

Heritage Impact Assessment

Proposed Beach Cafe, Needles Eye, Beach Terrace, Newbiggin by the Sea, NE64 6xe

Location

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is in Wansbeck District in Northumberland County, and is 5km west of Ashington, the principle commercial and administrative centre in the District. It is 12km west of Morpeth, whilst Newcastle upon Tyne, the regional capital, is 32km to the south-west. The centre of the existing and proposed conservation area is at grid reference NZ 312 877. Commercially, Newbiggin is one of four secondary retail and service centres in Wansbeck, and has a population of around 7,100. With a population over 28,000, Ashington is the principal centre of the district. Although considerable effort has gone into diversifying the local economy and new employment opportunities in the last ten years or so, the number of new jobs created has not yet been sufficient to offset previous losses suffered through the closure of all 15 of the working collieries in the district during the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, unemployment levels in Wansbeck remain consistently higher than regional or national levels. Newbiggin, like other settlements in the district, now shows no continuing signs of serious economic decline, but does suffer from general long term under-investment in historic fabric in buildings and spaces which requires regenerative investment. This would raise the quality of its appearance and use as a local centre. The existing conservation area covers what is essentially a nineteenth century suburb of the original medieval fishing village and later nineteenth century seaside town of Newbiggin. The proposed extensions cover that historic core, plus additional townscape to the south-west, north-east and east which more closely represents the special historic and architectural interest of the town.

Character Analysis

Sub-Areas Although the existing and proposed conservation area forms one spatial whole, it does have four distinct sub-areas in terms of detailed character, with notable differences due to the nature, age and quality of development:

- Historic Core: the historic town centre and old fishing village,
- Suburban Extension: the later growth of the town with high quality nineteenth century holiday and commuter residences,
- Church Point: the landscape at the northern tip of the bay, virtually blank but for St Bartholomew's Church,
- The Promenade: a character sub-area in its own right, running parallel to but visually different from the first two. Despite the distinct differences between them, all are firmly linked by their development history as set out above. These sub-area names are used in the discussion below to highlight character differences in the various parts of the existing and proposed conservation area.

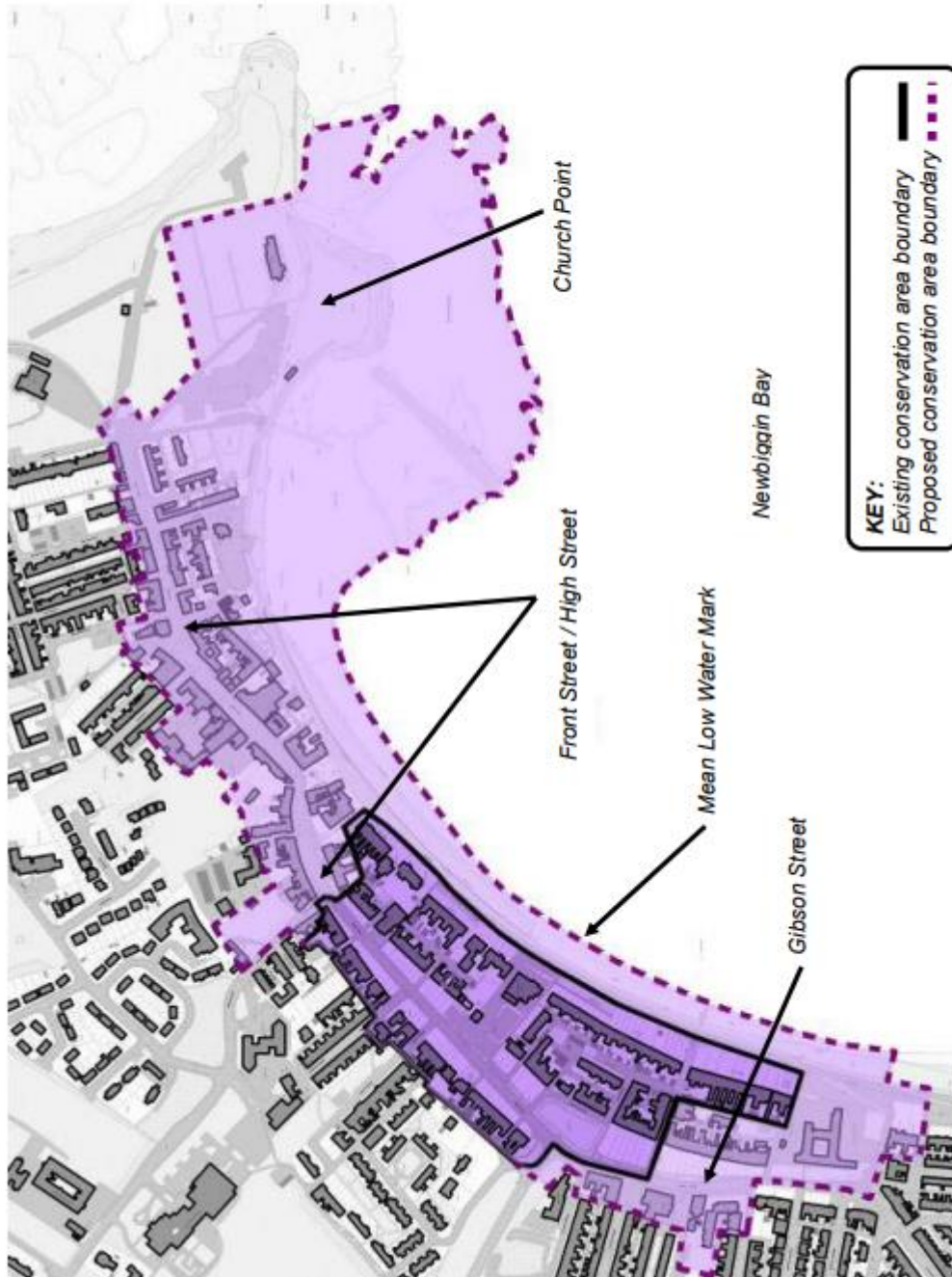
Legislation.

The Council has a statutory duty in exercising its planning powers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. It also has a duty, from time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for preservation and enhancement, and to consult local people on them.

Government Guidance.

Government guidance is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment and the associated Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide provide a comprehensive and essential reference on the historic environment. Other relevant guidance may include: PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS3 Housing, PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth,

Fig 1: Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area (Existing and Proposed)
(See page 6 for boundary review)



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

Regional and Sub-Regional Planning and Strategies.

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

- Regional Economic Strategy and Integrated Regional Framework
- Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Northumberland Local Area Agreement.
- Regional Cultural Strategy and Northumberland Cultural Strategy

Development Plan

The Wansbeck District Local Plan was adopted on 3 July 2007, replacing that adopted in 1994. The Local Plan will continue as the principle planning policy document for the former Wansbeck area until its policies are replaced by local development plan documents to be prepared as part of the new Northumberland Local Development Framework.

Relevant policies in the Wansbeck District Local Plan include GP17-19 Conservation Areas, GP6 Trees, GP10,11,13 Nature Conservation, GP14-16 Listed Buildings, GP20-21 Archaeology, GP30 Visual Impact, GP31 Urban Design, GP32 Landscaping & Public Realm, H5 Housing Design, RTC1 & 6-11 Town Centres, and REC12 Tourism.

The Site and its Surroundings

The proposals for a beach Style Café 'using a 40ft shipping container for restaurant use + 20ft shipping container for a kitchen area + separate 20ft shipping container to house surf boards has in general, been welcomed by residents of Newbiggin by the Sea. The seaside location continues to attract tourism and growth in this, is fundamental to the financial security of the business sector.



Drawing 276(90)02 Elevation 01.



Drawing 276(90)02 Elevation 02.

Design and Access

Our design details illustrate that careful consideration has been made for the safety and accessibility of all members of the public. Design drawing reference 276(20)01 has been developed to be in accordance with the Approved Document 'M' and the statutory requirements of the Building Regulations Approved Documentation.

Conclusions

We confirm that the principle of the development is supported under current development plan policy, especially as it is demonstrated that it will act as a sit-down café/restaurant. We confirm that the loss of usable external space is minimal, and justified by the benefits that will arise from the development.

Policy QOP 1 of the NLP states that developments should make 'a positive' contribution to the local character and distinctiveness and contribute to a positive relationship between built and natural features, including landform and topography. Policy QOP 3 is also relevant, specifically focussing upon public realm design principles. Developments in the public realm should create diverse, vibrant building and spaces which contribute to support a range of public activity and be physically and socially accessible and inclusive.

The repurposed shipping containers have been implemented across a wider region and can in some instances, benefit the appearance of a site or area. Our belief is that Newbiggin by the Sea will benefit enormously from the proposals, maintaining its heritage and stimulating growth and popularity of the seaside town.