long and emphasise the formal, grand-plan nature of the area. Oblique views of the terraces bring the architecture to life, the steps in their form and their various recessed and moulded features creating attractive visual rhythms. Where they survive, garden subdivisions also add to this rhythm. Similar oblique linear views to the rear of the terraces are less intrinsically attractive except where groups of surviving offshoots echo the grain and rhythm of the front elevations, seen in places behind both sides of Howard Street and Stephenson Street.

Approaching the Square from Upper Camden Street, Upper Norfolk Street or Northumberland Place, a degree of anticipation is created by the tell-tale presence of so many trees in the distance, signifying something quite different is approaching. As a result, the sense of arrival at the Square is very effective, inviting a pause in the journey to take in the views, before being led south down Howard Street by the vista ahead. The arrival into the Square along Suez Street and Norfolk Street is less dramatic due to the lack of tight development edges and corners here. Wide views across the Square are particularly pleasing with the backdrop of smart buildings and green foreground filtered by the Square's railings and trees (and even filtered quite attractively by the full height glass corner of the North Shields Customer First Centre). The simple geometry of the layout and streets leading off the Square means that diagonal views across it have an inherently attractive perspective.

Views along Howard Street in both directions become designed vistas, definitive of the conservation area. The northern vista is terminated by the north side of Northumberland Square, and the southern by the four flag poles and memorial outside the Stag Line building. Simple geometry also creates other attractive closed vistas, such as east along Northumberland Place to the east end of Northumberland Square, and east along Union Street towards Howard Street.



View down Howard Street from Northumberland Square

The tighter, less formal development at the north and south ends of the conservation area creates some more spontaneous views, such as glimpses through carriage arches into internal courtyards at Howard Terrace, along the south east side Norfolk Street, and through eye-catching gaps designed into in the late-twentieth century terraces at Union Stairs and Bedford Court. Such casual glimpses add intrigue and charm to these zones, emphasising their interesting, intricate layout.

The skyline throughout the area is formed by rooftops. There are a few alien features do intrude above some views, notably the flat boxy rooflines of Stephenson House, Northumbria House and, on Church Way, the YMCA – all bristling with antennae.

## Character Analysis

### Character Zones

Although the conservation area is essentially a single set-piece plan, there are notable differences in character. These differences are not enough to define distinct sub-areas within the whole, but three general character zones can be identified:

- North Zone: smaller, less grand, late Georgian building groups and twentieth century redevelopment, mainly between Northumberland Square, Northumberland Place, Albion Road and Stephenson Street (blue area);
- Central Zone: formal, grand, high quality late Georgian and Victorian terraces, on Northumberland Square, Northumberland Place and the north half of Howard Street (green area);
- South Zone: more eclectic mixed terraces of Georgian and Victorian development, plus twentieth century imitation of this, on Saville Street, the southern half of Howard Street and Union Street (orange area).

These zones tend to bleed into each other, and the differences between them can be subtle, particularly along Saville Street. Similarities and differences are highlighted in the discussion below.



## Use and Hierarchy of Buildings

The hierarchy of buildings in the conservation area is defined as much by their use as their form and materials. Particular land use was fundamental to the original concept of the area with high quality, high class terraced housing being the reason for the typical late Georgian residential square. As part of the town centre, key civic, religious and commercial uses were also prevalent, creating a high level of incident amongst the terraces.

The hierarchy of buildings is typical of the Georgian urban tradition. Most buildings are similar terraces of matching housing, all alike in their presence on the street, the aim to achieve a polite, yet impressive backdrop to everyday life in the heart of the town. Emphasis is made against this backdrop with a series of landmark churches, halls, institutes, municipal buildings, banks and clubs at key points amongst the terraces – to emphasise corners, as punctuation along their length, or as clusters to add weight to junctions. The result is a harmonious whole, with a planned balance between terraces and a peppering of landmarks, neither overpowering the other. Landmark buildings include:

- Subscription Library, Howard Street (1806-7, known as the Stag Line building)
- Salvation Army Chapel, Howard Street (1811) by John Dobson
- Baptist Church, Howard Street (1846) by John Dobson
- Church of St Columba, Northumberland Square (1853-8) by John Dobson
- Town Hall and Treasurer's Department, Howard Street / Saville Street (1844-5) by John Dobson and Green

- Mechanics' Institute, Saville Street (1857-8) by John Johnstone (now the North Shields Business Centre)

Other landmark buildings include the Pub and Kitchen public house on Albion Road, the North Shields Customer First Centre (just outside the boundary) and, because of their architectural quality and relationship between Howard Street and Northumberland Square, the central houses on the north side of the Square also form a landmark in their own right.

Changes in use in the Central Zone have had a profound effect on this balanced hierarchy, mainly changes from residential to business use. All the zones' terraces, particularly Howard Street, have seen the commercial demands of corporate presence and economics lead to (sometimes radical) alterations to the street front of individual buildings, to the detriment of the unity of the terraces. The impact of this on the buildings' fabric and appearance is discussed below (starting page 45).

Within the South Zone, the balance becomes more mixed, the planned hierarchy between backdrop and landmarks blurred by a more eclectic blend of styles, heights and forms, with less continuity. This has resulted from the incremental re development of this zone during the Victorian period with banks and halls, and its subsequent regeneration in the late twentieth century. No less characterful for it, the southern half of Howard Street is an exciting, visually stimulating mix of strong Georgian and Victorian civic grandeur and playful Post-Modern recreation. Importantly, unlike the Central Zone, changes in use here have not altered this hierarchy; since regeneration in the 1980s, land use is now less

obviously related to the individual building's presence on the street, with mixed use buildings side-by-side with offices that look like shops, and flats that look like banks. Only in the south-west corner of Howard Street and on Union Street has a conscious effort been made to repeat the backdrop and landmark effect of the Central Zone, with new terraced housing using the Stag Line building and a façaded bank as landmark bookends.

The North Zone as a whole appears lower down the hierarchy of the area, with much development once being incidental to that at the front on the Square (i.e. stables and outhouses) or secondary commercial in nature (for example, former bakeries on Albion Road and the lane behind Stephenson Street, and a builder's yard behind Northumberland Square). Such a jumble of land uses (dwellings, businesses, offices, pubs, shops, yards, parking) leaves little logical hierarchy on Albion Road, Church Way or Stephenson Street, but this is part of this zone's organic, piecemeal character.

## Architectural Qualities

### Form, Height and Scale

In the Central Zone and North Zone, two storey buildings predominate whilst three storeys are more common in the South Zone. The number of bays (width) of the houses also varies from modest two bay houses and Tyneside flats mostly in the North Zone, to much grander three bay and double-fronted five bay houses around the Square. Height and scale also vary, for example Victorian buildings tend to have generally larger proportions than late Georgian ones (but one of the earliest houses, Field House, is

also one of the largest). Some of the larger terraces are also raised on half-sunken basements.



Three bay terraces with half-sunken basements on the east side of Northumberland Square

The form of much of this survives in three-dimensions. The earliest houses were built without offshots (they are not a feature of late Georgian architecture) but most later ones were built with a half-width rear offshoot stretching into a yard. Where they survive, original offshots and yards add authenticity to the development pattern and, in a few places, add to the traditional character of back lanes. In many others, however, loss, addition or major alteration of offshots and yards has radically altered character to the rear. One

or two separate outbuildings do survive, most in the North Zone (for example, the former stable behind No.5 Northumberland Place).



Former stable, Camden Place

The three dimensional nature of buildings in the South Zone is crucial to the character of the internal courtyards at the south end of Norfolk Street – the traditional rears of the taller main buildings interact with the varied two storey shapes and smaller scale of new-build behind, creating an attractive service courtyard or mews character. The apparent two storey height of buildings at Union

Stairs and Bedford Court is just an illusion, with only the top parts of much taller buildings being visible, their foundations several storeys below the level of Howard Street, at Liddell Street.

Landmark buildings tend to be both taller and larger in scale. A few are similar to the housing just with bigger proportions, but most have wholly different shapes and are dramatically different in scale. They also use interesting massing to their advantage, notably the symmetrical Church of St. Columba and its adjoining wings, and the interesting asymmetrical accumulation of blocks, shapes and silhouettes of the former Town Hall and Treasurer's Department- a lively scene from all angles. Landmark buildings also survive in three dimensions, the often-blank bulk of many rear elevations very prominent along back lanes, particularly in the Central Zone.



Former Town Hall and Treasurer's Department

## Periods and Styles

There is a range of styles in the area but the dominant one is a simple, Classically-informed domestic architecture that has late Georgian beginnings and developed during the Victorian period. It is very much illustrative of what was originally residential architecture, found from these periods across Tyne and Wear, and can be linked to the bolder late Georgian “Tyneside Classical” tradition practiced in grander terraces, buildings and country houses in the region. Landmark buildings adopt a range of revival styles also from the late Georgian and Victorian periods.

The main architectural periods in the conservation area are:

- Late Georgian: The main architectural style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was based on Classical style and proportions, and was simple and usually symmetrical. Georgian urban planning was represented with grand streets, crescents and squares. The Georgian development here is late, the earliest surviving houses being from the 1780s and 1790s (Nos.97-100 Howard Street) followed by the north side of Northumberland Square (before 1811).
- Victorian: Dating from the mid nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth, Victorian architecture is very varied with many sub-categories, but much is based on showy, confident themes designed to demonstrate the wealth and power of the building owner. Rich, traditional materials are used – often brick, stone, timber and iron – with good quality, solid construction and plenty of flare. The three

strongest revival styles were Gothic (defined by vertically, asymmetry, pointed arches, gables and carving), Italianate (with low roofs, bracketed eaves and some stucco) and Queen Anne (red brick with Dutch gables, white joinery, doorcases and terracotta). There were also other revival styles with Tudor, Romanesque or Greek influences. The Arts and Crafts style also began in the late nineteenth century.

- Mid to Late Twentieth Century: The second half of the twentieth century saw a wide range of stylistic approaches develop and merge. Much in the 1960s and 70s was based on the purist, functional forms of Modernism or the International style (stark, concrete and steel, flat-roofed boxes with no decoration and large windows). During the 1980s, Post-Modernism sought to reconnect Modern architecture to people and place, with greater reference to traditional styles and features. This reference was sometimes so superficial that it created only insensitive pastiche.

A few buildings in the area have also been re-fronted, in the following periods:

- Edwardian: Smart and attractive, Edwardian architecture is a less-flamboyant continuation of Victorian grandeur in the early decades of the twentieth century. It is concerned with presenting an impressive face to the public with thoughtful, well-designed buildings with plenty of fine detailing. The elegant, flowing, organic lines of late Victorian Art Nouveau also developed as an influence.

- Early to Mid-Twentieth Century: Architecture of the 1920s and 1930s developed along several different styles such as “Tudorbeathan”, Georgian revival, Moderne / International style. Art Deco also developed with geometry, abstract shapes, and smooth, sleek lines; watered-down Art Deco influence is sometimes known as British Modern.

Buildings from the late Georgian and Victorian periods can be some of the most valuable and well-built in town centres but can also suffer lack of attention as a result of commercial cost-cutting in areas that are under economic pressure. Most of what was originally housing in the conservation area is characteristic of these periods, whilst the landmark buildings are excellent, high quality examples of the various styles they adopt, showing plenty of talent in their design. This mix of periods and styles is reflected in the Post-Modern approach of the South Zone, whilst other high-quality alterations, mainly re-fronting of existing buildings, was carried out using Edwardian or Art Deco styles.

Early Georgian architecture, from the 1720s, pioneered the division of terraces into individual plots. These were then long-leased to builders who accepted conditions that ensured a degree of unity in the design, keeping the layout and quality of the landlord’s estate attractive and valuable. The terraces in the conservation area used this theme, being designed incrementally, but with a subtle balance between the individuality of each house and the unity of the terrace. The grandest examples of this urban approach would skilfully arrange the fronts of terraces as one unit, disguising individual houses to look like a single “palace” as seen here on the north side of Northumberland Square and Northumberland Place where

bowfronted houses anchor the unified terraces at either end. Howard Street did not receive such a strict approach to its buildings; buildings vary in age and character but nevertheless the overall impression was originally one of unity and harmony, particularly in the Central Zone.

### Features, Detailing and Materials

The unity of the late Georgian, Victorian and Post-Modern architecture relies on a handful of recurring architectural features and detailing, treated in slightly different ways throughout, as influenced by the staged development of the area.

Many of these details have been altered over time, from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. These include Victorian shopfronts inserted into Georgian houses, Edwardian and Art Deco re-fronting of buildings, or modern cladding and window openings in the 1960s and 70s. The most negative of these alterations are discussed below (starting page 45).

### Masonry

Most of the area’s terraces and some of its landmark buildings are in brick. Brickwork is key to the character of the conservation area and is the basis of the warm, well matured visual appearance of the buildings. The bricks used vary considerably, many of the earlier ones being produced locally. Most bricks used are rough in texture, mottled in appearance, and have stained and weathered to a warm, uneven tone. Broadly, bricks tends to be darker/red/purple brown Georgian bricks or slightly redder, crisper bricks used in many Victorian and all the Post-Modern buildings.

Usually, facing bricks are used to the front and common brick to the rear. Bricks are predominantly laid in English garden wall bond in Georgian and Victorian buildings. Flemish bond is also found in places. Newer terraces in the South Zone use simple stretcher bond with modest use of polychromatic (multi-coloured) decorative brickwork to enliven elevations. Pointing, the way mortar is finished off between the bricks, is generally flush or slightly recessed. As common brick in the older buildings is rougher, pointing tends to be more prominent; the crisper lines of the later Victorian and Post-Modern brickwork makes the pointing finer and less visually prominent.

Natural, local sandstone is the other main masonry material in the area and is key to the high status and mature, rich texture of many of its landmark buildings. Ashlar (smooth, fine cut) stone is used on the main façades of many landmark buildings with the sides and rears often in coarser or rubble sandstone, or common brick. This presentation effect is also achieved in the terraced housing on the north side of the Square. Sandstone is also worked to great effect with confident, rich mouldings and carvings used to emphasise a variety of architectural styles – Tudor Gothic at the Former Town Hall, Palladian at the Church of St Columba, Romanesque at the Baptist Church, Greek Doric at the Salvation Army Citadel, and Italianate at No.105 Howard Street's former bank.

Moulded ashlar is used in brick buildings for plinths, string courses, eaves, watertabling, quoins, window dressings, door surrounds, steps, porches, chimneys, shopfronts and other features including, in one or two places, entire ground floor elevations. Terracotta is used in place of sandstone in one or two of the Victorian buildings.

The Post-Modern terraces use artificial stone for new work. All sandstone was originally unpainted and, where it remains so, has patinated to an attractive rich, textured appearance.

Natural stone masonry is also used in some of the Edwardian and Art Deco re-frontings: smooth white Portland stone detailing at No. 73 Howard Street, and an entire elevation of polished black granite at No. 25 Northumberland Square, the latter being a well-informed, high quality and rare Art Deco inspired composition.



No. 25 Northumberland Square

Render is used sparingly as an eaves and bay window detail in the South Zone. The Stag Line building has a striking rendered roundel in its riverside gable, a prominent landmark from below.

Replacement masonry and cladding used in the later twentieth century, often in modern or artificial materials, are discussed below (starting page 45).

### Doorways

Doors and door surrounds are one of the definitive features of the area in both the terraces and the landmark buildings, particularly the latter which make dramatic statements of wealth or status at their main entrances.

Most doorways in the late Georgian terraces of the Central Zone and North Zone have Tuscan surrounds in sandstone, a simple Classical detail typical of the period, incorporating flat pilasters and a simple moulded entablature. Several of the larger houses have much grander doorcases, with triangular pediments, circular columns and more detailed mouldings. Urns carved in relief are a recurrent detail of some earlier doorcases across the area.

Victorian doorcases tend to be more flamboyant and there is more variation in the detail of the pilasters, brackets and cornice. On the west side of the Square, two of the large late Victorian houses have open sandstone porches instead.

Nearly all door surrounds incorporate an overlight (a traditional feature rather than having glass in the door), some square, many earlier ones rounded. Most houses in the Central Zone are raised

up on semibasements and so have a flight of stone steps to the front door that increases the visual importance of the doorway. Most other houses in all zones have one or two steps up. Many of the smarter steps are round-nosed. Some doorways in the North Zone are altogether plainer.



Georgian doorway at Northumberland Place, left, and Victorian porch at Northumberland Square, right

Few original timber doors survive but where they do, they are integral to the historic presence of the doorways, particularly heavy unglazed panelled doors in dark, rich colours in the Central Zone and South Zone. Many of the larger houses and most landmark buildings have double doors, another show of importance; some single leaf doors even have a central bead to look like double doors. Edwardian and Art Deco doors follow their style. A small amount of traditional door furniture survives, mainly knobs, letter

boxes and footscrapers, which add richness to doorways. Many of the grander buildings extend the use of smart, natural materials into the lobby, often with coloured floor tiles – such a feature is even found outside No. 6 Northumberland Place on the steps, a delightful flourish to the street scene.

Doorways in the landmark buildings tend to have bigger proportions and are more dramatic, using all of these features – sandstone surrounds, steps, overlights, doors, door furniture – to create vigorous statements of the building’s importance and grandeur. Even side and service doors on landmark buildings can be expertly emphasised. The grand full-width steps of the Salvation Army Citadel are a particularly impressive flourish which elevate the building both physically and spiritually, giving its entrance an almost theatrical presence.



Salvation Army Citadel

Many of these features have been recreated in the South Zone’s Post-Modern terraces, notably the strong Classically-inspired surrounds and flights of steps at Nos. 2-12 Howard Street, and the rounded overlights of communal doors in the internal courtyards. Emphasis is also made with flat hoods on courtyard doors and on Tyne Street. Most modern doors do not however have true panels, only beading to make them appear panelled.

Unfortunately, original back gates have been lost over time, along with yard walls, reducing the original character of the rear areas. Larger openings into yards, outhouses and commercial buildings in the North and South Zones still exist, many with arched heads and emphasised keystones. Several have been altered with late twentieth century shopfronts or roller shutters whilst others now have replica joinery or surviving historic joinery, revealing something of their robust, functional past (for example, the former stable behind No. 5 Northumberland Place).

Doors and door surrounds have been frequent casualties in alterations, replaced with nineteenth century shopfronts and twentieth century modernisation, discussed below (starting page 45).

### Windows

Window openings are strongly vertical, one of the defining features of the area’s character and they are strongly emphasised in landmark buildings following the architectural style used.

Stone Nos.12-20 Northumberland Square have plain window openings and sill string courses. Most other window openings in

earlier buildings in the Central Zone have flat tops with angled natural sandstone lintels (some are square) and square stone sills, often combined with a string course. Later ones tend to be larger throughout, and many are emphasised with full decorative stone surrounds, illustrative of the wealth and status of these town centre buildings. Large stairwell windows, usually with rounded tops, are also a traditional recurrent feature, effectively echoed in the South Zone's Post-Modern terraces. In the North Zone, many openings are plainer and have brick lintels.



Vertical window openings, Northumberland Square

Many window openings in the South Zone (and a few elsewhere) have Classical proportions, i.e. second floor openings are smaller than the ground and first floor ones. In such cases, ground and first floor windows are often emphasised further, perhaps with arched tops and keystones. The North Zone has more variety in window shape and size; many are altered. One or two of the Art Deco openings across the area are more horizontal, typical of the style. A few circular windows are used in the South Zone, perhaps giving a nautical theme.

Landmark buildings make significant play of window openings, most with decorative stone surrounds following the building's architectural style, for example, mullions and transoms with square drip moulds or pointed arches at the Tudor Gothic Former Town Hall, and round arches at the Romanesque Baptist Church and the Treasurer's Department. Some use aprons and brackets. The Stag Line's large tripartite Venetian-style window is particularly striking and is regularly repeated symbolically in the Post-Modern terraces nearby.



Striking windows at the Stag Line Building

The simplicity of the Central and North Zones' earliest architecture means that bay windows are not a recurrent feature, but they are used sparingly for emphasis. The elegant double-height bow windows at Nos. 1 and 5 Northumberland Place and Nos.12 and 20 Northumberland Square are particularly attractive features that emphasise these end-of-terrace houses and are definitive of their graceful late Georgian style. A similarly elegant ground floor bow at the back of No.18 Northumberland Square, in stone, is an important reminder that the terrace once had open gardens to the north.

A variety of moulded single and double-height bays with square or angled sides enliven the later Victorian terrace on the east side of the Square, and bays are a feature of the Edwardian re-frontings on Howard Street in the Central Zone. Later Victorian buildings in the South Zone also use bays for emphasis, but only at first and second floor level, i.e. oriel windows or 'hanging' bays. This feature has been successfully exploited in many of the Post-Modern terraces, including the particularly striking three-storey octagonal corner bay at No.111 Howard Street. Repeated bays along Tyne Street and the bottom end of Norfolk Street add an attractive rhythm to oblique views along the terraces. Some bays have lead or zinc pitched roofs; many have flat tops behind parapets. The iron cresting atop the bays of the building adjoining the Business Centre on Howard Street are a rare and important decorative feature.

Of the windows themselves, the majority in the area have now been replaced (see from page 45) but several from all periods in all zones do survive, their rarity crucial to the area's character and appearance. Windows would have been set back from the face of the building in a reveal; the deeper the reveal, the richer the

character of the building (particularly on landmark buildings). Traditional windows are double-hung vertical sliding timber sashes. Earlier windows were often sub-divided with glazing bars, with later ones having larger panes (perhaps with one vertical glazing bar) and therefore 'horns' for added strength. Some later Victorian windows have unequal sashes – taller lower and shorter upper ones, the latter often with glazing bars. The rare Art Deco windows are definitive of the style with geometric glazing bars, horizontal emphasis and some in metal (for example, No. 25 Northumberland Square). Post-Modern windows variously echo those in the South Zone (but with chunkier proportions, and sashes are mostly fake) or are simple casements with vertical emphasis.

Several landmark buildings use painted and/or leaded glass, or intricate glazing bar patterns. Painted leaded glass in No. 97 Howard Street's stairwell window is a particularly unusual for a domestic building in the area.

Late Georgian window frames were often painted off-white; Victorian ones were often the same colour as the front door, off-white, or a combination of both; later window frames are nearly always white.

### Shopfronts

Due to the town centre location, there are several shopfronts in the conservation area, most having been inserted into what were originally houses during the gradual change from residential to commercial quarter in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some earlier doorcases were retained in such alterations (for

example, Nos. 47-51 Saville Street - "Saville Chambers") but many ground floor elevations were completely altered as a result.

Shopfronts are mainly in the North Zone on Albion Road, Howard Terrace and Church Way, and in the South Zone on Howard Street and Saville Street. Most have traditional timber features along Classical lines, with shop windows above masonry stall-risers, framed by pilasters and brackets, and topped with an entablature of architrave, fascia (containing signage) and cornice. Doorways are mostly recessed, a traditional feature, some with a decorative threshold. Well-designed traditional shopfronts were designed to be in harmony with the rest of the building above, often with an integral side door to an upstairs flat.

In the North Zone, No. 4 Albion Road has the best surviving nineteenth century shopfront, which although has seen some changes, makes a strong contribution to the street scene. Whilst later works have resulted in the loss of traditional features from other shopfronts, Nos. 1 and 9 Albion Road and Roselyn Hall on Stephenson Street have still retained elements that are necessary for maintaining the character of the area. Nos. 4a-b Albion Road are a pair of rare early twentieth century, Art Deco inspired, timber shopfronts with, granite stallrisers and a coloured terrazzo threshold.



Traditional recessed doorways and decorative thresholds on Albion Road

Shopfronts in the South Zone are a mixture of altered and restored nineteenth century shopfronts, and Post-Modern recreations. The much-altered shopfront at No. 51 Saville Street retains its huge decorative brackets. Post-Modern shopfronts use traditional features (including recessed doorways) but in a simplified or exaggerated way, creating lively and robust features that considerably enhance the lower end of Howard Street. Nos. 58-68 Saville Street were part of a relatively recent scheme that unified them through colour and signage. Whilst overall proportions and features, such as recessed doorways, have been retained, unfortunately some unity has been lost through the unsympathetic treatment of fascias.

As well as shopfronts, there are several bank and pub fronts, often in stone and acting as a plinth for the whole building. The Pub and Kitchen public house has enlarged windows with Classical surrounds.

### Roofs

Unaltered roofs are important historic features in the conservation area. Traditional dual pitch roofs are used throughout, enlivened on some of the later Victorian terraces and some landmark buildings with hips and gables. Offshot and outhouse roofs are single or dual pitch depending on their size and age.

In the terraces, roofs provide a degree of unity, even where watertabling is used to divide individual roofs stepping down a slope. Where the terrace is continuous, so too are the roofs, with corners neatly turned by hips. The Pub and Kitchen public house

has a particularly attractive curved hip roof following the shape of the corner elevation below.

The traditional roof covering in all zones is Welsh slate. Original Welsh slate is rough-looking with purple hints slightly uneven edges and subtle variations in shade and tone that helps define the richness and texture of the area's character. No. 19 Northumberland Square uses Lakeland slate, which is thicker, with green tones, and laid in diminishing courses (bigger slates at the bottom, smaller at the top). Until recently, Nos. 13 and 16 had the same treatment. This is an important indication of the terrace's age and the rest would also surely have been the same material when built, to retain unity. Ridges vary; many are grey clay; others are red. Valleys are traditionally lead lined.



Welsh slate with grey ridge, Upper Norfolk Street

Eaves are treated in a variety of ways, the simplest being flat timber boards or stepped brick, used on many rear and some front elevations. A variety of simple and more ornate moulded stone cornices are used on the front of most terraces, variations often indicating the break between stages of the terrace's development. Eaves on landmark buildings are more pronounced, most being stone parapets detailed to follow the style of the building, for example, castellated at the Tudor Gothic Former Town Hall, balustraded at the Palladian Church of St. Columba, and pedimented on the Classical Stag Line Building, Business Centre, and The Pub and Kitchen public house. Post-Modern roofs echo the simpler types found nearby, apart from No.111 Howard Street that makes good use of exaggerated timber bracketed eaves to conceal a fourth storey and to emphasise the corner.



Post-Modern detailing at 111 Howard Street

Verges are plain or finished with stone watertabling. Gables on Victorian buildings, mostly in the South Zone, have stone watertabling, shaped kneeler blocks and finials.

Gables on Nos.1-3 Bank Court, a neat Victorian red brick building on Norfolk Street, are repeated to great visual effect along the street in the recent housing inserted there. They are also the key to the shaped gable design on new housing at Union Street and Bedford Court in this zone. A zinc dome at No.111 Howard Street is an ideal punctuation mark on the prominent corner with Tyne Street.



Gable, 1-3 Bank Court

In the North Zone, roof pitch and height are more varied due to the random nature of development there and a higher level of alterations. A large gable at No.6 Albion Road, a former bakery, is a

prominent feature along the street. Most of the late twentieth century development in the North Zone, and elsewhere, has flat roofs.

Much Welsh slate has been replaced over time and other changes made to roofs, discussed below (starting page 45).

### Chimneys

Chimneys are a recurrent traditional feature in the conservation area and help define the lively appearance of its architecture. They add to the roofscape considerably, particularly in the Central Zone and on Howard Street in the South Zone, where the lie of the land makes them visually prominent on the horizon.

On the terraces, main chimneys are placed at the ridge with secondary ones to the rear or on offshots. In the older properties, they are narrow and deep, stretching across the depth of the house, whilst newer chimneys tend to be smaller and squarer. Most are stout and sturdy in appearance with sizeable proportions. The detail varies considerably but most are in brick with moulded tops. Most pots, many of which survive, are cream or red clay.

Chimneys in the landmark buildings are the boldest, often in stone, the most prominent ones being the tall octagonal Tudor Gothic chimneys at the Former Town Hall, and the heavy stone features at No.105 Howard Street and the Church of St Columba. The North Shields Customer First Centre has a square, flat-topped flue. Most of the new build terraces in the South Zone do not have chimneys, which makes the roofscape rather lifeless compared to the restored chimneys around.

Several chimneys have been altered, discussed below (starting page 45).



Chimneys are missed when they are not present

### Dormer Windows and Rooflights

Lit attic space was generally not part of the original design of the terraces, most being designed with – and still having – “clean” roofscapes, particularly to the front. Some were built with a single dormer to the rear, and one or two of the earlier terraced houses in the South Zone have a single vertically proportioned glazed dormer with a curved roof to the front and/or rear. These have been copied and exaggerated in some of the Post-Modern work there.

Rooflights are not a traditional feature of the area’s architecture, but one or two early small frameless “glass slates” can be seen on rear roof slopes and offshoots. Front slopes, and those to the rear or side where they were designed to be seen, would originally have been kept free of rooflights. Where modern ones have been added, they are notable.

Landmark buildings also tend to be free of dormers and rooflights, although some may be concealed behind parapets. The rear range of the Former Town Hall has a series of large half-timbered pitched roof dormers to the rear, suited to its Tudor revival style. The building adjoining the Business Centre on Howard Street is the only other building that makes significant play of attic space in its original design, using a mansard roof and two large brick dormers with glazed cheeks, stone detailing and iron finials.



Dormer at the Former Town Hall, left, and at the building adjoining the Business Centre, right

A significant number of larger intrusive dormers have been inserted, mostly in the Central Zone, discussed below (starting page 45).

### Rainwater Goods

Gutters and downcomers (drainpipes) are generally not prominent features of the architectural design, and many have been significantly altered. In places, however, downcomers add to the

vertical rhythm of the terraces. There are generally two types of gutter: those concealed within the moulded stone eaves, probably lead lined, and gutters applied directly to eaves. In the first type, the downcomer cuts through the moulded eaves; in the second type, where eaves overhang, the downcomer tends to be shaped around them. Downcomers would have traditionally been cast-iron, most probably painted black. Several original or early hoppers survive, being typical square or conical features. Many of the landmark buildings have concealed rainwater systems; one or two have slightly more decorative square-section downcomers.

### Harmony

The variations in architectural detail described in this section are as a result of the incremental development of the area by separate landowners over many decades, and the influence of the town centre location over the types of building that developed there.

There is considerable variation in the architectural treatment of the area's buildings, but nearly all use a consistent architectural vocabulary and palette of natural materials, with an understanding of the contribution it makes to the whole. Particularly in the Central and South Zones, this originally created unified, balanced architecture with a considerable legacy of status and quality.

### **Contribution of Spaces**

#### Northumberland Square's Central Gardens

Northumberland Square's central gardens are pivotal to the conservation area's late Georgian development pattern and are as important to its civic status as the landmark buildings. Indeed, the

relationship between the gardens and the buildings around them is crucial, one providing a setting to the other; the Church of St Columba in particular benefits from this. The gardens are also a rare tract of large green space in the town centre and so should also be prized for their amenity and potential ecological value.



Northumberland Square from the north west

The gardens would originally have been a private communal area of ornamental walks for use by residents of the houses around. Rook's 1827 plan shows the gardens laid out with four entrances, one centrally on each side, and an elaborate symmetrical pattern of curvaceous paths, also shown on the 1st Edition OS (1865). Subsequent OS plans reveal a gradual erosion of this layout from the inside out and, although a 1970s aerial photo (see page 17) indicates a symmetrical layout somewhat reflecting the historic one, today's layout is informal, organic and with no symmetry. Size and shape have also been eroded, with a series of squared notches

taken out on each side (apparently for street furniture outside the gardens) and a long strip taken for pavement outside the North Shields Customer First Centre due to the building's unbalanced siting in the Square.



"Notches" taken out of the gardens' original shape

The gardens today are a simple, pleasant green space making a key contribution to the character of the area. They comprise many mature trees (mostly around the edges with younger ones in the middle), mown grass, a series of sinuous tarmac paths, and one wide, irregular concrete flag path running north-south. South-centre is an octagonal rose bed (the gardens' only formal planting)

surrounding a recently restored life-size cast statue of a fish wife on a stone and brick plinth, whilst near the north entrance, a large boulder is another commemorative feature. Benches, litter bins and large planters are throughout. The gardens are lit by black Victoriana lampposts and bound by black replica metal railings on a low concrete slab plinth with gates on the north and south sides, and on three corners. The south gateway is emphasised with brick piers and an octagonal paved area outside. Although many people go through the park, they do not always stay to enjoy it. Whilst there are a couple benches and plenty of space for picnics, more seating may encourage people to stay longer, as well as a planted area. The loss of symmetry, original paths, gate positions, railings and plinth have notably reduced the gardens' historical reference – they have a somewhat stripped municipal air to them rather than a high-status civic one. As well as this, attention to some of the street furniture is required, for example repainting the bollards.



Southern entrance

The roads surrounding the Square are frequently used by cars and buses as a popular transport route through North Shields. This coming and going of vehicles can disrupt the tranquillity of the area.

Nonetheless, the (approximate) north-south alignment of entrances, paving and statue reflects that of the whole conservation area, with the statue looking symbolically towards the river. The contribution made by the number and height of the trees is crucial to the gardens' appeal and to their maturity, status and attraction in the town centre, although there may be scope for some thinning of newer specimens to allow for a better appreciation and the health of the more mature trees, and to reflect the historic planting pattern. The gardens are used by shoppers and office workers, and form an attractive route to and from the town centre from the east. They also play host to an annual event in the North Tyneside calendar, the Victorian Christmas Market, when they are filled with a lively array of stalls, fairground rides and a bandstand.



Commemorative boulder and trees within the gardens

### Square outside Stag Line Building

Notionally, the open space at the other end of the area's north-south axis is equally important to its character and history. Despite its pivotal vantage-point position, the square outside the Stag Line building at the foot of Howard Street appears to have originally been no more than a stub turning head at the end of the road (partially built on stilts below). Only during late twentieth century regeneration was it redesigned to give it its own identity as a pedestrian space, paved with a restrained grid of granite blocks, bound to the south by replica metal railings, and emphasised with four flag poles and a huge salvaged anchor and shipping bollard mounted on a stone plinth as a commemorative feature. The small electricity substation sited at an angle on one side makes a positive contribution by helping enclose the space with its neat, Classically-inspired brick skin. Like the Northumberland Square gardens, there are benches and Victoriana lampposts around.



Square outside Stag Line Building

Steps provide access to Liddell Street, in the neighbouring Fish Quay conservation area below. Due to the growth of many mature trees and shrubs growing alongside the steps, this route has become unpleasant and does not appear to be frequently used. From the square, however, these trees add depth to the view and provide a habitat for local wildlife.

As an incidental square, this space now has considerable prominence and is a key link and point of orientation in connecting the town centre and the riverside. Steep banks outside the area to the south and east provide a good green setting, and the flag poles are an inspired addition that reflect the area's civic status, the nautical theme of the riverside below, and anchor views south down Howard Street. The square is regularly used for photography by the Borough Registrar's Office in the adjacent Stag Line building, for which the space also provides an important setting.

### Roads and Pavements

Wide Howard Street is a key space in its own right, linking the two open spaces at either end. In the Central Zone, Howard Street has a scheme of parking bays, tree surrounds, pavements and street furniture. Its symmetrical nature reinforces the street's pivotal axis for the area.

The late twentieth century regeneration in the South Zone saw a similarly high-quality treatment to the lower end of Howard Street, including extensive reclaimed granite setts for parking bays. Here, however, chevron parking on one side of the street has pushed the carriageway off-centre, disjointing the view along the full length of Howard Street and slightly reducing the impact of that single linear

vista. The changing road surface also detracts from the vista as attractive grey setts and slabs alternate with black tarmac.



Reclaimed setts, southern part of Howard Street

Other road and pavement surfaces generally make a poor contribution to the appearance of the area. Most roads are black tarmac; many in the Central Zone are red tarmac extensively patched with black, leaving a confusing and unnecessarily visually prominent character to the road surface. This is compounded where there are extensive road markings, particularly intrusive on the west side of Square.

Pavements are a random mix of grey concrete flags (a reference to what are likely to have once been stone flags), tarmac and concrete patches. Kerbs are mostly standard concrete. Back lanes have also

lost their original setts and are now a patched collection of concrete and tarmac with little merit.

Young street trees make an important contribution to the ceremonial, high status nature of the upper half of Howard Street. A row outside the former Town Hall emphasise this important location, repeated on Norfolk Street where they begin to reverse its misleading 'back lane' character.



Street trees on Norfolk Street

Lampposts are tall black pastiche features in the Central and South Zones; more standard examples are found in the North Zone. A not-so-common double letterbox sits smartly on the corner of Upper Camden Street and Northumberland Square. A few historic road nameplates survive: rare details that should be retained.

There is a considerable amount of other street furniture in the conservation area – parking and road signs, finger posts, plastic planters (which tend towards clutter unless actually brimming with plants), ticket machines, bollards (particularly on Howard Street), various litter bins, grit boxes, barriers, bike stands and bus shelters – much of it black and gold pastiche Victoriana in style, and much being ad hoc in nature and position. In addition to this, much of the furniture requires maintenance.



Street furniture throughout the conservation area

### Central Zone's Front Gardens

Originally prominent, but now badly eroded, are front gardens to the terraces around the Square and along Howard Street. Short but important, these gardens were once an integral part of the original domestic character of each house, providing a green setting to the terraces, and setting this high-class development apart from the surrounding, tighter back-of-pavement terraces. They would originally have been bound and divided by iron railings and stone plinths. The one or two that survive as green gardens still make a positive contribution as historic fragments and can be attractive spaces in their own right. Even where they are no longer green, garden divisions are an important historic reference to the grain of the area, as well as containing some historic railings (one or two on Howard Street) and stone plinths.



Green garden and historic railings on Howard Street

The west side of the Square has some complete carved stone gate piers and stone plinths with replica railings. The north side has a few surviving carved stone piers (including three unusual slender ones at Nos. 19-20). Nos. 2-12 Howard Street, a recreation of the Central Zone's terraces in the South Zone, use modern railings in a traditional way to bound and divide their notional gardens.

Most gardens in the Central Zone, however, have now become completely eroded to become blank forecourts or essentially part of the pavement.

### Back Yards and Internal Courtyards

Like front gardens, divisions between back yards indicate the grain of the area and provide a degree of setting to the buildings. Also like front gardens, they have been extensively eroded. However, where they survive in groups, something of the original character of back yards can be seen. The heavy stone gateway behind No.16 Northumberland Square is a particularly precious remnant of the terrace's original rear garden setting. Several trees on back yard boundaries on the north and east sides of the Square are also a reminder of the conservation area's attractive residential beginnings.

Few of the landmark buildings leave enough room for yards. The former Town Hall's internal yard was attractively redesigned as a dining court during the building's recent restoration.

The created internal courtyards of the South Zone are lively and inviting with an informal mix of brick, tarmac and block surfaces, joinery and brick boundaries, and some planting. Although historic

plot divisions have gone, these courtyards now make an attractive contribution to the Post-Modern regeneration of the South Zone.



Modern created courtyard, Norfolk Street

### Other Spaces

Field House's gardens and trees are an important reminder of its early, low density origins, the orientation originally taking advantage of the southerly aspect before development around it increased. The trees (protected with TPOs) are an attractive counterpoint to the large open space opposite.

Other modern additions to public open space, such as the area outside of Howard House (outside of the conservation area boundary), also add positively to the surrounding area.

### **Atmosphere**

The conservation area's character is gained not only from the built fabric and spaces around them, but also the atmosphere they create. The area's buildings and spaces generate particular types of social use that combine to create a stimulating mood and rhythm to the place – the Customer First Centre, the daytime peak of commercial busyness, the town centre traffic passing through, and the social, religious and civic gatherings in landmark buildings. The grandness and status of the area's layout and many of its buildings create a prestigious, public feel to the place, of an urban quarter with considerable status, albeit a status that has demonstrably slipped from "grand civic" to "municipal" over time. Civic pride that recognises this should be generated and nurtured.

Due to the number of trees, principally in Northumberland Square's gardens, the feel of the place is also heavily influenced by the seasons. A cold winter's morning waiting for a bus in the Square can feel very different from a warm summer's afternoon heading down Howard Street for a gaze out along the river. Trees also contribute pleasing sounds to the experience of the area – bird song and the rustling of leaves – which are a rare respite in a busy urban environment.

In this way, the buildings, spaces, streets and their use combine to generate an area of considerable attraction with an inherently appealing atmosphere. This overall status is however, challenged in the Central Zone and North Zone by the level of alteration and loss to some of the buildings, giving parts a down-at-heel tone.

## Loss, Intrusion and Damage

### Neutral Parts

Parts of the North Zone are neutral in character, particularly some of the more altered development along Albion Road and Church Way. Although this development is essentially historic in nature, the changes affected here have robbed the buildings of all but a few hints of their original character. However, much of it is superficial and is reversible. Re-drawing the conservation area to exclude some of these buildings would make the boundary less coherent to the north and would lead to selective protection to the street scene and of development in the blocks behind.



Properties altered over time retain the potential to be restored

Whilst the form, style and particularly the position of the North Shields Customer First Centre are intrusive, its scale and height (at

the front at least) are no more out of place than the Church of St. Columba opposite. Its bulk does squat rather unkindly in the corner of the Square, and its materials and detailed design are indeed uncompromising, but its use does at least make a key contribution to the civic importance of the area.

The green space at the junction of Northumberland Square and Suez Street is, in theory, a gap site that should be filled with a building to provide a strong corner to the development pattern to match those elsewhere around the Square. However, like the North Shields Customer First Centre and Stephenson House (see below), its development is stifled by the railway tunnel beneath – foundations for a sizeable building here may be difficult to engineer. Consequently, it is laid out as simple gardens with trees, grass, municipal planting and boundary railings, and is a pleasant corner.

### Negative Parts

One building inside the conservation area, Stephenson House, is illustrative of several other negative buildings and sites just beyond the boundary, all of which harm the area's character and appearance. Their appropriate redevelopment – were that ever viable – would provide the opportunity for significant enhancement of the area's gateways and boundaries.

Stephenson House has a form, scale, height, style and materials firmly at odds with the prevailing pattern and character of the area. This intrusive five storey flat-roofed office block is a typically ill-mannered late twentieth century intrusion that pays little attention to its surroundings, preferring to make a statement of its own rather than integrating sensitively into the neighbourhood. Like the North

Shields Customer First Centre, its exact siting is guided by the railway tunnel beneath, leaving a blank car park outside that bleeds across the exposed back lane behind, creating a weak corner to Suez Street. Outside the boundary, this arrangement is repeated twice on the opposite side of Suez Street (Unicorn House and, most intrusively for the Square, Northumbria House) as well as at several other locations to the west of the area (for example, the Beacon Centre). Unlike the integrated landmark buildings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such buildings do not respect the area of which they are part.



Stephenson House and car park, left, and its uncompromising scale, right



Unicorn House, left, and Northumbria House, right

Two other smaller but intrusive boxy buildings are similarly out of place – Nos. 76-78 Church Way and Nos. 75-79 Howard Street.

There are gap sites outside the boundary, along Norfolk Street, where the strong townscape edge has been destroyed by the wholesale clearance of terraces several decades ago.

### Incremental Change and Harm to Unity

Comprehensive change of use away from residential to commercial described above, plus later economic pressures, have been partially responsible for a marked incremental change to architectural features, detailing and materials:

- loss and replacement of original architectural details,
- inappropriate designs, materials and methods for repairs, alterations and new work.

The area is characterised by terraced buildings and gardens that rely on unity for their character and appearance. Even though they were developed incrementally, the area's terraces were designed with an inherent uniformity which was intended to give consistency and balance to the street, creating a whole that is always greater than the sum of its parts. This harmony can be easily damaged through loss or change that alters the intended balance along the street, emphasising individual buildings or parts of buildings to the detriment of the whole terrace.

Many of these incremental changes have entirely changed the appearance of some individual buildings – mainly re-frontings in the Central Zone. In basic terms, all of these have harmed the unity of

the area by making individual buildings stand out to the detriment of the terrace. Most of the Edwardian and Art Deco ones are of sufficient architectural quality to be of interest in their own right, whilst most of those in the last 20-60 years have involved low quality work, synthetic materials, and now discredited approaches, leaving inherently unattractive façades. In several spots, these changes have accumulated to weaken the character and appearance of the area, and at the north end of Howard Street, have comprehensively distorted it. The most intrusive examples are Nos. 49-51, 54-59 and 62-67 Howard Street, and No. 3 Northumberland Place.



Unattractive work that has harmed the unity of the terrace, Howard Street

Some changes took place before the conservation area was designated in 1975, others may have been given consent in less conservation-minded times, and some have been as a result of

permitted development rights, i.e. works that do not require planning permission.

The continued maintenance of buildings is also an important factor. Although it is not something that can always be directly controlled through the planning system, buildings that are poorly looked after are detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is not a widespread issue, but there are some properties that are in need of attention.

It will be important to curtail harmful changes to prevent damage continuing, whilst most existing changes could be reversed over time to restore the architectural and historic qualities that give the area its distinctive character. This would be more easily achieved with detailed guidance and incentives.

#### Loss and Replacement of Original Architectural Details

Some original architectural features that helped define the special interest of the area have been lost incrementally over time. The main losses have been:

- Several enlarged or repositioned window and door openings, and some full-width shopfront windows inserted in ground elevations, which distort the architecture of the building and harm the unity of elevations in the terrace.
- Loss of original front doors, which have been replaced with a variety of modern timber doors in mock reproduction or modern styles that have an insubstantial appearance compared to traditional solid panelled features or replaced in PVCu or with metal and glass “shop” doors.



Inserted shopfront that does not respect the architecture of the building, Northumberland Place

- Widespread loss of original windows, replaced with either modern timber or PVCu casements or chunky sashes. The effect that fenestration has on a building's character and appearance should not be underestimated. Even slight changes to details (such as glazing bar profile or width) can dramatically alter the character and appearance of a building. This can be true if one in a set of windows is changed or if it is repeated across a whole façade. The visual effect of modern materials and inaccurate designs is invariably jarring against a well-aged building in natural traditional materials. The success of PVCu windows that attempt to copy the design and proportions of traditional windows depends on the width and profile of the frames. It is generally the case that PVCu frames are thicker and more angular than timber ones, and cannot accurately incorporate details like mouldings, horns, beading and stained glass.

PVCu “glazing bars” are often false strips superimposed onto glazing with a flat, flimsy appearance. PVCu does not take on the patina of time like timber. The result will almost always harm character and appearance. The same is true of “fake” sash windows (top-hung casements) that rarely reflect the particular style of the building. These and other modern window styles, including small top opening lights and those with horizontal proportions, often have clumsy, chunky proportions and are often placed flush with the face of the building rather than being set back into an appropriate reveal, thus losing depth and shadow to the building's architecture.



PVCu windows with flat, flimsy glazing bars and chunky frames, left, compared to traditional timber windows on the right

- Some loss and replacement of timbers on some historic shopfronts that have flattened their appearance, and the

addition of deep plastic fascias, internally illuminated box fascia signs, external roller shutters with shutter boxes, and a few wholesale replacement modern shopfronts, all of which are intrusive features detracting from architectural character and often visually dislocating the shopfront from the rest of the building above.

- Some loss of chimneys that have been removed, capped or dropped in height, harming the contribution they make to the unity of the terraces and the appearance of the roofscape.
- Widespread replacement of iron rainwater goods (including hoppers and downcomers) with plastic ones which, in a few places, affects the contribution they make to the architecture's vertical rhythm.



Modern shopfronts with large windows and fascias that harm the buildings' appearance

Such losses of traditional features have accumulated over time to weaken the character of the area in some places and generally begin to erode its special local architectural and historic interest.

### Inappropriate Designs, Methods and Materials

There have been many cases of repairs, alterations and new work using designs, methods or materials that are inappropriate to the area's special local architectural and historic interest. Most of these have not required planning permission or were given consent in less-conservation-minded times. The most harmful of such changes are:

- Several added and enlarged offshots with widths, heights, forms, materials and detailing that do not reflect the main building and that harm the three dimensional designed balance between buildings, offshots and yards.
- Marked use of render, tile cladding, pebbledash or masonry paint to brickwork on main façades. This conceals the historic brickwork that defines the character of the area's buildings, and makes individual buildings stand out visually, to the detriment of the harmony of the terrace (as well as possibly harming the fabric of the building in the long term).
- Widespread painting of sandstone detailing, including bay windows, sills, string courses and door surrounds. This destroys the rich historic patina of time that characterises mature unpainted sandstone, and which, depending on the use of colour, can also make individual buildings stand out visually to the detriment of the harmony of the terrace.



Painted sandstone sees the loss of the rich, natural material and harms unity

- The replacement of British slate with artificial slate (that are usually thinner with a flat, shiny appearance at odds with the rich texture of natural slate) or concrete tiles (that are wholly different to slate in shape, size, texture, pattern and colour as well as often being heavier and so possibly causing the roof structure to sag in the long term).
- The addition of dormer windows, in boxy, modern designs with flat roofs. These are often placed eccentrically on the roof slope, interrupting the unity provided by the roofscape, or are full width and rise from the wall head, essentially removing all roof slope.
- Several added Velux-style rooflights that are larger and greater in number than traditional small metal rooflights or

glass slates. Modern rooflights are often placed eccentrically on the roof slope with no reference to the fenestration below and sit proud of the roof plain interrupting the unity provided by the roofscape.



An unsympathetic boxy dormer on the left. The dormer on the right is more appropriate but is joined by rooflights that although small, disrupt the roofline

- Unsympathetic access ramps that have altered the rhythm and feel of Howard Street. Whilst important to provide good access for all, it is necessary that the design respects and is sympathetic to the conservation area.
- Brick and stone for repairs and alterations that is poorly matched in size, colour, texture or bond, leaving visual scarring on façades.
- Poorly finished or badly matched pointing that can significantly alter the appearance of brick buildings, by making the pointing more visually prominent.
- Several added metal fire escape stairs that are inherently unattractive features and add to the visual clutter of the rears, when viewed along back lanes.

- Commercial signage, some of which is placed at odds with the architecture of the building and can be oversized and brash in appearance.



Excessive, poorly placed signage has a harmful affect

Such inappropriate changes have accumulated over time to weaken the character of the area in some places and generally begin to erode its special local architectural and historic interest.

### Erosion of Backyards and Central Zone's Front Gardens

The contribution that the Central Zone's front gardens made to the appearance of the area has been extensively eroded. Nearly all have been put over to hardstandings, replacing green nature with flat hard surfaces. Nearly all original iron boundary railings are gone

(most presumably removed during the Second World War as so many reputedly were), as have divisions between gardens. Where there are boundaries, many are an ad-hoc range of non-matching, mostly modern materials that harm the unity of the terraces and reduce the overall attractive appearance of the area (for example timber fences, bricks, blocks, flimsy-looking replica metal railings in pastiche designs, etc.).

Most of these changes have occurred at houses converted to commercial use, where parking, steps and ramps have been inserted instead. This is most intensely felt on the east side of Howard Street where almost any notion of front gardens have been eradicated. Boundaries and subdivisions on the north and east sides of the Square have been comprehensively eroded, most damaging to the setting of the buildings.



Complete loss of front gardens, Howard Street

Rear and dividing walls to back yards have also been eroded, though less comprehensively. Most walls have gone from Howard Street's west back lane and the west and north sides of Northumberland Square. Most dividing walls are also gone or

significantly reduced in length. Where rear walls are missing, yards and back lanes tend to merge into large featureless expanses of tarmac with no character, some of which are quite visually prominent (for example, behind the east side of the Square, in stark contrast to the attractive courtyards of the South Zone).

## Management

Change is an inevitable component of most conservation areas; the challenge is to manage change in ways that maintain and, if possible, strengthen an area's special qualities. The character of conservation areas is rarely static and is susceptible to incremental, as well as dramatic change. Some areas are in a state of relative economic decline and suffer from lack of investment. Often, the qualities that make conservation areas appealing also help to encourage over investment and pressure for development in them. Positive management is essential if such pressure for change, which tends to alter the very character that made the areas attractive in the first place, is to be limited.

Proactively managing Northumberland Square conservation area will therefore be an essential way of preserving and enhancing its character and appearance into the future. Historic England advise using management plans/strategies as a way to manage development pressure and neglect, whilst ensuring the conservation area retains its inherent qualities<sup>4</sup>. A Management Strategy is currently being prepared for this conservation area that will look to set out a framework for preservation and enhancement based on the elements of special character and appearance, and threats and opportunities, discussed in this Appraisal.

Management topics that could be addressed in any management document for this conservation area are briefly discussed below. In addition, issues that relate to all conservation areas in the Borough should be applied to this one, including Borough-wide Local Plan

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<sup>4</sup> Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1 (2019) Historic England

policies, dealing with enforcement, agreeing a way of monitoring change in the area, agreeing processes for decision-making and community consultation, and addressing the availability of resources to deal with all management issues.

## Regeneration

The Central Zone and North Zone have for some time now been ideal for a comprehensive, partnership-led, restoration initiative, based on capital grant aid and comprehensive public realm improvements.

North Tyneside Council are currently pursuing a range of regeneration initiatives within North Shields, guided by an overall masterplan. The most relevant for this area is the High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding that has been awarded by Historic England, in response to a bid by the Council. The HAZ programme, which will run from April 2020 to March 2024, aims to support physical improvements to the historic and built environment, which in turn would facilitate more varied and vibrant uses for the area, including cultural, leisure and tourism uses. A key focus is for community participation in the implementation of the HAZ programme and for increased understanding of and involvement in the heritage and culture of the area.

There are several good comparators for regeneration in the sub region, the most obvious being the approach taken in the South Zone in the late twentieth century.

## Boundary Review

A boundary review of the conservation area should be a high priority. As discussed under Setting and External Relationships from page 8, much of the immediate surroundings are ordinary but there are some opportunities for review that would serve to rationalise the boundary and include some strong features.

A boundary review should focus on Union Street where the boundary randomly cuts through the centre of Bedford Court due to the development occurring after the conservation area was designated. Extending the conservation area to Bedford Street would be ideal as it would protect views of the Fish Quay and maintain the existing high standard of design.

The boundary could also be extended to include Camden Street and the associated part of Saville Street. This could result in a more coherent reflection of the historic development pattern. It would also include locally significant buildings and development of a high standard, such as the modern Howard House and its public space, and the Magnesia Bank public house. The presence of several interesting buildings with strong townscape presence around Norfolk Street and the associated part of Saville Street means this area could also be worthy of inclusion in the conservation area.

Any proposal to change the boundary would require a full public consultation.

## Buildings at Risk

Work is close to completion on the reuse and restoration of Nos. 13-16 Northumberland Square and development of the gap site to

the rear, meaning those buildings previously identified as being most at risk within the conservation area by the Council are now being rescued.

Nevertheless, there are several other buildings in the area, some listed, some not, that are in poor condition. The Council need to keep the occupancy and condition of buildings in the area under review and consider a strategy to tackle any issues that arise. This should be tied to a regeneration strategy for the area.

## Site Specific Design or Development Briefs

Site specific briefs would be most appropriate for the gap site on Norfolk Street just outside the conservation area and, should the opportunity for redevelopment ever exist, for Stephenson House within the boundary. The briefs should clearly set out the characteristics of the conservation area to which new development should respond, and define the constraints created by the spatial and character traits of the site and area. Briefs would best be prepared in conjunction with a wider regeneration initiative for the area.

## Thematic Policy Guidance

Specific guidance for this conservation area could be beneficial as a proactive way of managing future change. The guidance should ideally focus upon providing appropriate, positive guidance to address those issues identified under the Loss, Intrusion and Damage section of this document.

### Trees, Green Space and Public Realm

A comprehensive restoration plan for the Square could be prepared, based on historically-informed design and planting, combined with an understanding of its modern-day contribution to the civic identity of the town. This is an aim of the HAZ programme. Long term consideration should also be given to how roads, pavements, kerbs, back lanes and street furniture, etc. could be preserved and enhanced, and integrate the area with its surroundings.

An agreed approach to managing trees in the public realm should be a positive step to protecting them well into the future. A review of existing Tree Preservation Orders should also be completed.

### Article 4 Directions

The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) automatically grants planning consent for a range of developments to properties<sup>5</sup>. These are known as permitted development rights (PDRs). PDRs are slightly more restricted in a conservation area for some types of development. However, this still does not prevent various developments being carried out which, over time, can combine to harm the area's special interest.

The GPDO allows the Council to remove harmful PDRs using an Article 4 Direction<sup>6</sup>. This means consent would be needed for certain developments at properties covered by the Direction. Article 4 Directions are most commonly used in conservation areas on dwelling houses, which benefit from the majority of PDRs relating to

appearance. There are few dwelling houses in the conservation area and so an Article 4 Direction for this purpose may not have much effect. More relevant to this conservation area are PDRs that relate to changes of use<sup>7</sup>. These have become increasingly more flexible in recent years and have the potential to continue to. Many town centre uses are able to change to another (for example, shop to a restaurant and vice versa) without planning permission. Such PDRs can have a marked effect upon the function and character of an area and may be of particular concern in light of the implementation of the HAZ programme.

Being aware of the existence of PDRs and the effect they may have upon the character and appearance of the conservation area is important, with a view to consider an Article 4 Direction if potential for harm is identified.

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<sup>5</sup> Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Article 3

<sup>6</sup> Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Article 4

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<sup>7</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020

## Other Information and Guidance

### Other Heritage Designations

The following heritage designations are found within the conservation area. For information on what these designations mean, please visit: <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

0	Scheduled Monuments
16	Listed Building entries
2	Locally Registered Assets
1	Tree Preservation Orders
0	Article 4 Directions

### Listed Buildings

Entries on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest cover the whole building (including the interior), and other buildings, walls and structures in the building's curtilage. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the special interest of these buildings is protected.

Name	Grade	Date Listed
1 Howard Street (Stag Line Building)	II	24/10/1985
25 Howard Street	II	19/02/1986
Salvation Army Citadel (Scotch Church)	II	19/02/1986
Baptist Church	II	19/02/1986
Borough Treasurer's Department	II	19/02/1986
Borough Treasurer's Dept and Magistrates Court	II	19/02/1986
Corner building of Borough Treasurer's Dept	II	19/02/1986

97 Howard Street	II	19/02/1986
98, 99 and 100 Howard Street	II	19/02/1986
105 Howard Street	II	19/02/1986
106 Howard Street	II	19/02/1986
1-5 Northumberland Place	II	24/10/1950
12-20 incl. 17a Northumberland Square (No.12 incl. No.1)	II	24/10/1950
Church of St. Columba	II	23/12/1971
Field House, 1-5 Stephenson Street	II	27/04/1978
Wall and piers to east of Field House	II	27/04/1978
North Shields Mechanics Institute and Free Library	II	05/04/2013

### Local Register

North Tyneside Council has a register of buildings and parks that are of local architectural and historic interest (the local register). The entries are of local importance. Unlike nationally listed buildings, local register status does not put any extra planning constraints on a property; rather it would be a material consideration if a development was proposed (i.e. the historical and architectural quality of the building would be taken into consideration when the planning officer was making their decision). To aid decision-making, the Council has adopted the Register of Buildings and Parks of Local Architectural and Historic Interest Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2018.

The following are included in the local register:

Name and Address	Relation to conservation area
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The Pub and Kitchen, 13-14 Albion Road	Within CA
Northumberland Square gardens, Northumberland Square	Within CA
Garricks Head, 44-52 Saville Street	Adjacent to CA
Old Post Office, 63 Saville Street	Adjacent to CA

### Tree Preservation Orders

North Tyneside Council protects trees by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). A TPO aims to protect trees that make a significant contribution to the visual amenity of an area. The Local Planning Authority can make a TPO in respect of a tree, group of trees or woodland. The effect of a TPO is to make it an offence to carry out most works to trees without the Local Planning Authority's consent.

Name	Trees	Species
Field House, Stephenson Street, North Shields, Tree Preservation Order 1993	Seven	ash, elm, lime, sycamore

### Article 4 Directions

Under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Article 4 Directions can be imposed in conservation areas. These mean that certain works that could previously be carried out without planning consent would require planning permission.

There are currently no Article 4 Directions in the Northumberland Square conservation area.

### County Historic Environment Record Entries

The following entries from the Tyne & Wear Historic Environment Record (HER) are within, or partly within, the conservation area boundary. The HER is held by the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation team.

Records for these entries can be viewed at <https://www.twsitelines.info/>

No.	Site Name	Period	Site Type
4568	North Shields, Metcalf's Ropery	post medieval	ropery
4570	North Shields, Scotch Church	early modern	non-conf. church
4571	North Shields, Methodist Chapel	early modern	Methodist chapel
4572	North Shields, Secession Church	early modern	non-conf. church
4576	North Shields, Ranter's Chapel	early modern	non-conf. church
4578	North Shields, Baptist Chapel	early modern	Baptist chapel
4584	North Shields, Town Hall	early modern	town hall
6929	North Shields, Chirton Colliery (Shields Colliery)	post medieval	colliery

### North Tyneside Local Plan Policies

The most relevant local planning policies relating to this conservation area are S6.5 *Heritage Assets*, DM6.6 *Protection, Preservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets* and those within the North Shields Area Specific Strategy. Other Local Plan policies may also be relevant, including those on housing, design, local retail centres, advertisements and highways. More information can be found at <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1130/local-plan>

### **The Implications of Conservation Area Status**

The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing character and appearance of conservation areas in exercising their planning powers. In particular, the local authority has extra controls over the following in conservation areas:

- demolition,
- minor developments,
- the protection of trees.

### Demolition

Outside conservation areas, buildings that are not statutorily listed can be demolished without approval under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Within conservation areas, the demolition of unlisted buildings requires planning consent. Applications for consent to totally or substantially demolish any building within a conservation area must be made to North Tyneside Council or, on appeal or call-in, to the Secretary of State.

Generally, there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

### Minor Developments

Within in a conservation area, legislation<sup>8</sup> states that there are certain cases where permission must be obtained before making alterations that would normally be permitted elsewhere. This is to ensure that any alterations do not detract from the area's character and appearance. The changes include certain types of exterior painting and cladding, roof alterations including inserting dormer windows, and putting up satellite dishes that are visible from the street.

Under Article 4 of the same legislation, there can be further measures to restrict other kinds of alteration that are normally allowed under so-called "permitted development rights". These measures, called Article 4 Directions, can be selective in the buildings they cover within the conservation area, and the types of restriction they impose depending on how they might affect key building elements and so character and appearance. These Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor alterations to buildings in conservation areas that can cumulatively lead to erosion of character and appearance over time. Development is not precluded, but selected alterations would require planning permission and special attention would be paid to the potential effect of proposals when permission was sought.

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<sup>8</sup> The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended)

Examples might be putting up porches, painting a house a different colour, or changing distinctive doors, windows or other architectural details. The Local Authority has to give good reason for making these restrictions and must take account of public views before doing so. There are currently no Article Directions in place in this conservation area.

To many owners, any extra considerations needed regarding works to their property are more than outweighed by the pleasure they derive from living in such an area.

### Trees

Trees make an important contribution to the character of the local environment.

Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area, whether or not it is covered by a tree preservation order, has to give notice to the local planning authority. The Authority can then consider the contribution the tree makes to the character of the area and if necessary, make a tree preservation order to protect it.

## Sources and Further Reading

The following sources were used in the preparation of this appraisal.

- Local Plan, North Tyneside Council, July 2017
- History of Shields, William Brockie, 1851
- Wor Canny Toon, J Wallace Black, 1926
- The Buildings of England: Northumberland, John Grundy et al, Penguin Books, London, second edition, 1992
- The Archive Photograph Series: North Shields, Eric Hollerton, 1997
- The Archive Photograph series: Around North Shields, Eric Hollerton, 2000
- Memory Lane: North Shields, John Alexander, 2002
- Northumberland Place-Names, Stan Beckenstall, Butler Publishing, Morpeth, 2004
- Sitelines, the Historic Environment Record website of Tyne and Wear, <http://www.twsitelines.info>
- The Buildings of England: Northumberland, Nikolaus Pevsner, Ian Richmond, second edition, 2002
- North Tyneside Council website, [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk)

Other websites that may be of interest include the following:

- <https://historicengland.org.uk/>
- [www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com)
- <https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/>
- <https://georgiangroup.org.uk/>
- <https://c20society.org.uk/>

- <https://www.nandnsociety.org.uk/>

## Glossary

### Masonry

**Bond:** The way the bricks or stones are arranged in building, a wall, etc. Common examples are Flemish bond, English garden wall bond and stretcher bond.

**English garden wall bond:** Three or four rows of bricks laid with the longer side showing (stretchers), alternating with single rows with the headers showing.

**Flemish bond:** The bricks in each row alternate header and stretcher. The header in each row will be over the middle of the stretcher of the row below.

**Gable:** The part of the wall that fills the end of a pitched roof, often triangular or peaked in shape. Sometimes capped by coping stones to protect the top of the wall from the weather.

**Header:** The end or shortest face of a brick.

**Kneeler:** A large stone on the top corner of a wall and base of the gable that supports the coping stones of the gable and stops them sliding off.

**Pier:** A large support made of masonry, often associated with gates.

**Polychromatic:** Of more than one colour. Seen in some of the brick work in the late twentieth century housing in this conservation area.

**Quoin:** Dressed stones at the angles of a building. They may be alternately long and short. Pronounced "coin".

**Stretcher:** The longest side of a brick.

**Stretcher bond:** Bricks arranged so that all the rows show the long side of the brick. In each row the bricks will lie across the joins between the bricks in the row below.

### Doors

**Door surround:** A decorative element or structure around a doorway

**Overlight:** A horizontal opening over a door or window.

**Pediment:** A formalised gable, derived from that of a temple, that can be used over doors.

**Tuscan surround:** A door surround in the Tuscan style. Tuscan is a style of classical architecture, regarded as the least ornate.

### Windows

**Apron:** Raised panel below a window, sometimes shaped and decorated.

**Horn:** projections of the side frames of the sashes, devised to strengthen them, following the introduction of heavy plate glass.

**Lintel:** Horizontal beam or stone bridging an opening.

**Mullion:** Vertical member between the lights in a window opening.

**Oriel window:** A window that projects from the wall. Unlike a bay window it overhangs so needs to be supported in some way.

**String course:** A continuous narrow horizontal course or moulding which projects slightly from the surface of a wall and can be an appropriate decorative accompaniment

**Transom:** A horizontal member between the lights in a window opening.

**Window reveal:** The side of an opening for a window, or door, between the frame and the outer surface of a wall, showing the wall's thickness.

### **Roof Details**

**Bracket:** A projecting angled or curved form used as a supporting feature under an eave line or raincap, usually decorative.

**Catslide roof:** A pitched roof covering one side of a building and continuing at the same pitch over a rear extension.

**Gable:** The part of the wall that fills the end of a pitched roof, often triangular or peaked in shape. Sometimes capped by coping stones to protect the top of the wall from the weather.

**Finial:** Decorative top most feature that can be found above a gable.

**Kneeler:** A large stone on the top corner of a wall and base of the gable that supports the coping stones of the gable and stops them sliding off.

**Verge:** The top edge of a roof at the top of the slope often covered by a verge board.

**Watertable:** feature that consists of a projecting course that deflects water running down the face of a building away from lower courses or the foundation. A water table may be found at a transition between materials, such as from stone to brick.

### **Shopfronts**

**Architrave:** Moulded frame of a door or window.

**Cornice:** Moulded ledge, projecting along the top of a building or feature.

**Fascia:** Plain horizontal band, e.g. in an architrave or on a shopfront.

**Pilaster:** Flat representation of a classical column in a shallow relief against a wall.

**Stall riser:** Area below the shop window cill.

### **Miscellaneous**

**Balustraded:** A rail and the row of balusters or posts that support it, as along the front of a gallery.

**Castellated:** Battlemented. In the style of a castle.

**Downcomer:** A connecting pipe, often seen externally. Can be referred to as a downpipe.

**Entablature:** The upper section of a classical building, resting on the columns and constituting the architrave, frieze, and cornice.

Façade: The face or frontage of a building.

Roundel: A circular moulding, as seen on the Stag Line Building.

Sett: Rectangular blocks of stone, often granite, used for paving.