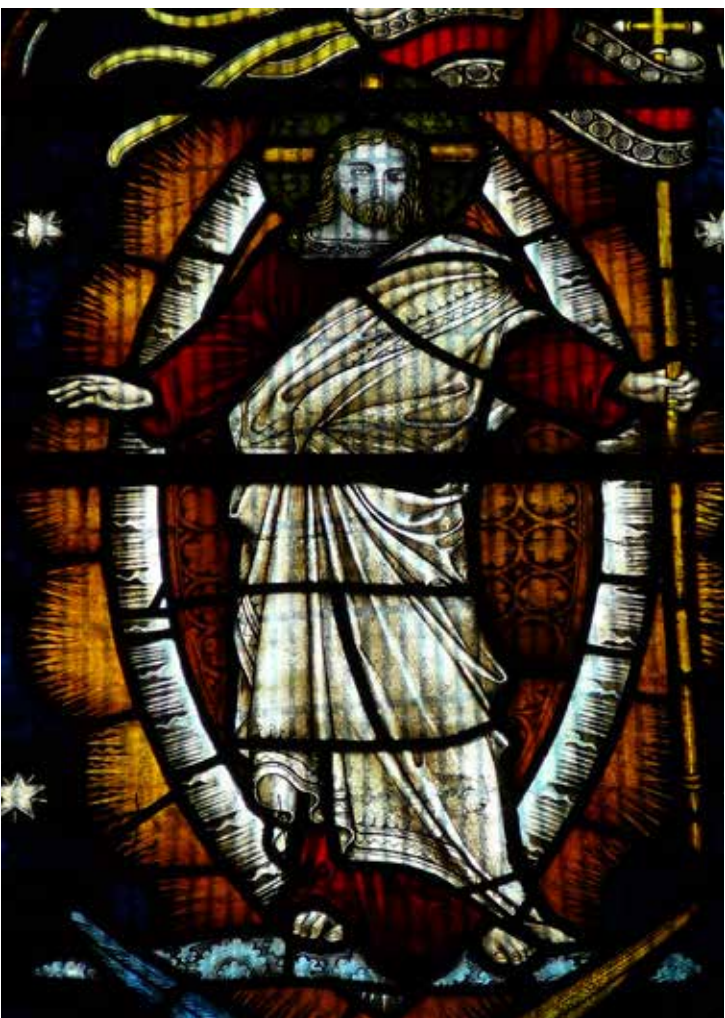


GREAT AYCLIFFE HERITAGE AND CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

NOVEMBER 2015



CONTENTS

Introduction and Approach 5

Public Consultation 10

Context 14

Historical Development 18

Character Assessment 24

Character Area Profiles 34

Appendix A: Schedule of Heritage Assets 96

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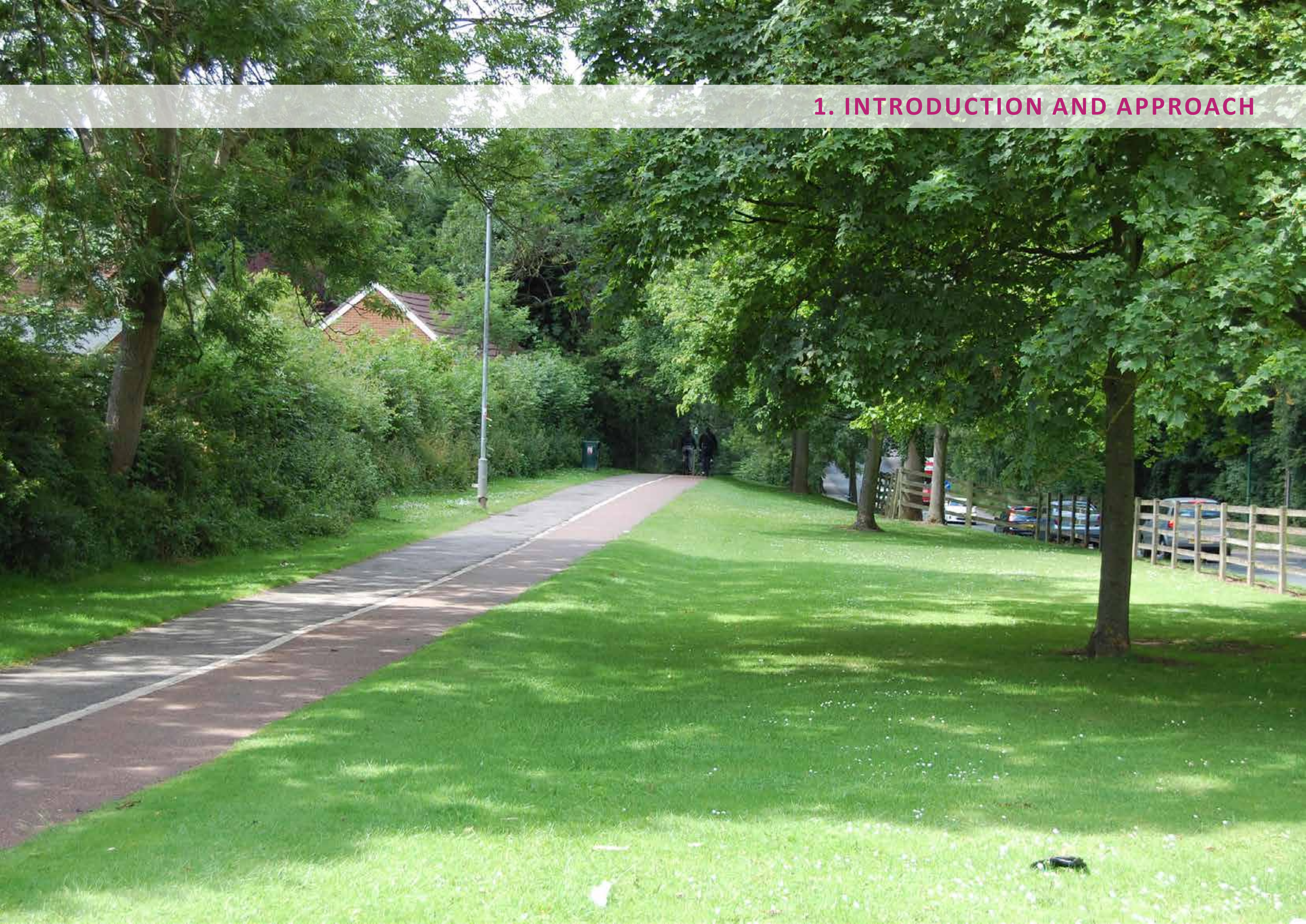
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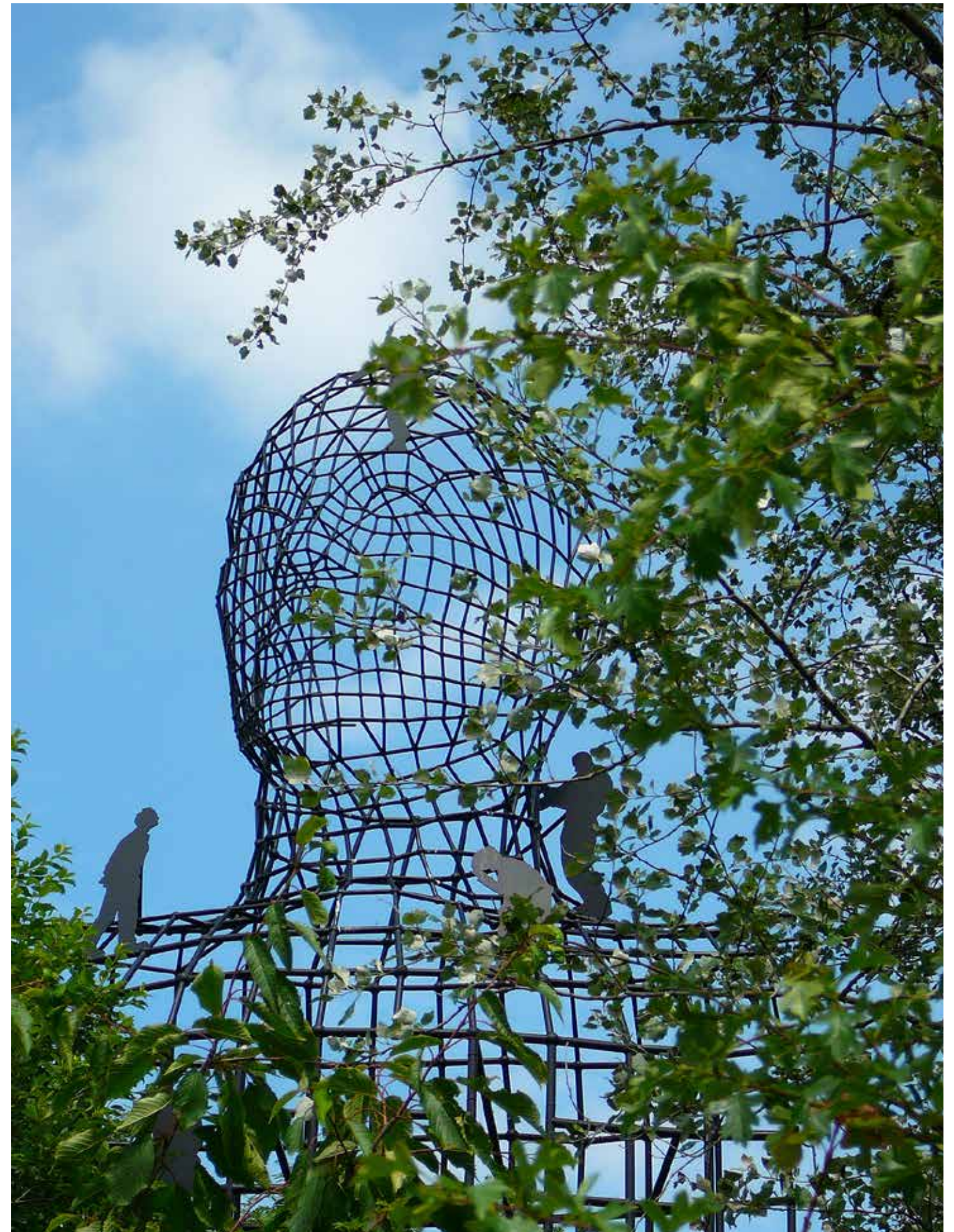
1. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH



This report presents a summary of the history and character of the Parish of Great Aycliffe, County Durham. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with Great Aycliffe Town Council, and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through desk study and fieldwork. It is intended to support the preparation of policies for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan and may also be used as evidence to support future updates of Aycliffe Village Conservation Area Statement.

Characterisation is a recognised approach to understanding the context and special qualities of a place which make it distinctive. The information generated can then be used as evidence to support the planning and design process and is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies based on an understanding and evaluation of the area's defining characteristics (DCLG, 2012).

The purpose of this report is to succinctly describe the historical development and key characteristics of Newton Aycliffe and Aycliffe Village. Policies can then be developed to ensure that new development considers local character and history, which reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.



'In Our Image'; a 16-metre high steel sculpture by Gateshead sculptor Joseph Hillier.



Traditional industrial building - Station Road, Aycliffe Business Park.

The approach of this study follows well-established landscape character assessment techniques. It has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood planning process and draws on best practice guidance including:

- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England 2014);
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (Historic England 2004);
- Character and identity: Townscape and heritage appraisals in housing market renewal areas (Historic England and CABE 2008); and
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010).

Landscape is defined by the European Landscape Convention as “..... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors.” This definition is broad and encompasses natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Landscape character assessment is a process used to describe and articulate what is special and distinctive about a particular place by identifying recognisable patterns of elements, or characteristics that make one landscape different from another.

The detailed desk study and fieldwork carried out to inform this assessment underpins the classification and description of Character Areas and broadly follows the process set out in the “Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Natural England, 2014).

2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION



AIMS OF THE CONSULTATIONS

Members of the local community and local interest groups were invited to share their knowledge and experience of the history, character and legibility of the area at workshops held by Great Aycliffe Town Council. The observations made have been used to inform the study.

A number of approaches were taken in order to develop an understanding of the town as a whole, to gain insight into local feelings towards each character area and to understand how residents perceive and use the public realm.

Approaches included:

- Presentations by Great Aycliffe Town Council on the value and benefits of character and heritage studies;
- Mapping what is good and bad about the town;
- Identifying issues using large scale base maps and flags; and
- Discussing specific character areas in order to develop an understanding of the general perceptions and needs of residents.



Mapping the good aspects of the town



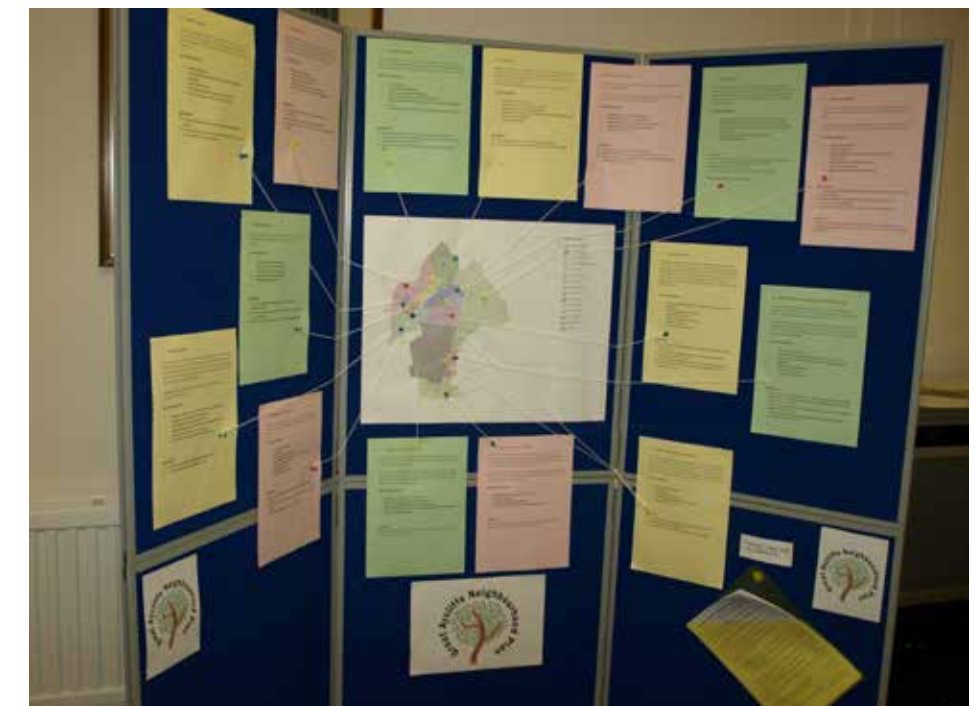
Mapping the bad aspects of the town



The Youth Council undertaking a mapping exercise



Example of mapping exercise outcomes



Detailing perceptions of each Character Area

SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO PERCEPTIONS AND ISSUES RELATING TO IDENTIFIED CHARACTER AREAS

Aycliffe Village Landscape Setting

1	Do you feel agree that the village and conservation area should be protected from adjacent developments?	YES 7	NO 2
2	Do you agree that the character area provides a valuable setting?	YES 9	NO 0

Aycliffe Village (including Conservation Area)

3	Do you agree that the village forms an important part of the town's heritage?	YES 8	NO 0
4	Do you agree that the village contains the most significant buildings in the town (St Andrew's Church)?	YES 8	NO 1
5	Do you feel that this setting is being affected by a close proximity to Aycliffe Business Park in any way?	YES 0	NO 8
6	Do you consider overlooking greenspace more important than parking immediately outside your home?	YES 4	NO 5

Open Farmland

7	Do you agree that the open areas of farmland are typical of the surrounding rural landscape?	YES 10	NO 0
8	Do you think that it is important to screen development from the surrounding rural landscape?	YES 7	NO 3
9	Do you consider the area to have recreational value (walking etc)?	YES 10	NO 0

Original New Town

10	Do you consider the greenspace ratio to development appropriate within the character area?	YES 8	NO 0
11	Do you consider overlooking greenspace more important than parking immediately outside your home?	YES 5	NO 4
12	Do you agree that the New Town character area is of national significance?	YES 8	NO 2
13	Do you think local centres such as Simpasture and Neville Parade are valuable to the area?	YES 9	NO 0

School Aycliffe

14	Are you aware of listed buildings within School Aycliffe?	YES 2	NO 2
15	Do you consider School Aycliffe to be a village?	YES 4	NO 5

Simpasture / West Park

16	Do you agree that the parkland setting provides valuable recreational facilities?	AGREE 10	DISAGREE 0
17	Are the parks a town wide asset or are they used exclusively by immediate residents?	YES 9	EXCLUSIVE 1
18	What is the most valuable feature within the area?	Parks (3), open spaces (2), lake (2), shops, green areas, settled community	

Burn Lane South

19	How would you rate the area for accessibility?	GOOD 8	POOR 0
20	What is the most valuable feature within the character area?	The Burn (2), central access, green lungs,	
21	Do you consider overlooking greenspace more important than parking immediately outside your home?	YES 3	NO 3

Burn Lane Central

22	Do you feel that open areas of grass add value to residential areas?	YES 8	NO 1
23	Do you think that the black, yellow and red brick of each estate should be retained in any future development?	YES 4	NO 4
24	Do you agree that it is positive that all residents can access Woodham Burn?	YES 9	NO 0

Williamfield Way

25	Do you feel that the flat roofed properties are characterful or are a detrimental feature?	CHARACTER 3	DETRIMENTAL 8
26	Do you feel as though an abundance of greenspace in this area creates large areas of unused space?	YES 1	NO 7
27	How would you rate the quality of the greenspace in this character area?	GOOD 7	POOR 0

Alston Crescent

28	Do you agree that footpaths which are separated from highways are valued?	YES 7	NO 1
29	Do you think that local centres such as convenience stores and churches etc. are valuable areas of public realm?	YES 8	NO 0

Burn Lane North

30	Do you think cul-de-sacs form social communities or exclusive communities?	SOCIAL 8	EXCLUSIVE 1
31	Do you place value on local centres such as Cobbler's Hall?	YES 9	NO 1
32	Do you think all greenspace should be accessible or should be protected for wildlife?	ACCESSIBLE 4	PROTECTED 6

Woodham

33	Do you feel that Woodham is an exclusive section of town?	YES 5	NO 3
34	Do you feel that the green areas of the golf course add to the setting?	YES 3	NO 1

CONSULTATIONS FINDINGS

A number of key considerations emerged from the consultation which have informed the preparation of the study. These are summarised below:

POSITIVE

- Aycliffe Village is a positive aspect of the town which forms an important part of the town's heritage;
- St. Andrew's Church is the most significant historic building within the town;
- Open areas of farmland are typical of the wider landscape character and have high recreational value in terms of walking etc;
- The town's green space form an essential setting within residential areas;
- The town's parks form an essential setting and are well used by residents on a town wide scale;
- Local centres such as Simpasture, Neville Parade and Cobbler's Hall are valuable community assets;
- Woodham Burn and the Great Aycliffe Way are regarded as great assets for the town;
- Off road pedestrian routes are a valuable asset; and
- The abundance of trees and tree lined avenues have been referred to by some as the town's 'lungs'.

NEGATIVE

- A number of building types form detrimental features, including flat roofed properties surrounding Williamfield Way;
- There are a number of unused shops;
- A number of buildings are 'old and scruffy'; and
- There is a perception that the town centre is run down, which may be a result of inactive frontages.

OTHER

- A number of consultation contributors recognised that not all green space should be accessible but should be protected for wildlife;
- Landscape buffers are an important feature that protect assets such as the New Town area and Aycliffe Village;
- The New Town development is considered to be of national significance;
- Participants were evenly divided when considering if parking outside your own home was more important than overlooking green space; and
- It is important to appropriately screen the effects of future development within open areas in order to maintain rural characteristics.



Defining the goods and bads of the town

3. CONTEXT



This section of the report describes the location and context of the Parish of Great Aycliffe and summarises current planning policies which are relevant to the assessment.

LOCATION

Newton Aycliffe is a town in the north east of England, falling within the wider boundaries of County Durham. Founded in 1947 under the New Towns Act of 1946, it is the oldest 'New Town' in the north of England.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the town is within a wider agricultural landscape. There are larger settlements in proximity including Durham to the north, Stockton and Middlesbrough to the east and Darlington to the south. To the west the land rises towards the North Pennines AONB.

NEWTON AYCLIFFE

The town covers an area of approximately 2,400 hectares with residential estates and a large area of business and industry to the south of the town centre. Large areas of open space are located within the developed area which connect to the surrounding agricultural areas.

Aycliffe Business Park is a major employer and includes companies such as Gestamp Tallent; Husqvarna, Ebac, Permold, Lucite, Compound Photonics, Lidl, Stiller and the recent addition of Hitachi.

The town is home to approximately 26,633 people^[1], representing an average population density of around 10.8 people per hectare; the average at county level is 2.3 people per hectare^[2].

[1] Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011

[2] Great Aycliffe and Middridge Area Action Partnership - 2012 Statistical Profile

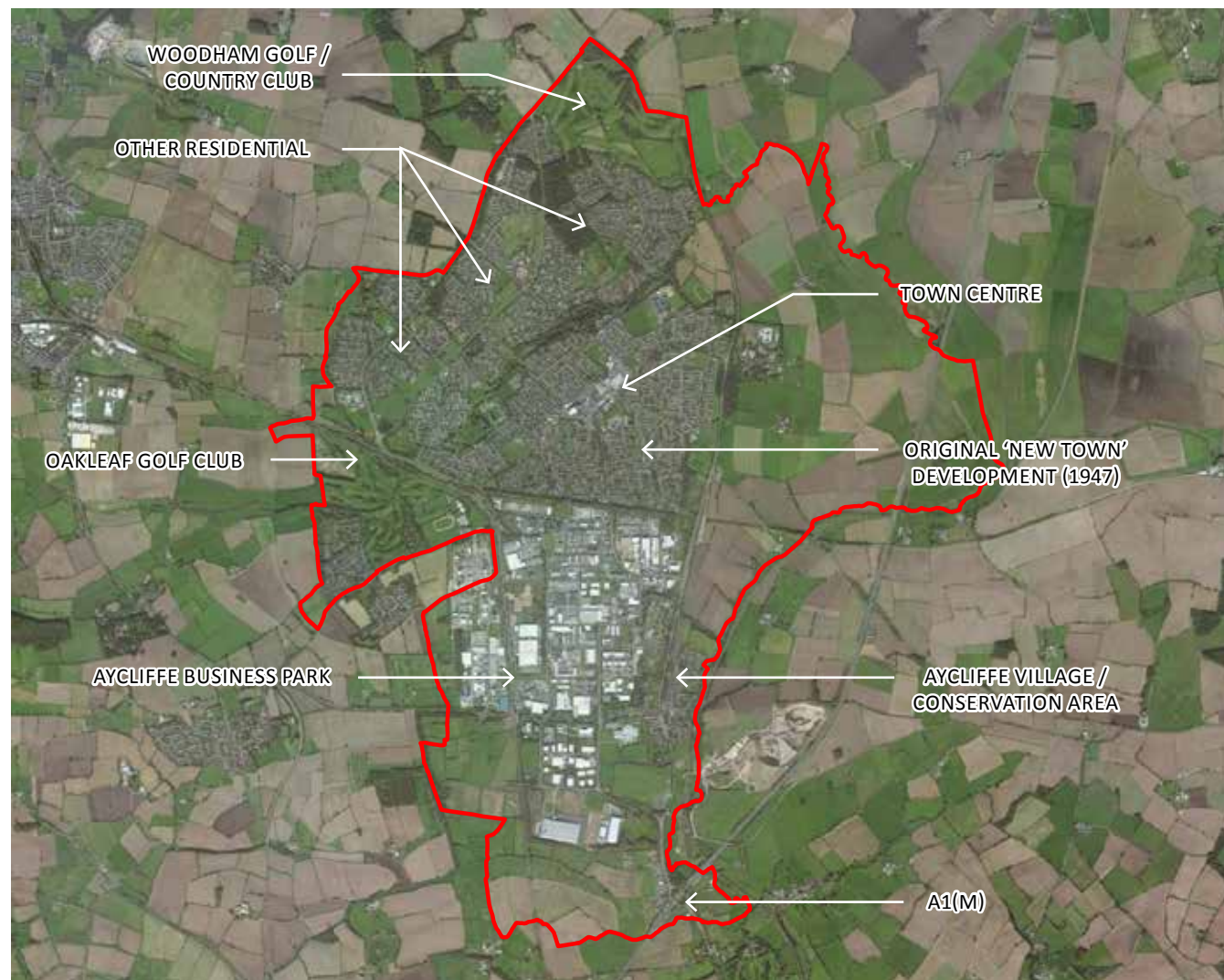


Figure 1: Newton Aycliffe Boundary Plan

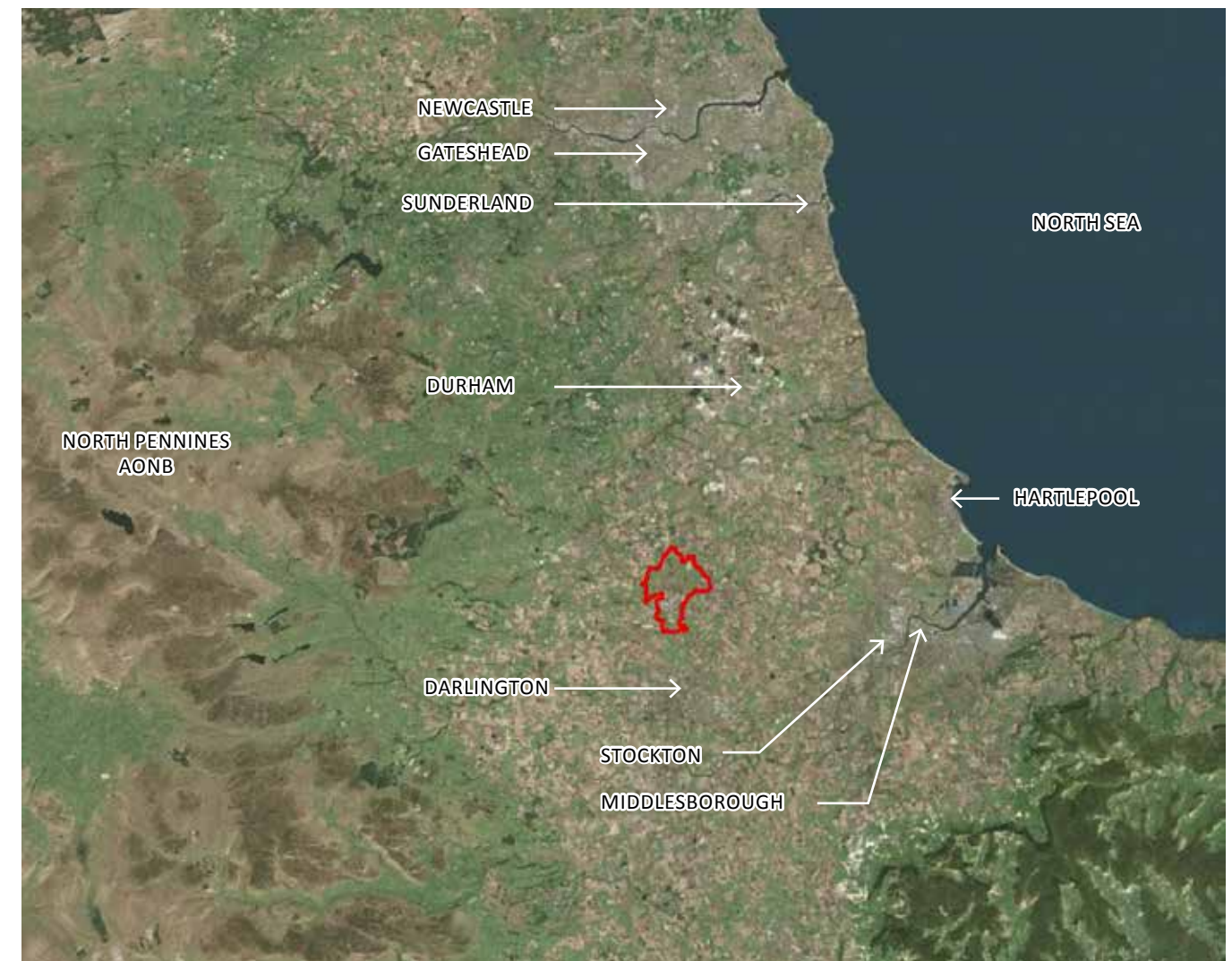


Figure 2: Newton Aycliffe Location Plan

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2012 (NPPF)

The NPPF was published by The Department for Communities and Local Government in 2012. It requires local authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive vision for the enhancement and enjoyment of heritage assets. Part 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment clearly states that local authorities should recognise “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness” and should seek “Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place”.

PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE 2014 (PPG)

The Planning Practice Guidance was published by The Department for Communities and Local Government in 2014. The section on design includes guidance on promoting landscape character (Paragraph: 007Reference ID: 26-007-20140306). It states that “development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development” and that the “successful integration of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective”.

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The current Development Plan for County Durham is made up of the ‘saved’ policies of Local Plans. Saved policies in Local Plans will continue to influence development decisions until the County Durham Plan replaces them.

The County Durham Plan will directly link with the Sustainable Community Strategy which includes key areas, one of which is:

- Altogether Greener - ensuring an attractive and ‘liveable’ local environment, and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

County Durham is currently covered by nine separate Local Plans, which provide the basis for making decisions on planning applications, and help to influence the location and type of development that is built.

SEDFIELD BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN, 1996 (SAVED POLICIES)

A number of saved policies within Sedgfield Local Plan relate to development within Newton Aycliffe.

Design

Saved policy D1 ‘Reason for the Policy’ states:
‘New developments should include areas of amenity open space and landscaping to create a pleasant setting for the development. The standards for the provision of open space within new housing areas are set out in Policy L2. A high standard of landscaping will be expected particularly around developments in the countryside and on the periphery of settlements’.

Environment

Saved policy E4 states:

‘Proposals for built development will normally be refused in the following green wedges which provide the setting of towns and villages:

- South and west of Aycliffe Village’

Saved policy E18 states:

- The council will seek to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the borough’s conservation areas...

Industry and business

Saved policy IB1 states:

The Borough Council will normally approve planning applications that maintain in appropriate locations a range of land available for industry and business comprising the following types of sites:

- (A) Prestige Business Area
- (B) General Industrial Areas
- (C) Local Industrial Areas
- (D) Business Areas

Saved policy IB2 states:

‘Existing industrial estates in the borough as shown on the proposals map are designated as one of the following types of sites:

- (A) Prestige Business Areas
Aycliffe Industrial Park (Part), Newton Aycliffe.
- (B) General Industrial Areas
Aycliffe Industrial Park (Part), Newton Aycliffe.

Leisure, Community and Tourism

Saved policy L2 states:

‘In housing developments of 10 or more dwellings, open space will normally be required to be provided within or adjacent to the development at the following standards (derived from policy I 1), for every 10 dwellings a minimum of:

- 100 sq.m. of informal play space; and
- 500 sq.m. of amenity space’.

Saved policy L5 states:

‘Planning permission for development which would result in the loss of an area of open space, will not normally be granted other than in the following circumstances:

- for the development of new recreational facilities related to the open space area;
- for the development of a small part of a larger area of open space to enable the remainder to be enhanced;
- when an alternative area of open space of similar or improved quality and accessibility will be provided; or
- for the use of a small part of a larger area to provide off-street parking for adjacent dwellings in areas of car parking shortage.

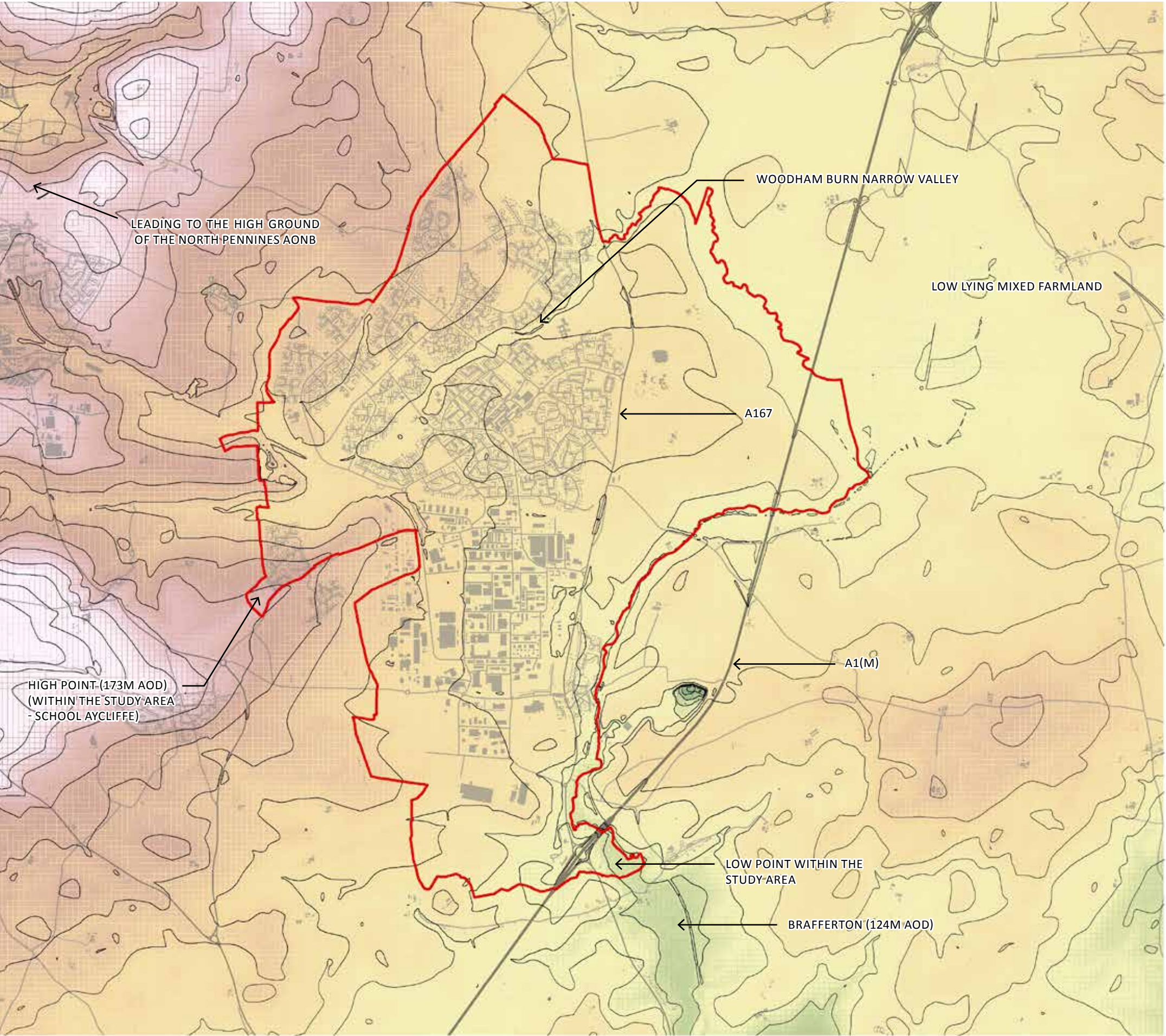
Development of areas of open space should not prejudice:

- the availability and distribution of open space within the settlement in accordance with policy L1;
- the environmental quality of the site; or
- the amenity or wildlife value of the site’.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

The following documents sit under Local Plans and provide additional detail where it is needed:

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents cover a range of issues such as house extensions and conversion of rural buildings. SPGs relate to specific Local Plans and district areas.
- Conservation Area Appraisals (CAA) relate to specific conservation areas in County Durham. CAAs express the special character of a conservation area and contain recommendations for ways to improve them.



As shown in Figure 3, the town lies on the eastern edge of the Pennines and as such the land in the western part of the town is higher than in the east where the topography is influenced by the River Skerne.

School Aycliffe forms the highest section within the town's boundaries (173m AOD). The lowest point of the study area (25m AOD) is located in the south east corner of the study area towards Brafferton.

Figure 3: Topography

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Aycliffe is believed to have Iron Age origins. Very little is known about the area in the Roman period. Whilst it is certain that Romans settled nearby, there is little, if any, traces of them within the area.

Aycliffe (in old records written variously Acuf, Aicliffe, Acclijfe, and Ayhley) is supposed to have derived its name from the old oak woods which stood there. Although in a letter dated 1606, King James I accused the dean and chapter of having wasted and spoiled the old oak wood of Aycliffe, however, it was not until the civil war period that the oak wood was totally destroyed.

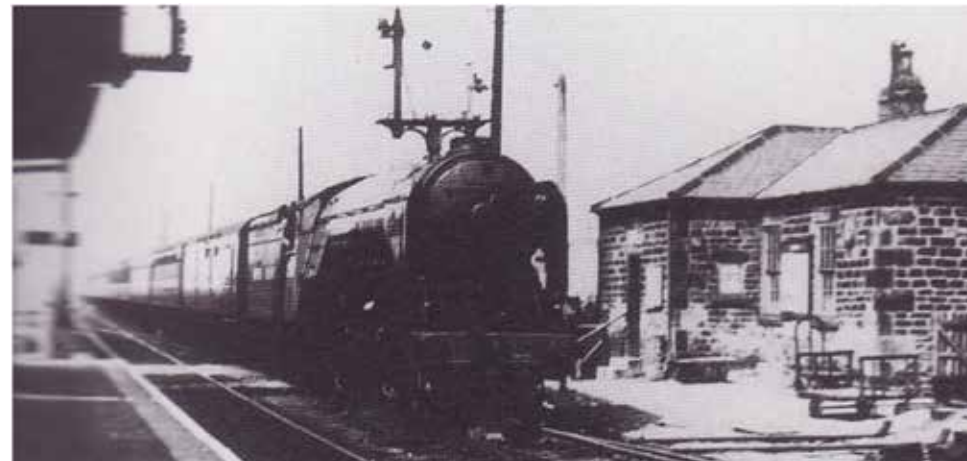
Aycliffe (particularly the village) is certainly believed to have Anglo Saxon origins built around the parish church of St. Andrew's which displays evidence of Anglo-Saxon construction and 10th Century masonry. Although most of the present church is of later date, it does denote that the church and the area were perhaps in continuous habitation. The church illustrates this through later alterations. Several carved stone fragments found at the church are the remains of late Anglo-Saxon crosses. The church would have been the only Anglo-Saxon building on the site built in materials of any permanence, denoting its importance. Other dwellings would have been huts constructed of wattle and daub, which have not survived.

Saxon Aycliffe is believed to have disappeared after 1069 at the hands of the Norman invaders. A new village was built on the present site of Aycliffe Village in the 11th or 12th Century, leaving the church isolated. The layout of the roads and open spaces has largely remained until this day, although the buildings have been replaced and renewed. The wider area would have been mostly made up of farm buildings, farm workers' cottages, barns and other agricultural buildings which is still evident within the wider landscape setting today.

Great Aycliffe would have still been a relatively peaceful agricultural area up until the late 18th - early 19th Century, when quarries and water driven mills powered by the River Skerne became numerous and the gradual industrialisation of the area would have become more evident. During the first half of the 19th Century the population grew in consequence of the extensive working of the limestone quarries. The scars of the quarrying can still be seen today east of Aycliffe Village. The quarries extended and consumed land to the immediate south of the Church of St Andrew.

By 1851 Aycliffe contained 198 inhabited and 23 uninhabited houses, and fourteen farms, a paper and two corn-mills and a windmill. The village also contained four inns and public houses, with several masons', blacksmiths', joiners', grocers', and other tradesmen's shops; and three lime kilns in the wider vicinity. Aycliffe Village was central to much of the activity within the area.

The Industrial Revolution and the coming of the railways had a major influence on the development of the area. George Stephenson built the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1821. This, The Stockton, Hartlepool, and Clarence line and the York, Newcastle, and Berwick railways, all passed through the study area bringing with it increased connections, and further intensive industrialisation of the once agricultural area. This brought with it an increase of migration to the area to support their construction and the industries they supported, particularly coal mining.



Heighington Station

Coal had brought great prosperity to the area from the 1830s and through into the rest of the 19th Century and early into the 20th Century. By 1910, however, the most accessible seams of coal were nearly worked out and the subsequent exhaustion of deeper workings meant that the majority of the collieries had closed by 1930.



High Street, Aycliffe Village 1934



ROF housing during WWII

During the Second World War it was decided to site a Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Aycliffe to take advantage of the high level of unemployed women that the war created. Aycliffe was chosen due to the proximity of the A1, reasonably good rail links and the immediate vicinity was sparsely populated. The marshy location was also ideal, as the site was shrouded in fog and mist for much of the year providing cover from any enemy raids.



Aycliffe Angels ROF Aycliffe 1942 – 1945

The war time ordnance factory sited there in 1939/40 covered an area of about 867 acres (347ha). At its peak it employed some 16,000 workers drawn from a wide catchment area in a radius of up to 30 miles. The factory's layout accounts for its very substantial acreage; it was planned with special regard to safety considerations and over 1,000 buildings were scattered widely over the site. Many of them were protected by mounds, to minimise damage in the event of explosion and some were built entirely underground to service storage magazines. As the workers were mainly women they became known as the Aycliffe Angels.

Whilst the existing buildings had been hastily erected and were not well suited for peace time production, it was this former ROF site and its buildings that helped create the foundations for the new town.



Aycliffe ROF during WWII

It was Ebenezer Howard’s, Garden Cities movement that provided the framework for the New Towns policy, instituted by the British Government after the Second World War, and subsequently copied throughout the world. However the key to the realisation of Howard’s Garden City concept was that the Estate Company was to recoup the ‘unearned increment’ of additional land values arising from development, and use excess profits for ancillary development including amenities. The Garden Cities movement demonstrated both the feasibility and value of large scale development as a means of relieving city congestion and providing a better environment for both leisure and work, while at the same time demonstrating that both planning and development had to be long term and financed by ‘patient money’ i.e. prepared to wait for a return on its investment. Following two world wars and the economic depression of the 1930s, the state’s appetite for intervention quickened and Howard’s Garden City movement evolved into the post-war New Towns movement. The policy of national planning was quickening at a pace during the war, paving the way for bold measures.

The impetus for the New Town of Newton Aycliffe came from central government rather than local pressure and stemmed from its industrial past, specifically, its dependency on coal and heavy engineering and the decline of these industries around Aycliffe and the surrounding area. Aycliffe’s strategic position adjacent

to the A1 and the railway link was an obvious point for economic growth to help stop further decline.

The Beveridge Report of 1942 pledged to destroy poverty, homelessness, unemployment, ignorance and disease – and the new government was expected to create a ‘Welfare’ state, which would care for its citizens from the cradle to the grave. Lord Beveridge adopted the new town as the flagship of his new welfare state. He envisaged a ‘classless’ town, where manager and mechanic would live next door to each other in council houses. Newton Aycliffe was to be ‘a paradise for housewives’ with houses grouped around greens, so children could play safely away from the roads.

The New Towns Act was introduced in 1946 to ensure the planned decentralisation of congested areas, with additional aims of providing self-contained and balanced communities for work and living. A Development Corporation and its members were charged with securing the layout and development of the town. The pre-eminent virtue of the new towns legislation was its flexibility. The adaptability is truly evident at Aycliffe, which was established for social purposes, but has evolved into an economic growth point bringing in new industries into being to redress the balance between the old and declining predecessors.

The idea of the New Town at Aycliffe was developed to provide housing and ancillary facilities in support of the very large adjoining industrial estate, newly converted from the ROF. Many of the buildings at the end of the war were handed over to private industries and used by North East Trading Estates Limited, a company set up to attract trade and new industry to the North of England. North East Trading Estates Limited attracted 60 firms and an initial total employment of approximately 2,000 workers.



Clarence Chare first houses - Pre fabs 1948

The Grenfell–Baines Group, under the leadership of Sir George Grenfell Baines, architect and socialist, was chosen to prepare the New Town’s Masterplan. On the 12th February 1947 the intention to create a new town at Aycliffe was publicly announced. The principal reason for Aycliffe being selected was to provide accommodation for some of the workers on the adjoining industrial estate. The Aycliffe New Town (Designation) Order was made on 19 April 1947, and Aycliffe became one of the six new towns designated before the end of 1947 (Stevenage, Crawley, Hemel Hempstead, Harlow, and East Kilbride were the others). Aycliffe was the first New Town in the North of England.



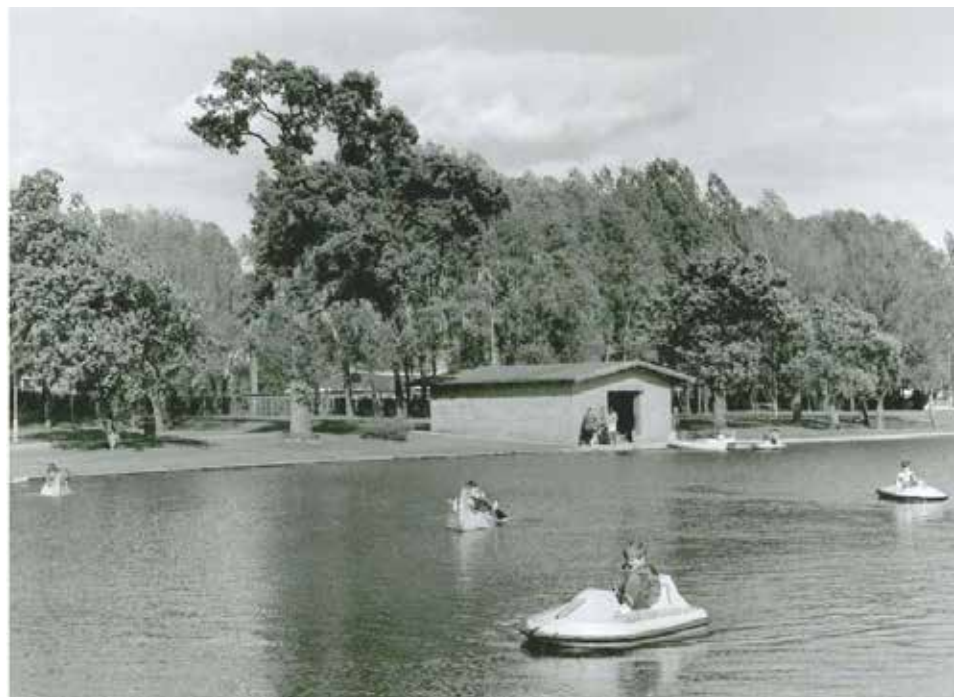
Neville Parade shops 1950s



Sheraton Road, New Town development 1950s

Initial housing development at Aycliffe was very much influenced by the concept of a balanced community. The intention to create a socially and physically balanced community was specifically stated in the 1951 Durham County Council Development Plan and in the New Town's Masterplan. The Grenfell-Baines Masterplan also broke new ground as it sought to apply social science to planning by consulting sociologists on proposals. It based plans on the function of spaces and then fitting roads around those rather than the other way around. For example social activities were difficult in long wide streets but easy in squares, crescents and cul-de-sacs and these would need appropriate space. Before drawing up the masterplan the Group looked at local villages and regional styles of architecture and identified that nearly all villages were built around village greens.

Lord Beveridge opened the first house on Tuesday, 9 November 1948. Housing was developed in six wards, each with 3,000 dwellings. Unfortunately the idea for a village green was lost although the Masterplan had paid special attention to the social aspects of the new town's development and provided each ward with community as well as shopping facilities, centrally placed in the ward and at a distance of only one quarter of a mile from the furthest dwellings. The facilities provided included a number of shops, together with a post office. The proposals also included provisions for at least 50 shops in the town centre. In reality few of these facilities were forthcoming. Although a town hall was never built, the Development Corporation took as their headquarters a block of offices in the town centre called Churchill House. Churchill House has a 77ft high campanile and clock tower which provided a focal point within the town centre, although development of the town centre and further facilities was slow to follow.



Boating lake at West Park 1950s

The close ties with the Industrial Estate and its prosperity meant that unlike other new towns the Development Corporation was limited to building no more houses than were necessary to match that growth.

The Development Corporation had another issue in that it had no powers and very limited means of tempting others to help provide facilities at an early stage. Private developers were unwilling to invest in shops or such amenities such as cinemas and restaurants before the population had risen to a level sufficient to support them on a profitable basis.



Town centre 1950s.

By June 1953 Lord Beveridge, who had come to live in the town, opened the 1,000th house (houses were being painted pink and yellow, to prevent the 'new town blues'). By 1955, the town comprised a triangle of housing, bounded by the Clarence Railway to the south, Shafto Way to the east, and Central Avenue and Pease Way to the north. The population stood at 6,600.



Aerial view 1958



Simpasture shops 1950s

The 1960s and the Halisham report 'The North East – A programme for regional development and growth' brought a boost to Newton Aycliffe bringing with it proposals for the growth of the town from 20,000 to 45,000, with an emphasis on infrastructure and public services, particularly the upgrading of the A1 to motorway standards. As a result, although not fully enacted, a further masterplan was drawn up by Messrs C Edmund Wilford and Son that was to cover an additional area of about 1,700 acres lying to the north west, west and south west of the town. There were many objections to the proposed expansion, despite these the expansion was confirmed on 13 April 1966 with a target population of 45,000 by 1971. However, by March 1971 the population of the new town was only 23,588. The new extension to Aycliffe meant that the town centre facilities were also to be expanded. This included the redevelopment of the town centre to provide additional shopping space and office facilities and the building of the sports and recreational centre by the 1970s. The target population was further revised to 32,000 by 1991. This target had implications for the future development of the town centre. In 1974 there were further aspirations for the town including an arts centre and theatre to be added to the sports and recreation centre, a substantial development store with parking and an office block. Some other minor additions were made in 1977-78 with a Boots store and conversion of first floor flats into shops. However, it was felt that



Royal visit 1960

the three major developments were key to the completion of the town centre. Plans for an arts centre and theatre were abandoned due to lack of funds, whilst development started on a department store and a roof top car park. Thames House was completed in 1983 and provided office facilities as well as a shopping arcade and a public house. Aycliffe Town Centre was subsequently sold by the Aycliffe Development Corporation in 1984 to the Grainger Trust.

By the late 1970s, the myth of a ‘classless town’ was considered out-of-date. Private contractors were allowed to build new housing estates – for instance Byerley Park, the Chase and Woodham Village (after 1981). In September 1979 the development corporation began selling its council houses. By the end of the 1970s new housing had been added in the Horndale, Byerley Park, the Chase, Burnhill and Agnew areas. The population neared 28,000.

The proposal to build a golf course at the northern edge of the Aycliffe had been in the Development Corporation’s programme for a considerable number of years. The golf course brought with it rapid development of the Woodham area during the 1980s. Woodham Village was proposed for 3,000 inhabitants, including not only 1,000 houses but a complete village centre comprising shops, licensed premises, churches and a community centre. There was a settlement called Woodham in pre-Norman times and this was fully embraced by the Development Corporation. Woodham Manor was also famous for horse racing during the reign of King James I, who attended meetings personally in the early 17th Century. This link with Woodham’s equestrian past has been maintained through the adoption of equestrian related street names.

In 1998, the town which was Beveridge’s ‘bold experiment’ celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, when the first Great Aycliffe Way circular walking route was developed.

The new millennium has seen the further development of the town through additional funding into local industry and community ventures. In 2008 Newton Aycliffe received a war memorial, and in November 2009, the ‘In Our Image’ sculpture was lowered into place at the southern entrance to the town. The town centre also changed with the redevelopment of the Avenue site with a Tesco supermarket, new Youth Centre and a Town Centre Park. A halt on development within the town centre brought frustrations and a stall to development. The issue



Woodham Village Centre

of Aycliffe’s town centre was brought to the attention of the public in the House of Commons, and eventually work restarted on the second phase in 2011. In the same year Japanese firm Hitachi confirmed the development of a new railway factory. This has vastly expanded the business park.



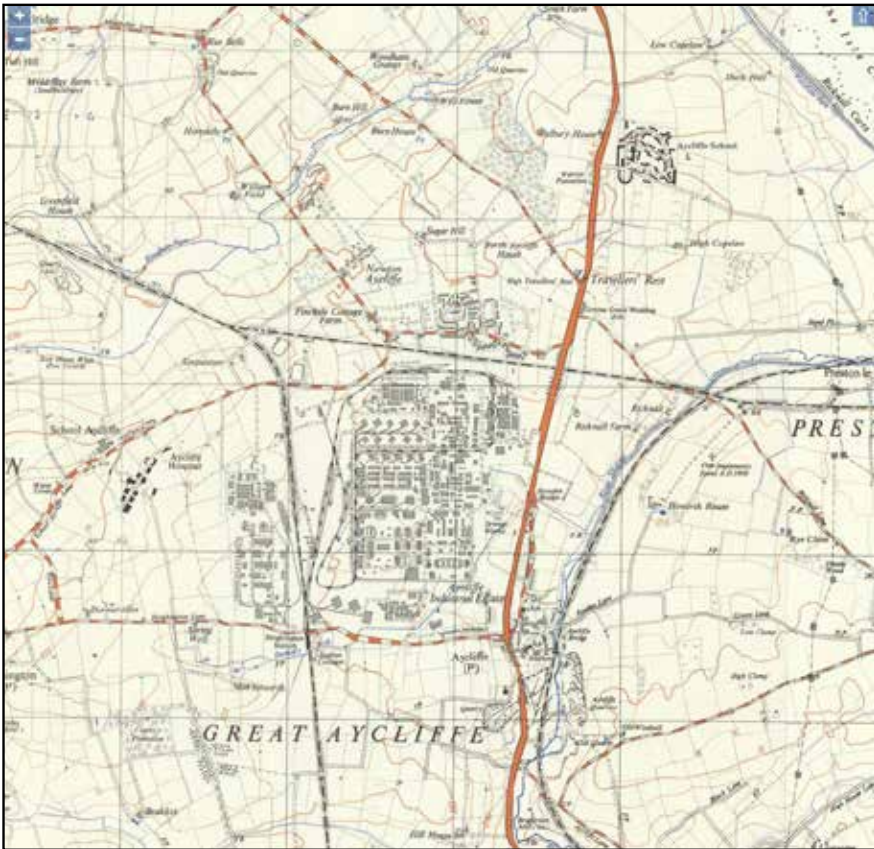
Aycliffe War Memorial - installed 2008



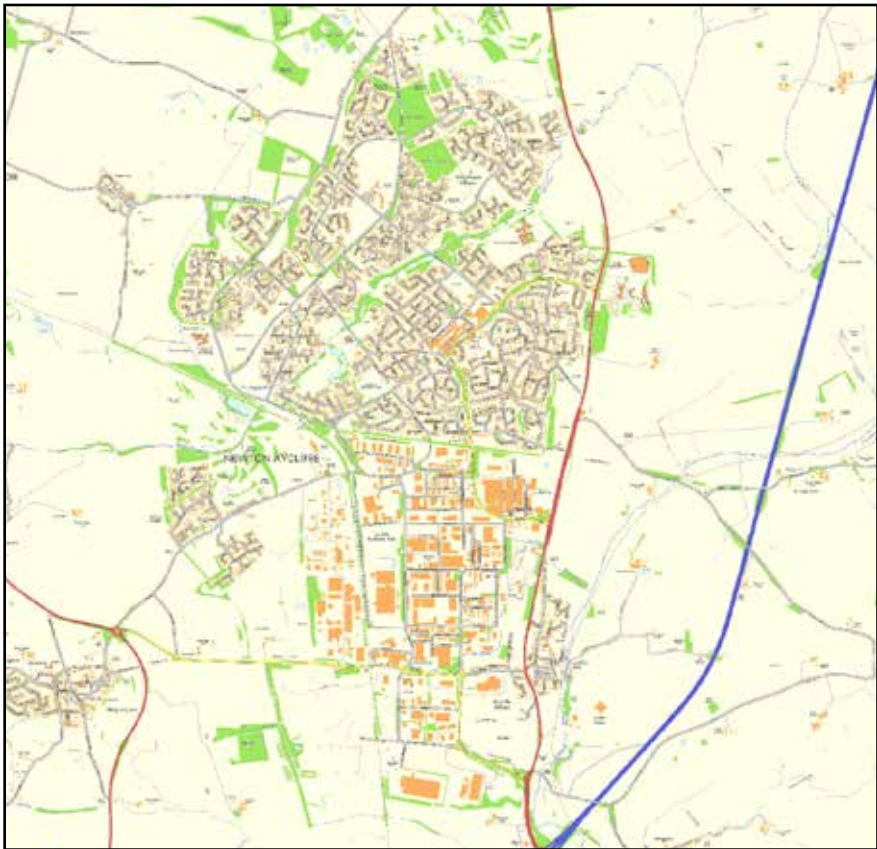
Map1 – First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map 1856 showing Aycliffe Village prior to the siting of the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) in 1939/1940 and the new town. Aycliffe Village remained relatively unaltered until the Great North Road was re-routed in 1934.



Map 3 – OS Map 1961 showing the extent of the new town development to the north of the Industrial Estate.



Map 2 – OS Map 1:25,000 1953 showing the extent of the former World War II ROF site and its transition to the Aycliffe Industrial Estate after the war.



Map 4 – 2015 Map showing current extent of Newton Aycliffe with increased residential development to the north.

4. CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



Existing character assessments have been reviewed to provide some context to this more detailed assessment. The general character and setting of Newton Aycliffe is described in the profiles of **National Character Areas (NCA) published by Natural England**, as shown in **Figure 4**. The key characteristics of NCA 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau and NCA Profile: 23 Tees Lowlands are summarised below:

NCA Profile: 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau

- Open, agricultural landscape;
- Scattered traditional stone villages built around village greens; and 'New Towns'; and
- Local nature reserves and a good access network, particularly along disused colliery railways which provide local residents with good opportunities for outdoor recreation.

NCA Profile: 23 Tees Lowlands

- A broad, open plain;
- Agricultural land is intensively farmed, with large fields and sparse woodland; and
- Green corridors such as minor valleys and former railway lines provide links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside.

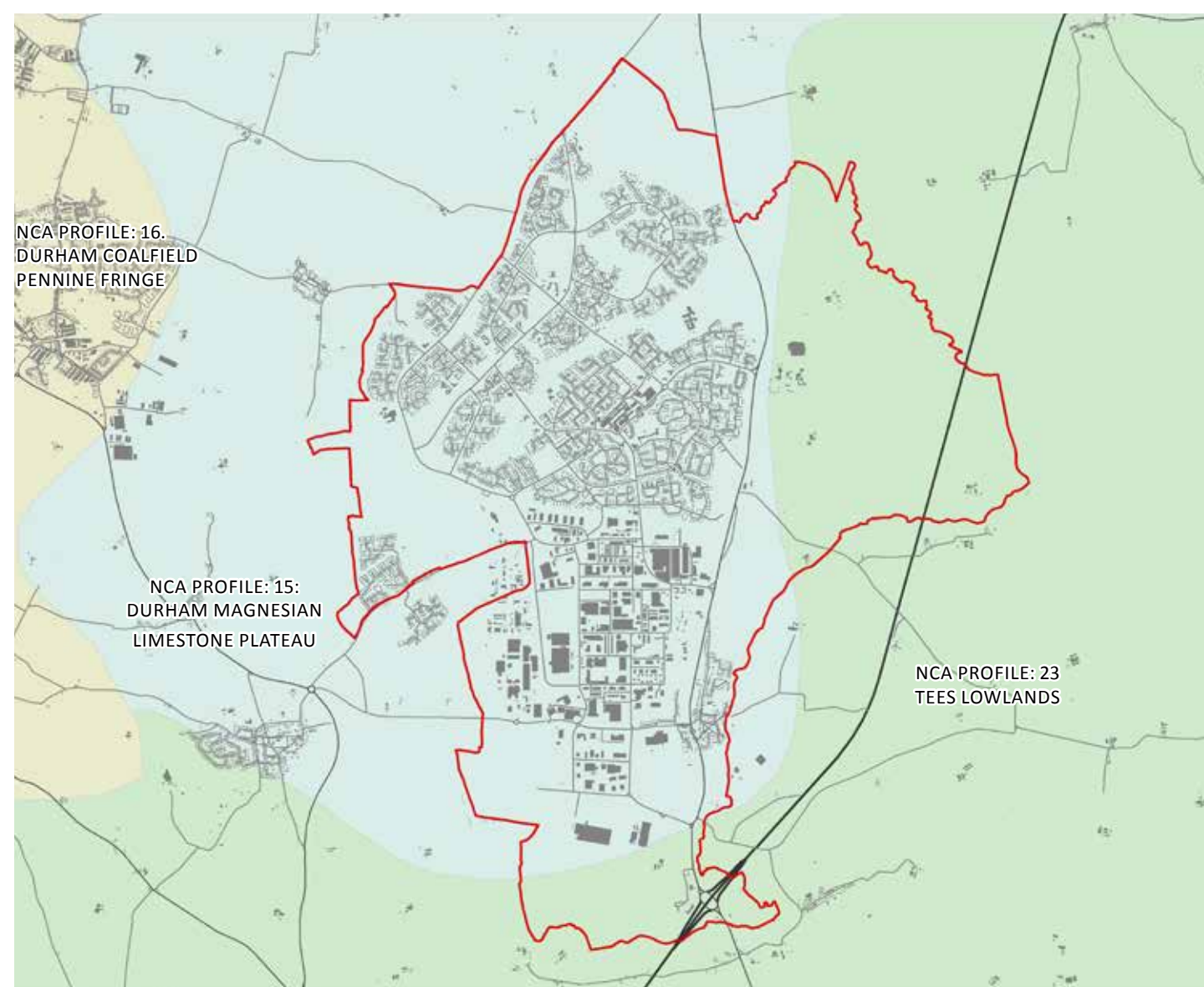


Figure 4: Landscape Character Areas

Approximately 5km to the west of the study area is NCA 16: Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe. Whilst outside of the study area this NCA offers an indication of the wider landscape setting of Newton Aycliffe.

NCA Profile: 16: Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe

- a transitional landscape between the North Pennines NCA to the west and the Tyne and Wear Lowlands NCA to the east; and
- Some 3% (2,252 ha) of the NCA lies within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and 204 ha falls within the North Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area, designated for its habitats.

In addition the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008) identifies 23 Broad Landscape Character Types, of which Newton Aycliffe falls into two areas defined as: **Limestone Escarpment** and **Lowland Plain**. The salient points of each Broad Landscape Character Type is identified as:

Limestone Escarpment

- A low escarpment, deeply dissected in places to form a series of short valleys between well-defined spurs;
- Gently rounded topography of soft magnesian limestone covered in places by glacial drift;
- Semi-regular patterns of medium and large-scale fields bounded by low, clipped hawthorn hedges;
- Occasional small 'green' villages on ridge tops and valley floors. Scattered mining towns and villages; and
- Rural in character in places but with a semi-rural or urban fringe quality in settled areas.

Lowland Plain

- Open lowland plain.
- Gently rolling or undulating topography with areas of flat or hummocky terrain;
- Mixed but largely arable farmland of cereals and oil-seed rape;
- Semi-regular patterns of old enclosures, often fragmented by amalgamation into large arable fields;
- Low clipped hawthorn hedges;
- Nucleated pattern of small green villages connected by winding lanes. Many shrunken or deserted medieval villages;
- Heavily wooded areas create a greater degree of enclosure and a more intimate scale; and
- A sparsely settled rural landscape.

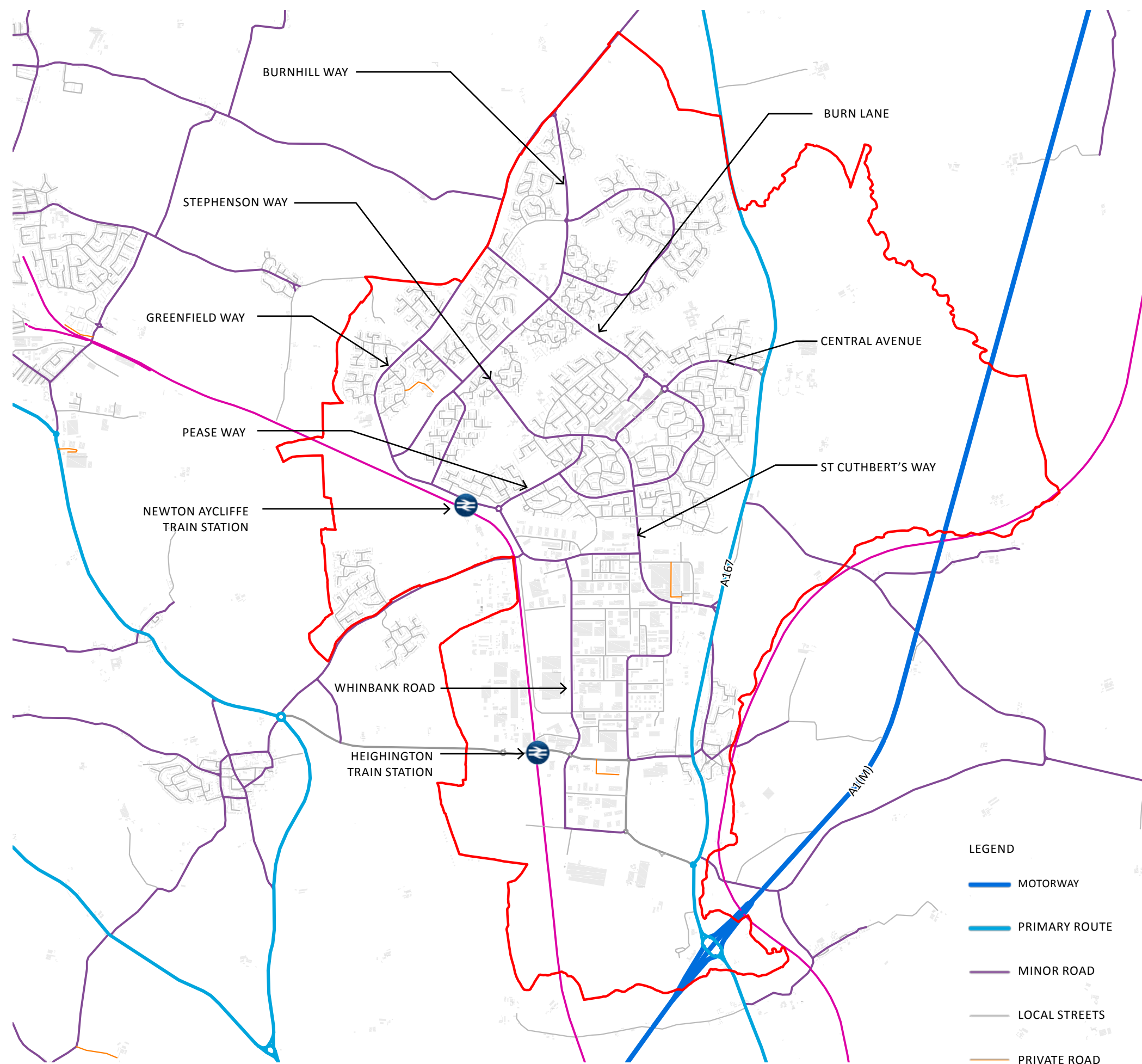


Figure 5: Movement Plan

Figure 5 indicates the main connections within and surrounding Great Aycliffe. The town is connected to the national road network via the A1(M), which lies to the east of the town and connects to Durham (13 miles), Gateshead (29 miles), Newcastle (32 miles) and Sunderland (27 miles) in the north and Harrogate (50 miles), Leeds (70 miles) and York (63 miles) in the south.

The A167 forms the eastern edge of the town's developed area and was previously known as the Great North Road (A1), which passed through the town until 1969. The road connects with the A1(M) and links the northern sections of the town with Aycliffe Village in the south. The A167 also provides a direct route to Darlington (8 miles to the south), and Durham (13 miles to the north). The A66 (off map) leads from the A167 and provides connections to the east including Middlesbrough (19 miles), Hartlepool (22 miles) and the heritage coasts of North Yorkshire and Cleveland (43 miles).

A network of minor roads provide direct routes across the town which connect with local streets and a small number of private roads that provide access to residential areas and business units.

A number of parks and green spaces throughout the town allow pedestrians and cyclists to move around free from vehicles. These include Woodham Burn, Simpasture Park, Woodham Park, West Park and Town Park.

Pedestrian movement is unrestricted within residential areas to the south of the town centre, particularly within the New Town development. Dedicated footpaths which are independent from roads provide a valuable network for pedestrians and cyclists.

In residential areas in the north of the town, pedestrian movement is largely confined to footpaths that form the edge of each estate. This creates pleasant routes for pedestrians and cyclists. However, movement within each estate is limited due to housing layouts.

Pedestrian access into the town centre is limited to poorly defined gateways. This is further impaired by the inward facing nature of the town centre, which is enclosed by roads.

Newton Aycliffe has two railway stations (Newton Aycliffe and Heighington) situated along the Bishop Auckland to Darlington railway branch line which links Bishop Auckland to Saltburn and also provides additional lines to and from Aycliffe Business Park.

Built form structure and style of buildings are strongly influenced by their use. As a consequence, there is a distinct contrast between the industrial areas in the south and the residential areas in the north, as shown in Figure 6.

Residential areas vary in scale and density which is attributed to different periods and styles in design and planning. The town’s primary choice of building material is brick, which is used throughout all of the residential estates. Brick is also prominent in many buildings within the town centre.

Aycliffe Village consists of older buildings of a traditional, local vernacular which form a designated conservation area. This historic core is surrounded by modern development which largely consists of semi-detached properties.

The New Town development consists of modest, mostly two-storey houses. The built form is offset by an abundance of green space and mature trees.

The size and detailing of buildings becomes increasingly modest in areas centred around West Park with two storey, flat roofed buildings and a mix of housing types. Here the houses are set within extensive areas of open space.

Residential areas in the north are focused along local streets. Semi-detached and detached two-storey properties line cul-de-sacs which form a network of dead end streets. This restricts views to the surrounding open space, which increases the perception of density.

A number of isolated farms and dwellings are located in open, agricultural areas in the east which are typical of the wider landscape.

An increase in building scale is evident within the small town centre, which is distinct from the surrounding residential areas. Tesco Extra, Argos, Thames Shopping Centre, town centre car parks and public services such as a fire station form a compact centre which is distinctly different from the surrounding residential areas. The buildings which form the town centre face inwards onto a small civic space. As a result, large blank walls and service areas line the perimeter.

A significant increase in building size is evident in Aycliffe Business Park. Buildings range from single units to vast distribution centres. The building footprints of modern developments increase in size to the south of the business park. Building materials range from brick, corrugated metal and modern pre-fabricated glass and metal façades.

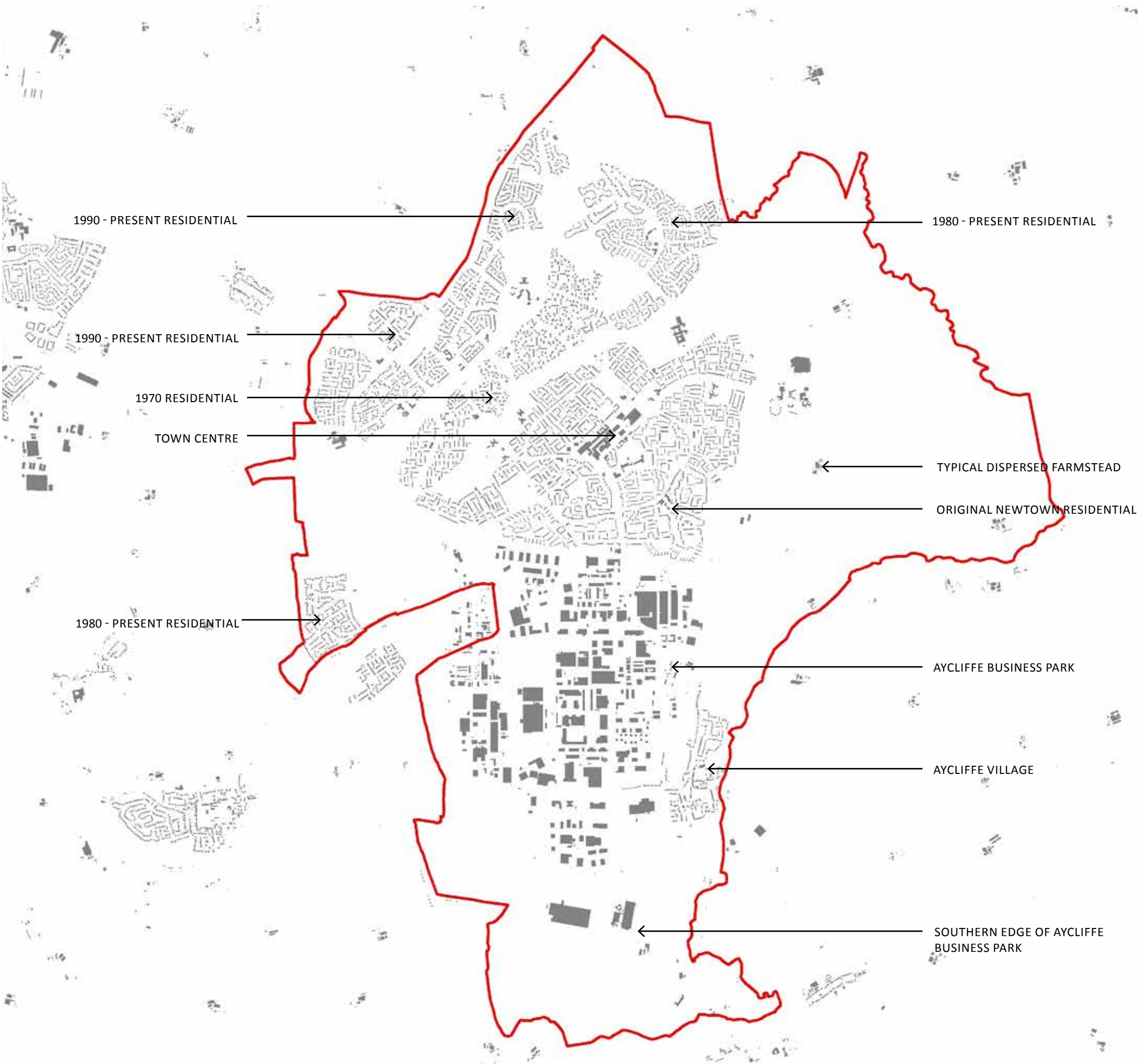
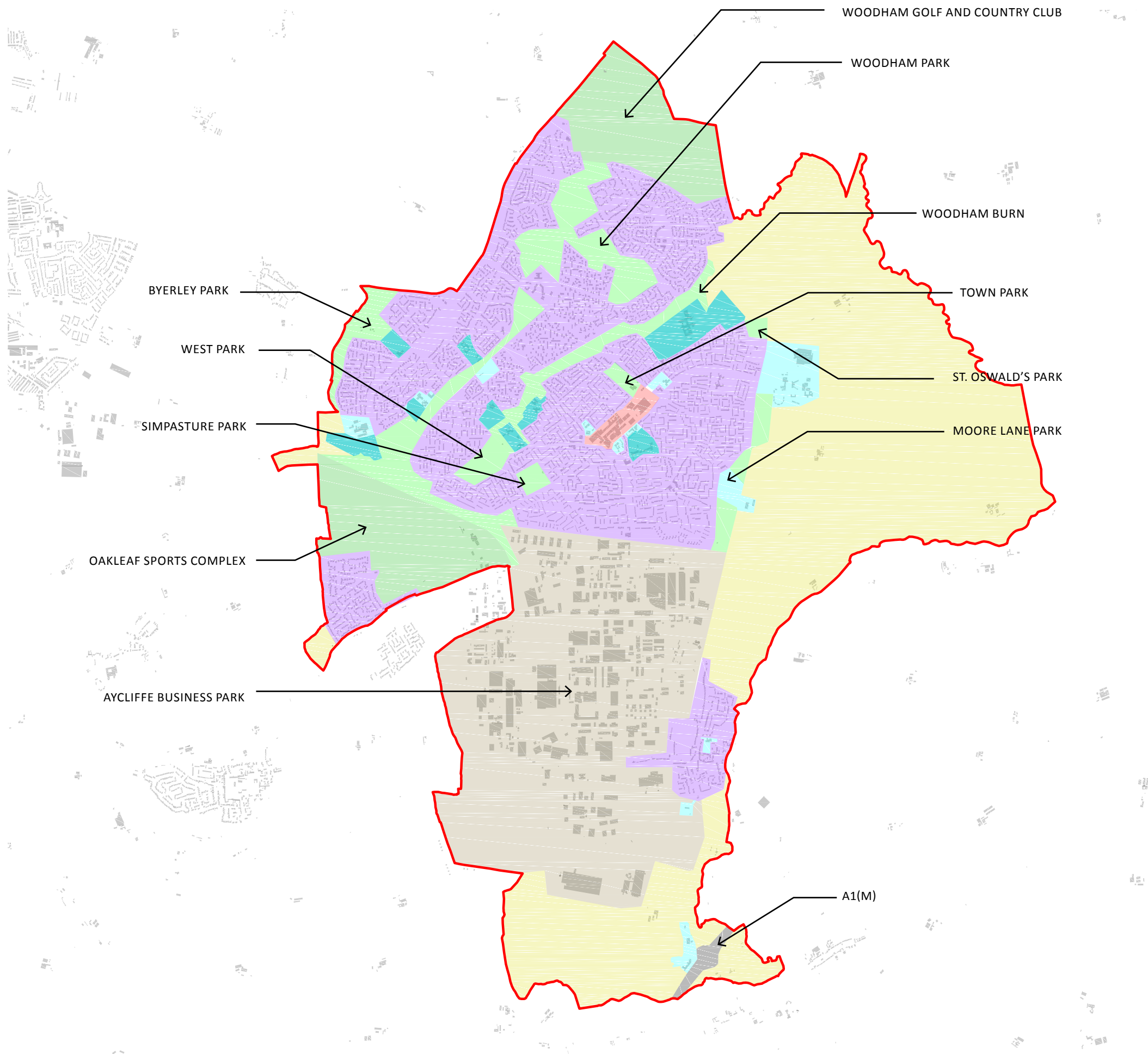


Figure 6: Built Form Plan



Newton Aycliffe consists of a number of land uses, as shown in Figure 7. These uses are largely defined by its history, its proximity to larger employment areas such as Durham and Middlesbrough and good access to the national highway network from the A1(M).

Agricultural land is typical of traditional land use in the area and accounts for 679 hectares in the west and south.

Residential areas account for 581 hectares which, with the exception of Aycliffe Village, are located in the north and west. Provisions such as retail, schools and colleges, green space and recreational facilities are integrated into the fabric of residential estates.

Aycliffe Business Park is a concentrated area of commerce and industry. The business park accounts for approximately 400 hectares.

A number of substantial recreational spaces are located in between built up areas including: Oakleaf Sports Complex, Simpasture Park, Town Park, West Park, Woodham Burn, Woodham Park, and Woodham Golf and Country Club.



Figure 7: Land Use Plan

Green space, as shown in Figure 8, plays an important role in retaining some of the original semi-rural characteristics of the town. Many residential areas include generous areas of amenity green space which creates a relatively quiet setting. Similarly, Woodham Golf and Country Club and Oakleaf Sports Complex form a significant contribution to the town's landscape setting and connections with the wider countryside.

Green corridors located between residential areas prevent the coalescence of developments and form a substantial network for pedestrians and cyclists. Areas of older housing laid out by the development corporation also contain a large amount of amenity green space situated within and around the buildings. This is in contrast with the more recent private developments in the north where amenity green space is located at the edges of each estate.

Mature trees and shrubs line many primary and minor routes which help to differentiate them from local streets and partially enclose developed areas. This is particularly evident in close proximity to Aycliffe Business Park on the A167. Sections of Burn Lane are well wooded, which forms a distinct break in development between the north and south, whilst ornamental planting along Central Avenue forms a distinctive entrance to the town centre from the A167.

Aycliffe Business Park is punctuated by mature roadside planting and grass verges. Areas of green space and well maintained private grounds both help to integrate the large-scale buildings into the landscape.

The treatment of the public realm varies across the area. Pavement materials are generally in-situ cast concrete or asphalt. Irregular and inconsistent use of materials, including gravel and concrete setts, occur within streets where provisions for parking have been implemented on an ad-hoc basis. In contrast, the materials palette in modern residential areas such as Woodham has been used to create a hierarchy of well-defined space.

The recent redevelopment of the town centre has created an improved area public realm using high quality materials and street furniture.

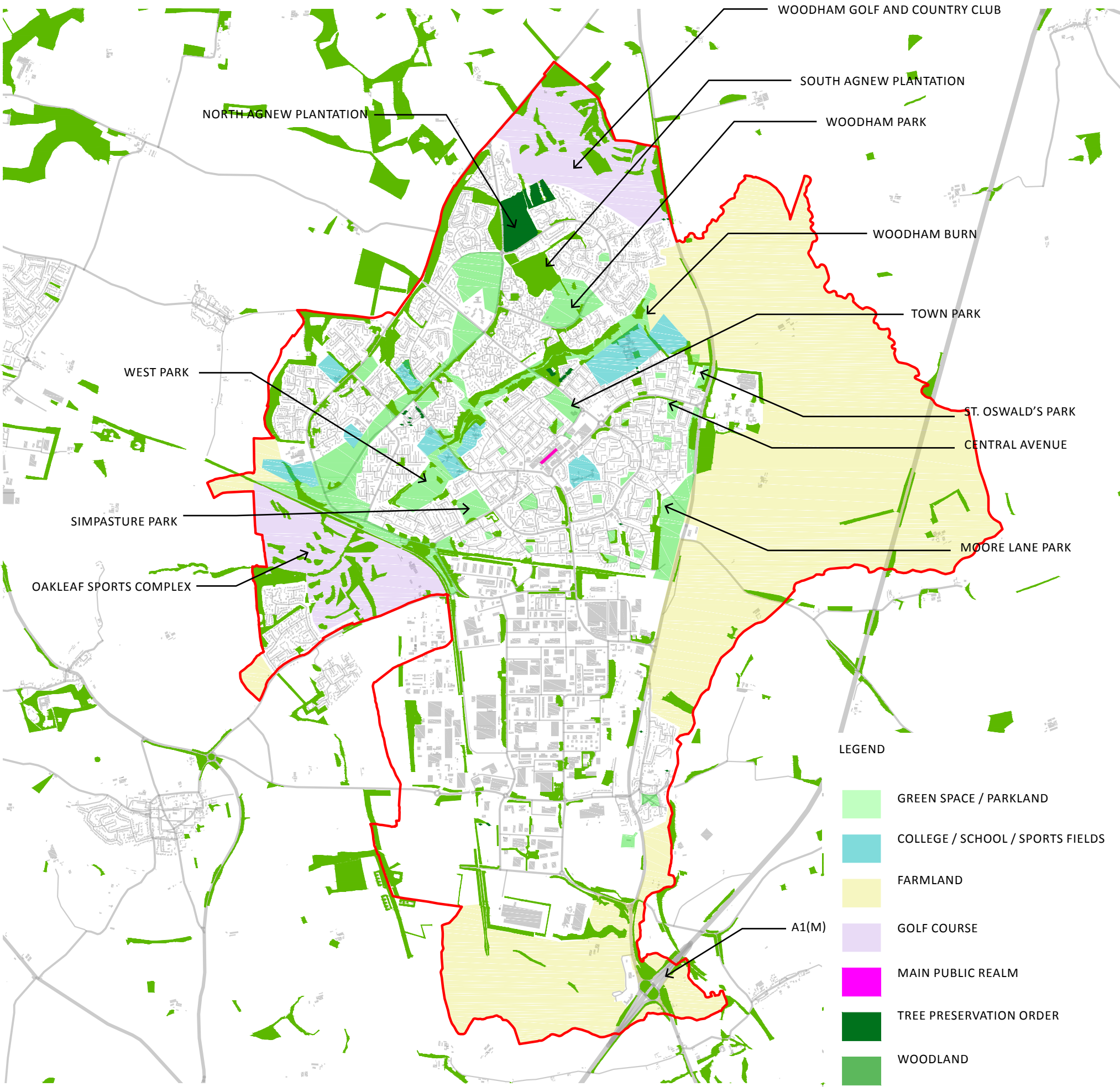


Figure 8: Greenspace and Public Realm Plan

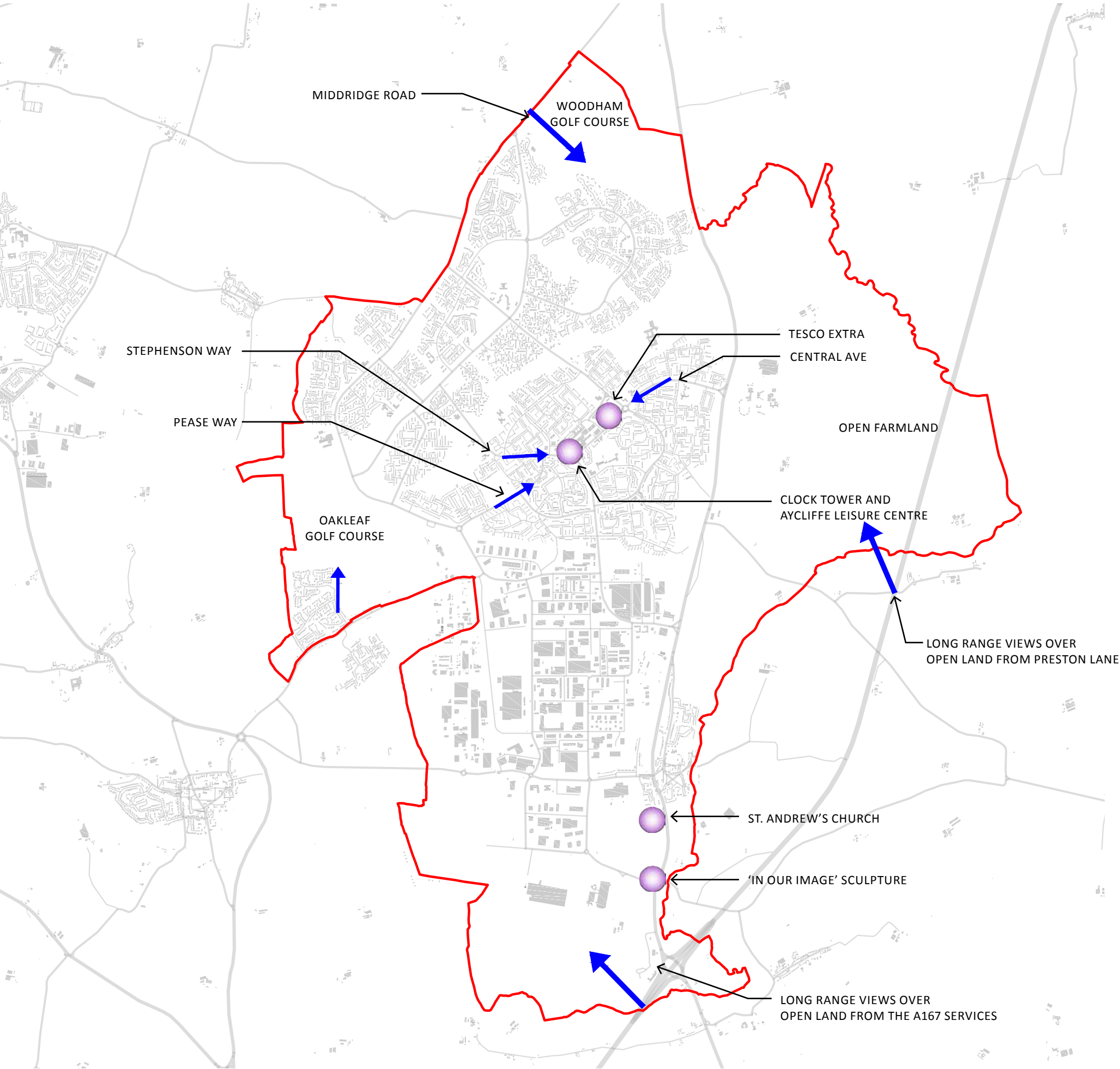


Figure 9: Key Views and Landmarks Plan

Views play an important role in understanding the character of a place. Long distance views and views of landmarks, as shown in Figure 9, are limited throughout Newton Aycliffe due to well vegetated boundaries and a lack of taller buildings or features.

The roofline and external signage of Aycliffe Leisure Centre provide a focal point to views from the east of the town centre. This is due to the height of the building and location in relation to the approaching primary routes of Pease Way and Stephenson Way.

The clock tower is a landmark within the town centre due to its height. It forms a central focus within the town centre and is visible from a number of approaching roads, including Pease Way.

To the south of Aycliffe Business Park is 'In Our Image', a 16-metre high steel sculpture by Gateshead sculptor Joseph Hillier. The sculpture sits in a prominent position on the roundabout of the A167 and St. Andrew's Way. Despite a lack of long range views of the sculpture, the position in relation to the town and business park marks an important gateway into the town.

The spire of the Grade I listed St. Andrew's church, which is partially visible above mature vegetation along the A167, acts as a visual gateway into Aycliffe Village.

There are also longer distance views across open land in the east. This is most prevalent from Middridge Road where elevated positions allow views south east over Woodham Golf Course. Similarly there are long views north west over farmland from Preston Lane and north west over farmland from the services located on the A167.



Views of the town centre clock tower above residential properties on Pease Way



'In Our Image' sculpture at the roundabout of the A167 and St. Andrew's Way



The signage on Tesco Extra makes it stand out from its surroundings



The roofline of Aycliffe Leisure Centre stands out against the houses on Pease Way



St. Andrew's church sits in a prominent location aligned with the A167



A slightly elevated and open position on Middridge Road offers open and longer distance views over Woodham Golf and Country Club



Views from an elevated position over houses in School Aycliffe offer long range views north



Open views over agricultural land from Preston Lane



Open views over agricultural land from services on the A167

Newton Aycliffe contains a number of listed buildings, as shown in Figure 10. However, these are mainly contained within Aycliffe Village, with others located at Heighington Station and School Aycliffe. These buildings are designated by Historic England as having special interest by way of their historic and/or architectural interest. However, just because other buildings within the area have not been designated does not mean that they do not have local historic or architectural interest or merit.

There is one conservation area which covers Aycliffe Village and 13 listed buildings and structures which comprise the following:

One Grade I building of exceptional national interest:

1. Church of St. Andrew (NHLE 1322806)

Twelve Grade II buildings of special interest:

2. Hodgson Chest Tomb, 5m. south of south porch of St Andrew (NHLE 1121507)
3. Headstone to John Gibson, 7 m. South of south porch of St Andrew (NHLE 1322807)
4. 14 High Street, Aycliffe Village (NHLE 1159681)
5. Oakles Farmhouse, High Street, Aycliffe Village (NHLE 1121509)
6. 3 The Green, Aycliffe Village (NHLE 1121508)
7. Lamp post 7 m. east of number 7, The Green (NHLE 1310948)
8. Locomotion One Public House and East Platform (NHLE 1322808)
9. Heighington Signal Box (NHLE 1391940)
10. Nurses' Teaching Centre, Wall and Gate Piers, School Aycliffe (NHLE 1159723)
11. Old Farm Cottage, School Aycliffe (NHLE 1322809)
12. Railway Bridge, 25m. north east of Ricknall Mill Farmhouse (NHLE 1159693)
13. Ricknall Grange Farmhouse and Yard wall to rear (NHLE 1121510)

In addition there are three scheduled monuments close to the boundary of the area that also enhances our understanding of the area. These are:

14. Deserted Village Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1002335)
15. Coatham Mundeville medieval village, fishpond and areas of rig and furrow Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1016109)

The standing remains of the former ROF buildings dotted around Aycliffe Business Park are also important visual reminders of the history of Great Aycliffe and the strategic importance it played in World War II.

The Old Stockton and Darlington line that was built by George Stephenson made history when in 1825 'Locomotion No.1' made the first passenger service. This line still plays an important role in the area and has recently been instrumental in the revival of train building with the introduction of Hitachi Rail Europe factory situated on Aycliffe Business Park which connects to the existing network.

The old Simpasture to Port Clarence railway, which formerly ran on an east-west axis between the business park and the New Town operated between 1833 and 1853 to take coal from mines in County Durham to ports on the River Tees. The now disused line forms an important green link within Newton Aycliffe and part of the Great Aycliffe Way.

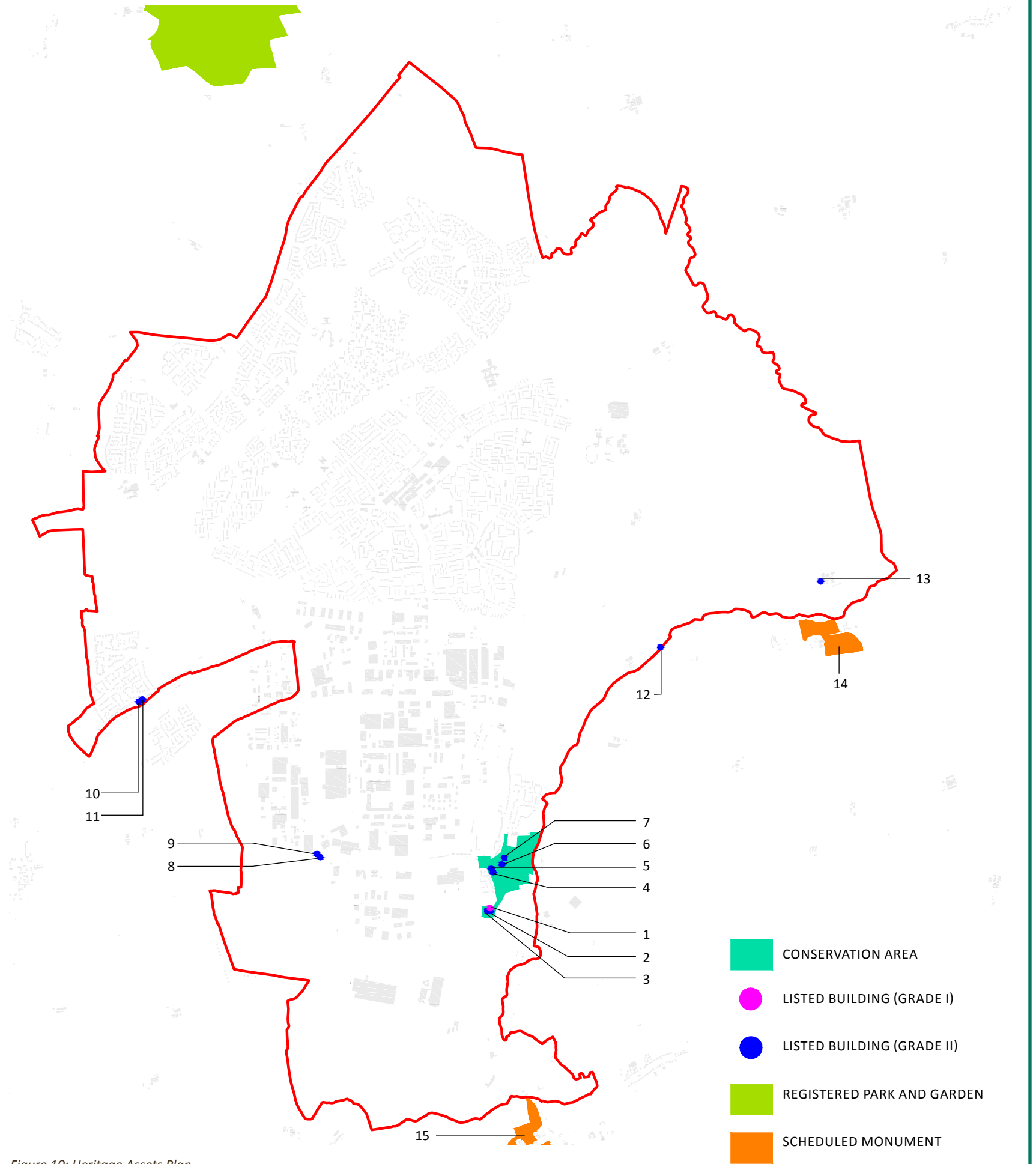


Figure 10: Heritage Assets Plan



Grade I Listed - St. Andrew's Church



Stained glass window at the Grade I Listed - St. Andrew's Church



Grade II Listed - Old Farm Cottage - School Aycliffe



Grade II Listed - Aycliffe Hall - School Aycliffe



Aycliffe Conservation Area



Lamp column in Aycliffe Village



Grade II Listed - Locomotion One Public House and East Platform

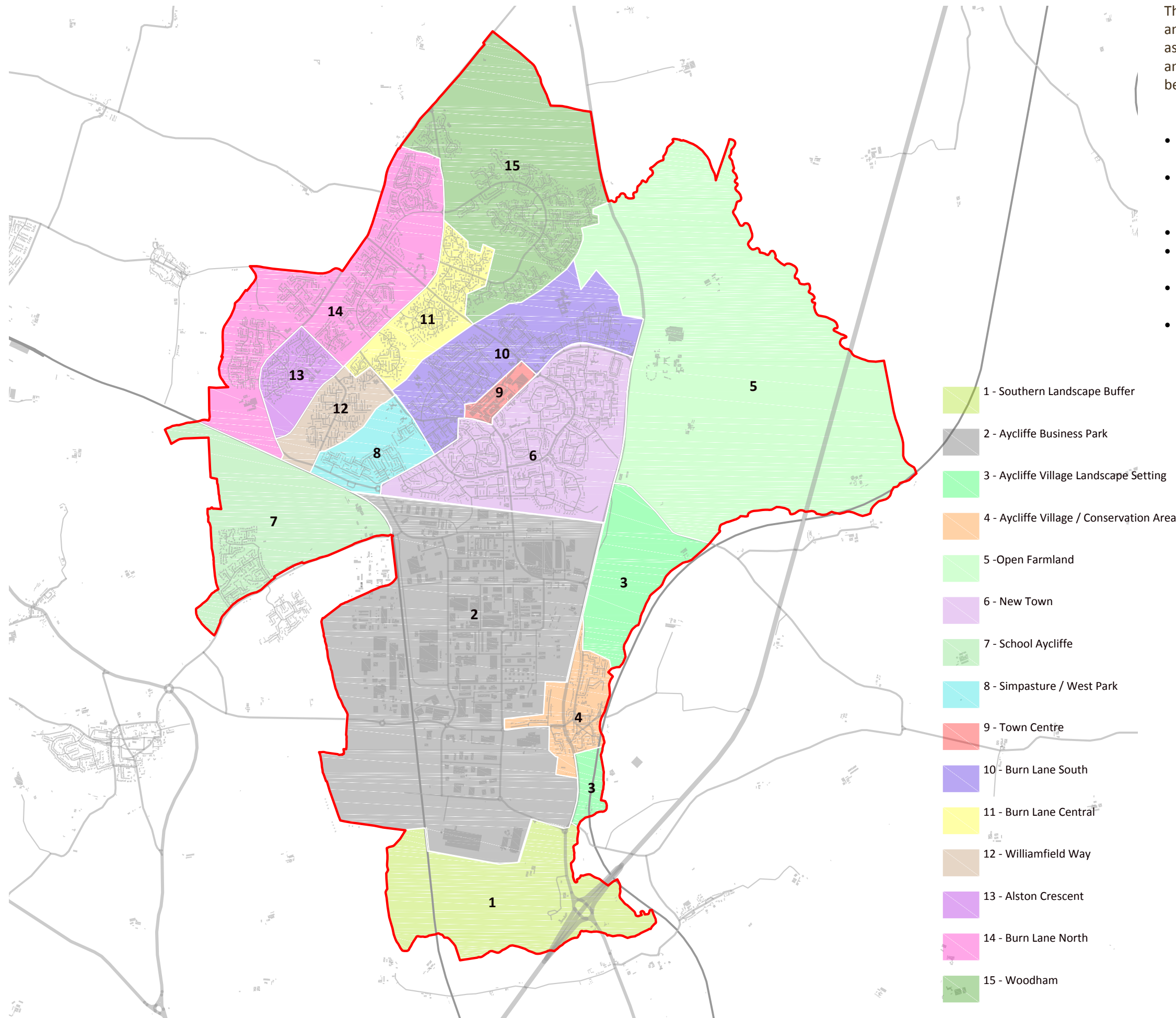


Heighington Signal Box

4. CHARACTER AREA PROFILES







The results of the desk study and fieldwork have been analysed and 15 distinct Character Areas have been identified, as shown in Figure 11. In order to understand the function and form of each Character Area, the following topics have been considered:

- **Movement** - including physical boundaries such as railway lines, roads, rivers and gateways, nodes and linkages;
- **Urban structure and built development** - including density and building height, enclosure, architectural period, style and detailing;
- **Land use** - including levels of activity;
- **Green space and public realm** - including how these relate to buildings and spaces;
- **Views** - including their contribution to an understanding of character and the identification of landmarks; and
- **Heritage** - identifying and placing value on elements of historical significance.

Figure 11: Character Areas Plan

1. SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE BUFFER

INTRODUCTION

This largely undeveloped area of land sits between the A1(M) and the southern edge of Aycliffe Business Park. The area is divided from the business park by a substantial belt of mature trees.

The area is typical of the character found within the wider rural landscape that surrounds Newton Aycliffe with irregular agricultural fields, paddocks and meadow grassland with substantial tree belts.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling farmland including arable and pasture
- Mature tree groups
- Horse paddocks
- The A1(M) and A167 and associated services which influence movement and tranquillity

FIGURE 12: CHARACTER AREA 1 - LOCATION PLAN

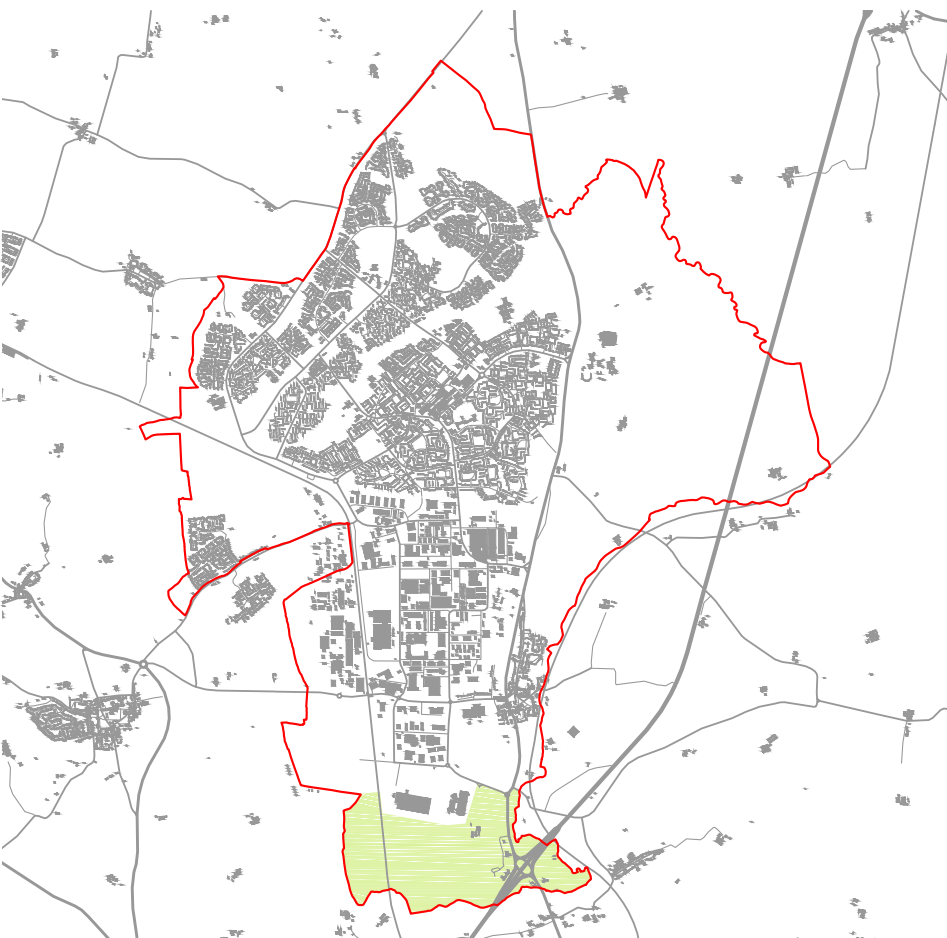
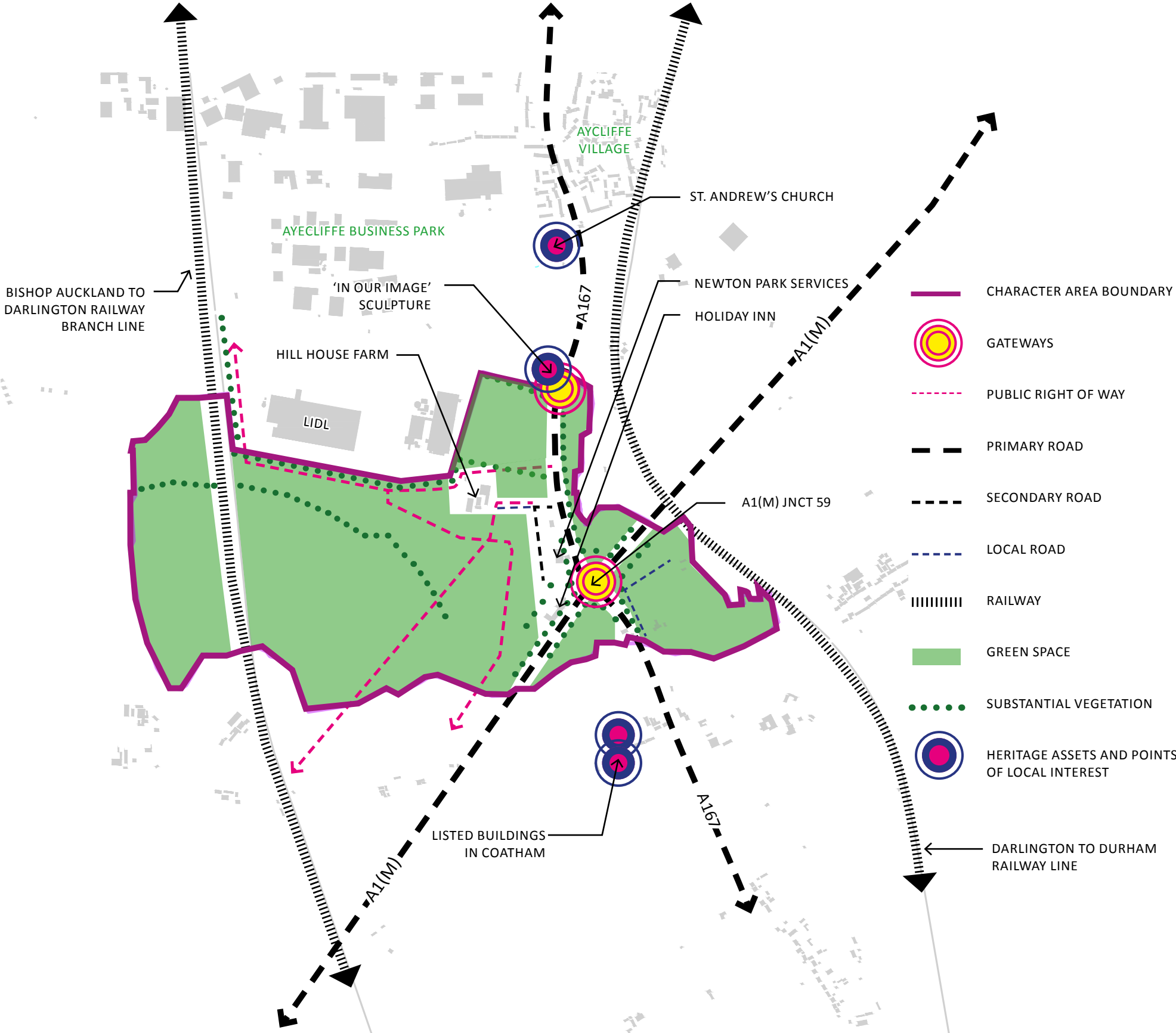


FIGURE 13: CHARACTER AREA1 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The primary roads within the character area include the A1(M) and the A167, which are located in the south and east. Aside from this, vehicle movement is restricted to access tracks. Whilst the primary roads are noisy, tree groups and road side vegetation reduce visual impacts.

The Bishop Auckland to Darlington railway branch line dissects the western section of the character area which segregates a small section of land in the west from the east. The Darlington to Durham line passes across the south east section of the character area. Whilst trains pass through, there are no train stations within close proximity to the character area.

A number of public rights of way cut across farmland to the west of Newton Park services which connect with Aycliffe Business Park, including FP8, FP6, FP12 and BW10.

STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

The tall, large scale and brightly coloured and lit buildings and structures which comprise the Newton Park services combined with vehicles including HGVs, contrast with the rural context of the character area.

In contrast, the traditional style of the isolated farmhouse, barns and outbuildings of Hill House Farm stand alone in the agricultural fields adjacent to Newton Park Services.

To the south east of the A1(M) and east of the A167 a small number of dwellings and an equestrian centre sit in an isolated, low lying position enclosed by mature trees.

HERITAGE ASSETS

Hill House Farm and its associated buildings are a notable feature within this character area. It is not listed although it appears to date from at least the early 19th Century and as such connects the changing landscape to the agricultural history of the area.

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly agricultural, with a mixture of arable farming and pasture. Some areas of irregular fields have been allowed to revert to rough grassland and there are paddocks grazed by horses.

Grazing land and paddocks also lie in the south beyond the A1(M). This section of the character area is completely enclosed by mature roadside vegetation.

Newton Park Services is an intense focus of activity in contrast with the rest of the character area, where there is a higher sense of tranquillity and isolation.



Agricultural landscape providing valuable landscape buffer between the A1(M) and Aycliffe Business Park

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Large agricultural fields and rough grassland offer a landscape setting rather than functional green space. Mature woodland blocks retain the semi-rural characteristics of the wider landscape. This is further enhanced by a well-wooded backdrop which completely screens the businesses and industrial activities within the Aycliffe Business Park to the north. Public realm is centred around McDonalds and the Holiday Inn within the motorway service station.

VIEWS

The large, illuminated signage of McDonalds and the Holiday Inn are prominent in views from as far away as Coatham Lane in the south due to being located in an open setting on higher ground. However, the Holiday Inn is largely screened by mature vegetation.

There are views across the character area north of the A1(M) due to the open nature of the agricultural land. Elsewhere, views are contained by vegetation and landform such that within the area there is a stronger sense of isolation and enclosure.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to the role that the open areas of agricultural land and mature vegetation play as a landscape buffer, including:

- Agricultural land that retains the rural characteristics of the wider landscape and provides a valuable landscape buffer between Aycliffe Business Park and the A1(M); and
- The strong framework of mature vegetation which creates a series of discrete parcels with contrasting openness and enclosure and the appearance of a well-defined wooded horizon.



ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed to retain the rural characteristics which are typical of the wider landscape, including:

- Poor maintenance of boundary fences and an accumulation of temporary buildings, vehicles and machinery associated with farming and equestrian uses; and
- The impact of the motorway services on views and tranquillity in the area closest to the A1(M).

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to rural characteristics and screening of the urban edge, including:

- The open, agricultural setting Hill House Farm; and
- The wooded ridgeline which screens views of Aycliffe Business Park and development to the north.

FORCES OF CHANGE

The character area lies to the south of Aycliffe Business Park, which, if extended beyond the wooded ridgeline would significantly extend the urban edge of the town and change the character of the area from semi-rural to urban.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on retaining screening of the urban edge and to retain rural characteristics which echo the character of the wider landscape.

- Retain a landscape buffer to maintain screening of the Business Park and to prevent coalescence with the A1(M);
- Retain the framework of mature vegetation and wooded horizons;
- Increase the biodiversity value of the introduction of meadow grassland and vegetated boundaries; and
- Reinforce roadside vegetation at the junction of the A167 and A1(M) roundabout to enhance the initial gateway into Aycliffe Village and Newton Aycliffe.



Views to the low lying equestrian centre



Signage in views from Coatham



Typical example of mature vegetation surrounding the equestrian centre in the south east of the character area.



HGVs at Newton Park Services

2. AYCLIFFE BUSINESS PARK

INTRODUCTION

Aycliffe Business Park covers an area of over 400 Hectares with business units of varying age and scale. The business park is located on the site of a previous munitions factory, which was fundamental to the establishment of the Newton Aycliffe New Town.

The character area is exclusively dedicated to business and industry and is enclosed on all sides by belts of trees and mature vegetation. Buildings are positioned around a grid of local roads with connections to the A1(M) and A167 primary roads and railway sidings.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Industrial buildings of various styles, size and age
- Effectively enclosed by mature vegetation
- Buildings associated with the original munitions factory provide evidence of the historical development of the area
- Contained views due to a relatively flat landform, mature vegetation and the density of buildings.

FIGURE 14: CHARACTER AREA 2 - LOCATION PLAN



FIGURE 15: CHARACTER AREA 2 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The business park is connected to the A1(M) via the A167, which forms the eastern boundary of the character area.

Gateways into the area include St. Andrew's Way, Heighington Street and St. Cuthbert's Way, which all adjoin the A167 in the east, St. Cuthbert's Way and Horndale Avenue in the north and Heighington Lane and School Aycliffe Lane in the west.

There is an extensive network of internal routes with busy secondary roads feeding an intricate grid of local roads. Dedicated and roadside pedestrian and cycle paths provide a high degree of permeability across the business park. Pedestrian movement is enhanced in the north by green space and grass verges which provide a distinct buffer between buildings and roads. Pedestrian movement is focused on minor roads in the south due to large areas of private land which is becoming common since the introduction of larger scale units.

The Bishop Auckland to Darlington railway branch line passes through the western section of the business park, stopping at Heighington Station on Heighington Lane. A number of spur lines provide direct freight links to the Hitachi rail manufacturing and assembly facility within Aycliffe Business Park.

STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Whilst the scale of buildings is generally large, there is variety in terms of age, mass and materials palette. There are many mid-scale units used as office space which are positioned around larger units of heavy industry. There are few buildings of architectural merit with the exception of occasional brick buildings, which date back to the original laying out of the area during World War II.

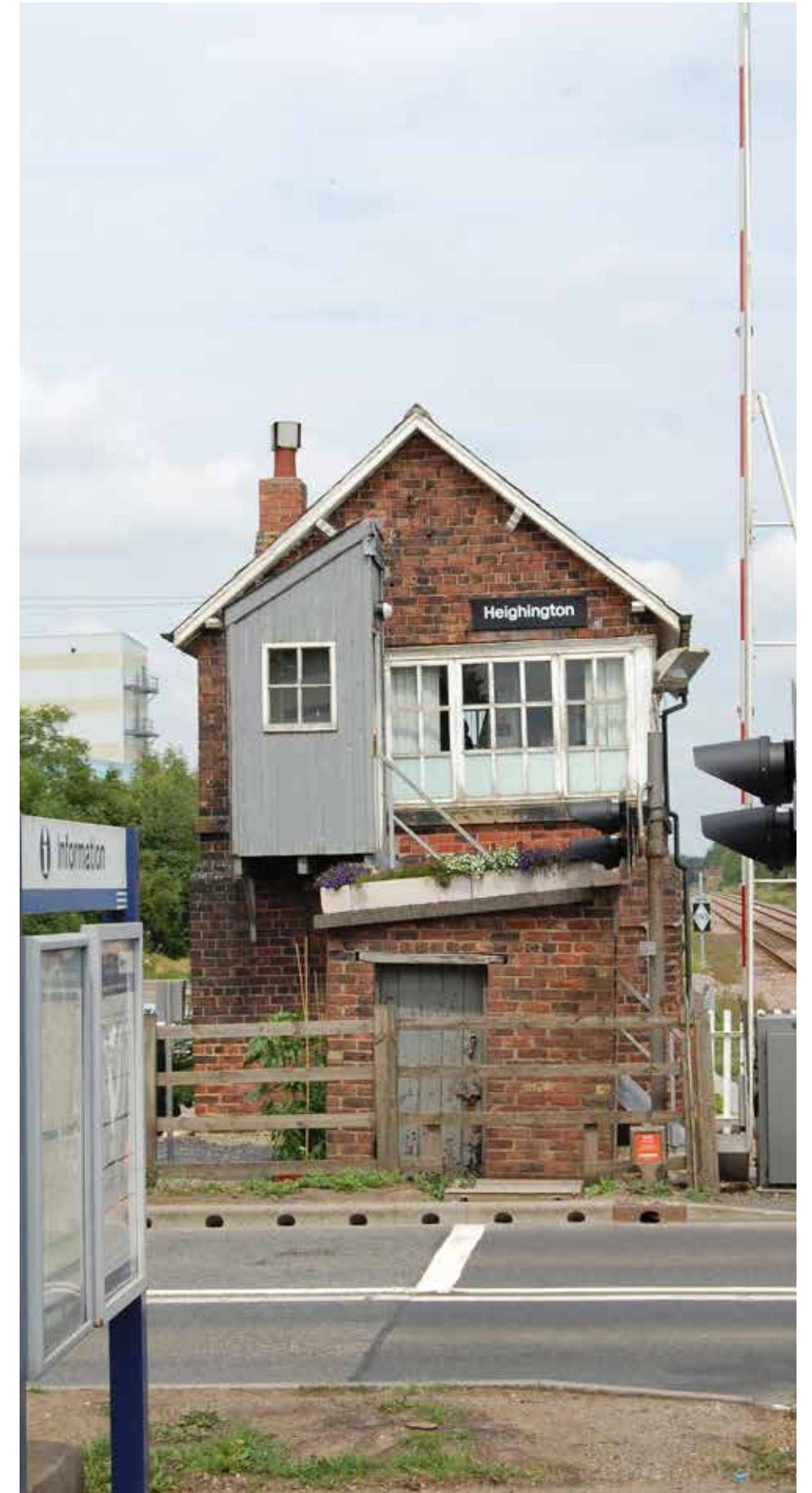
There is an increase in building scale and mass in the south of the character area where recent additions tend to be of larger scale and typically constructed from steel frame and prefabricated cladding. Manufacturing units and distribution centres are often set in large areas of private land which are secured by tall perimeter fencing.



Modern structures, amenity planting and minor routes along Spring Road.



Examples of heavy industry.



Grade II Listed Heighington railway crossing and signal box.

HERITAGE AND ASSETS

The site of Aycliffe Business Park was, up until the Second World War, an agricultural area with sporadic farmhouses. At the start of the Second World War the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) was built to produce bullets and munitions for the war. After the war many of the buildings were re-used by private industries and the North East Trading Estates Limited was set up to attract trade to the new industrial estate. There are still a few of these original units remaining that indicate the industrial estates former character. The architecture of these buildings is typical of the 1930s and 1940s and many are brick built with metal windows. These add some diversity to the character of the area. They are considered to be of local interest and worthy of some form of interpretation.

The Locomotion One Public House and east platform (previously listed as Heighington Railway Station) is a Grade II listed building located at the western edge of the character area. It dates from c1826. It stands within the context of the business park as the building and the adjacent signal box belong to an earlier period of Aycliffe’s history. The station buildings, originally known as Aycliffe Lane, date to 1826-27 and were originally an early station and booking office for the Stockton and Darlington Railway. It was also designed to include a public house to act as a waiting room. These buildings survive complete with the associated low platform, and although they no longer form the station, still continue in their other original use as a public house.

The Heighington Signal Box is a Grade II listed building located on the opposite side of the tracks from the Locomotion One Public House. It opened in 1872 and was designed for the North Eastern Railway Central Division, possibly by Thomas Prosser, then the company’s architect. It follows the earliest standard design for the Central Division, termed the Type C1 by the Signalling Study Group. It is one of the earliest surviving signal boxes in the country; at most four are thought to pre-date it in Britain.

The signal box has additional group value with the former railway station across the line and the adjacent level crossing. The NER Central Division developed out of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and it was at Heighington that George Stephenson Locomotion No.1 was first put on the rails to haul the world’s first passenger service in 1825.

The railway played a vital part in the choice of location for the ROF and this strategic importance carried on with the redevelopment of the land for the industrial estate.

LAND USE

Land use is dedicated to business and industry. Amenity green space and provides a landscaped setting and space for pedestrian routes.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Generous amounts of amenity green space provide a setting to buildings and roads in the northern section of the character area. Here many areas are accessible, which portrays a spacious and green character and caters to pedestrians and cyclists. This character disperses towards the south where buildings increase in scale and mass, with private grounds secured by perimeter fencing.

VIEWS

Views both into and through the character area are limited by a combination of mature vegetation, a relatively flat landscape and large scale buildings. The character area is bound on all sides by mature vegetation which provides substantial screening of views of the wider landscape.



Heritage asset - Locomotion One public house



Heritage asset - Heighington signal box



Heritage asset - it was at Heighington that George Stephenson Locomotion No.1 was first put on the rails to haul the world’s first passenger service in 1825

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to the strength of screening vegetation, green space, heritage and movement, including:

- Mature boundary vegetation, roadside planting and grass verges that provide a landscape framework and setting;
- Dedicated routes which offer greater movement to pedestrians and cyclists;
- Brick buildings which date back to the previous use as a munitions factory; and
- Listed heritage assets, including the Heighington Signal Box.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified to highlight the importance of the munitions factory upon the establishment of Newton Aycliffe and the effects from the business park upon the neighbouring Aycliffe Village, including:

- Traffic through Aycliffe Village including HGVs;
- A lack of green space in the south of the character area; and
- A lack of recognition of heritage assets and the site’s previous use as a munitions factory during the Second World War.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the heritage of the ROF site and the strong landscape framework:

- Rare survival of original buildings from the former use of the site during the Second World War as a munitions factory, which was the catalyst for the development of the New Town;
- Strong boundary vegetation which encloses the business park and screens views from neighbouring areas.

FORCES OF CHANGE

The recent introduction of larger scale buildings in the south of the character area has introduced a shift from the more human scale of buildings found in the north. Further land in the south has been allocated for a possible future extension of the business park.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on retaining the function of the business park and maintaining a balance between built form, heritage and green infrastructure by:

- Retaining, maintaining and celebrating cultural interests in the area such as buildings that remain from the original munitions factory and the Grade II listed Heighington signal box and Locomotion One public house; and
- Supporting a diverse range of building types and scale with high quality architecture;

- Sustaining and enhance the existing accessible green space;
- Retaining boundary vegetation and roadside planting which provides substantial screening of the business park;
- Enhancing definition between cycle and pedestrian routes and increase the visibility of gateways and wayfinders to refine usability and visual identity of the character area.



An increase in building mass and scale in new developments in the south



Areas of diverse planting add interest to pedestrian routes



Tall structures form valuable waymarkers

3. AYCLIFFE VILLAGE LANDSCAPE SETTING

INTRODUCTION

The Aycliffe Village Landscape Setting character area is defined by agricultural fields, rough grassland and River Skerne. The area lies to the north and south of Aycliffe Village and provides a distinct buffer which retains the semi-rural setting of the village and conservation area.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Distinctly open compared to the urban areas to the west and north
- Gently undulating landform
- Agricultural fields
- Grazing land and meadows
- Mature vegetated boundaries and tree groups
- The River Skerne

FIGURE 13: CHARACTER AREA 16 - LOCATION PLAN

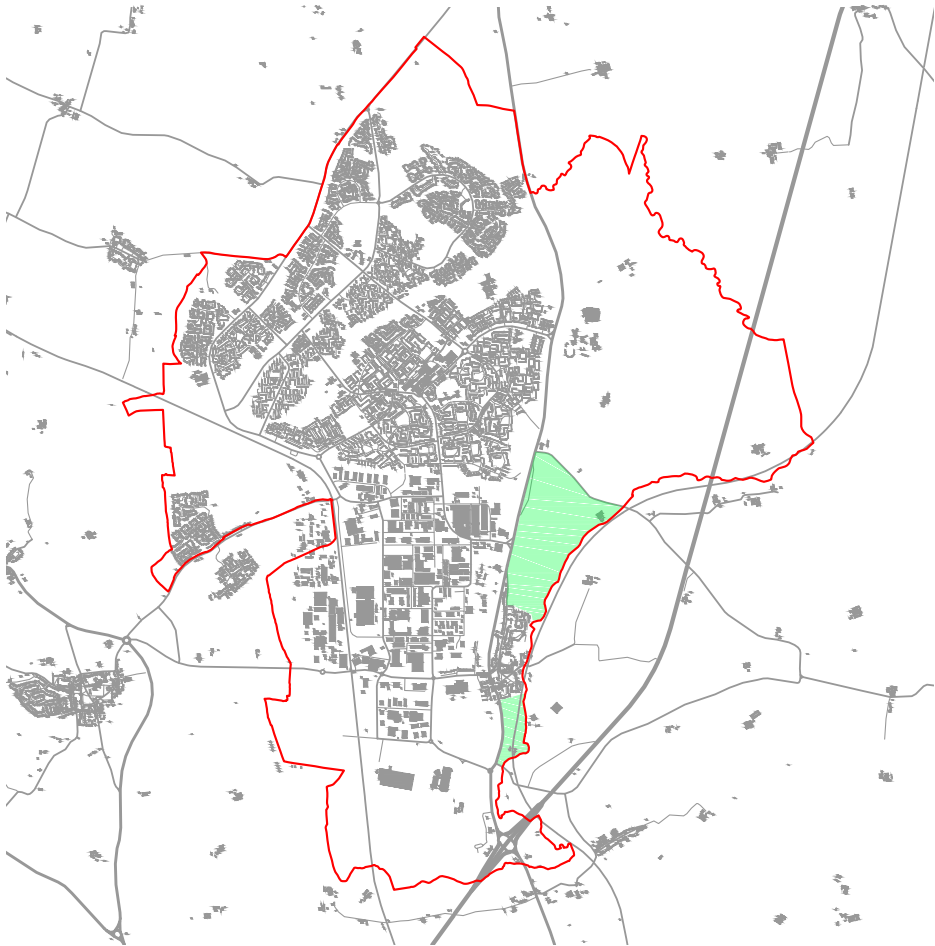


FIGURE 17: CHARACTER AREA 3 - FEATURES PLAN





Attractive meadows to the south of Lime Lane

MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The A167 forms the western boundary, however, no roads cross the character area.

The Darlington to Durham railway line crosses the area and bounds the eastern edge in the north, although there are no stations within proximity.

There is a good degree of permeability for pedestrians with a number of public rights of way, including FP16 and FP17 which cross in the north and FP1 in the south. These footpaths provide direct links between Aycliffe Village and the surrounding landscape.

STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Built form is limited to a small number of farm buildings and houses of a traditional character which are widely dispersed. Medium sized fields are bound by mature vegetation, particularly along watercourses including the River Skerne.

HERITAGE ASSETS

There are no heritage assets within the character area, although this area of land provides an important landscape setting for the Aycliffe Village Conservation Area.

LAND USE

The land within the area is primarily in arable use with extensive areas of meadow within the southern section associated with the River Skerne.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

There are no formal parks or green spaces in the area. However, public rights of way which cross the area provide valuable access to meadows and grazing land adjoining the River Skerne. These areas also provide valuable wildlife habitat.

Substantial tree groups screen the character area from the A167.

VIEWS

Views across the agricultural landscape are framed and limited by mature vegetation. The openness of the landscape in this character area gives rise to glimpsed views of properties on the northern and southern boundaries of Aycliffe Village and of minor roads in the north and south.

The edge of Aycliffe Village is clearly evident when approaching along the A167 in the south and Durham Road in the north.



View across the southern edge of Aycliffe Village



Views across the northern edge of Aycliffe Village



River Skerne passes through the character area

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to the rural landscape setting that the area provides to Aycliffe Village and its Conservation Area, including:

- Pattern of land use and vegetation is strongly influenced by the River Skerne; and
- Boundary vegetation that encloses the character area and reduces the effects of nearby busy roads.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified that affect the physical connection between Aycliffe Village and the character area, including:

- Pedestrian gateways and routes from the village that lead into the surrounding rural landscape are poorly defined.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the semi-rural character and contribution of mature vegetation to the quality of the area:

- The open, rural setting of Aycliffe Village;
- Diversity of traditional land uses, including meadowland bordering the River Skerne; and
- Mature boundary vegetation which helps to reduce the effects of nearby primary roads.

FORCES OF CHANGE

There is pressure to expand the Aycliffe Business Park, which lies to the west of the area. This character area provides an important buffer between the business park and the Darlington to Durham Railway line.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on sustaining the landscape setting of Aycliffe Village and Conservation Area by:

- Limit development within this area to retain the semi-rural character of the landscape setting of Aycliffe Village and Conservation Area;
- Retain and enhance areas of meadowland to increase biodiversity and habitat value of the River Skerne; and
- Define and enhance existing gateways and pedestrian routes from Aycliffe Village and Conservation Area into the character area.



Remnants of traditional stone walling



Views south from Ricknall Lane



Views of an isolated house from Lime Lane

4. AYCLIFFE VILLAGE / CONSERVATION AREA

INTRODUCTION

Aycliffe Village is the only historical settlement within the study area and is partly designated as a Conservation Area. The village contains a number of listed buildings, including the Grade I listed St. Andrew’s Church, which dates back to the Saxon period.

The Village has evolved over time and has lost many of its older buildings and in parts is heavily influenced by the A167. However, a village green at the heart of the Conservation Area creates a strong focal point.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A central village green
- Listed buildings, including the Grade I St. Andrew’s Church
- Variety of buildings of traditional construction
- The River Skerne, which forms the eastern boundary

FIGURE 15: CHARACTER AREA 18 - LOCATION PLAN

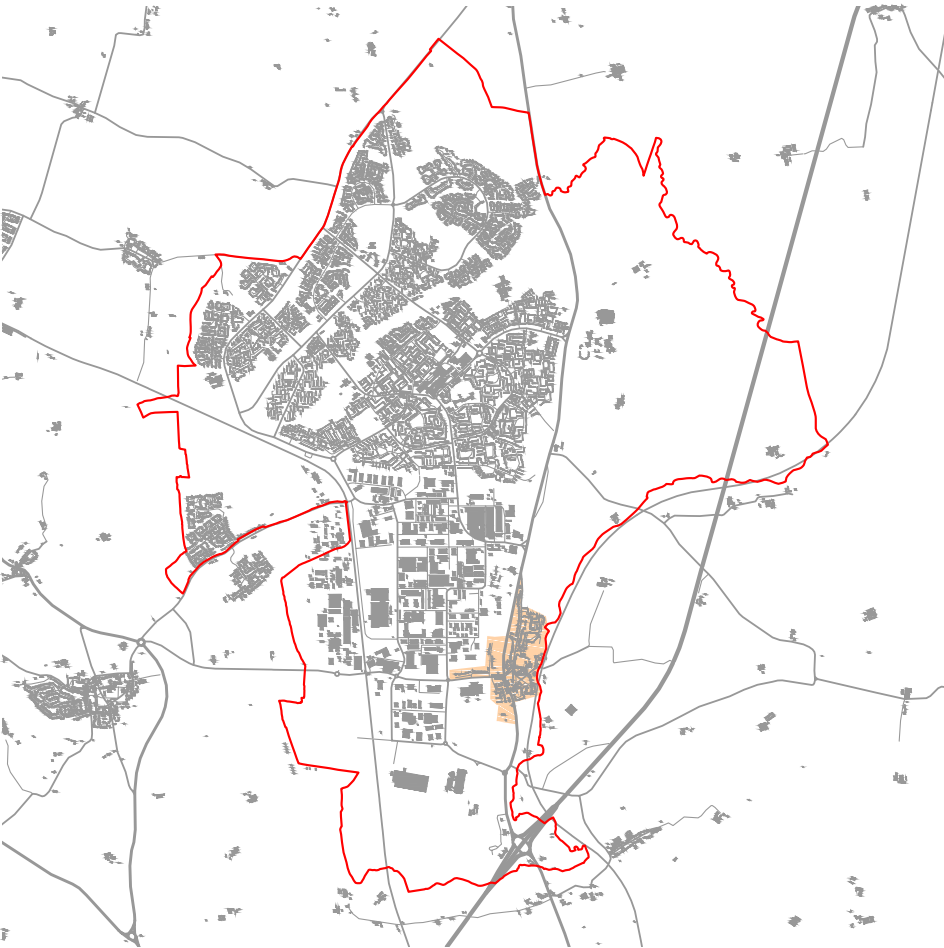
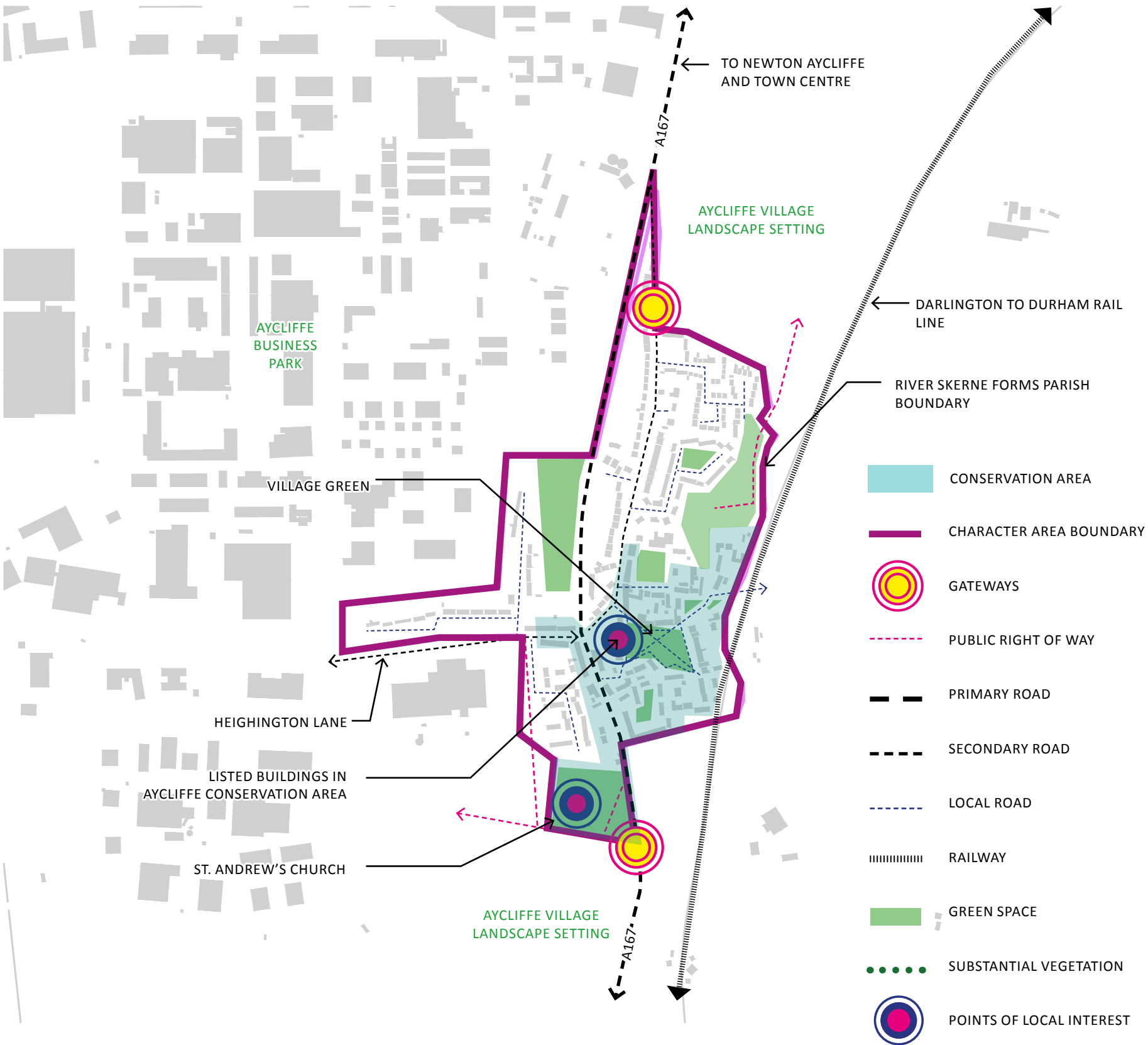


FIGURE 19: CHARACTER AREA 4 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The busy A167 divides the character area into two. This primary road goes on to form the western boundary of the character area in the north.

North Terrace and Durham Road form the main route through the centre of the village from which a number of local roads provide access to the village green and residential areas.

The traditional heart of the village contains a number of dedicated footpaths which dissect the village green. This allows pedestrians and traffic to move relatively independent of each other.

A number of public rights of way and bridleways surround the village edge and provide links into the surrounding rural landscape. These include FP2, FP4 and BW3 in the west and FP17 and FP20 to the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

This character area contains the majority of buildings of historical interest within the study area. The Aycliffe Village Conservation Area includes a number of traditional buildings which collectively are not repeated anywhere else throughout Newton Aycliffe.

A diverse range of houses overlook the central village green within the Conservation Area. Building styles vary from traditional cottages to post 1960s houses and the building materials palette varies from local stone to brick and render.

To the north of Aycliffe Village, outside of the Conservation Area, the density of development increases. Properties facing the road vary in style with very clear distinctions in materials and style between each development phase.

The Grade I listed St. Andrew's Church sits in an isolated position, screened by heavy roadside vegetation which aligns with the A167.

HERITAGE ASSETS

Aycliffe Village contains the only Conservation Area within the study area, which is focussed on the historic core of the village, specifically The Green and the High Street up to the Church Lane and St. Andrew's church. Conservation Areas are designated for their special architectural and historic interest.

The earliest evidence of settlement is the Parish church of St. Andrew's, which has Anglo Saxon origins and possibly dates from the 10th Century. The church would have been the only Anglo-Saxon building on the site built in materials of any permanence. A new village was built on the present site, probably in the 11th or 12th Century, leaving the church isolated. The layout of roads and public open spaces dating from this period has survived to this day, but all the buildings have vanished and been replaced. This early settlement was inward looking, reflecting its need for self-defence and self-sufficiency.

The 18th Century saw a steady expansion of the medieval village, as well as some rebuilding of the old village. The expansion was due in large part to the Great North Road (now the A167), which brought trade and prosperity to the village. The houses in the High Street were built along the route of this important road. In 1934 the High Street was remodelled and the road was widened. The old North Briton was broken up, set back and straightened, which led to the loss of a terrace of houses. The North Briton appears to have been remodelled and reflected the fashion of the time for roadhouses that were built along the Great North Road. In 1969, the Durham section of the A1(M) opened and Aycliffe Village was bypassed.



A167 which forms the western boundary of the village



Examples of traditional dwellings which overlook the village green within the conservation area

Aycliffe Village Conservation Area contains seven listed buildings, all of which are Grade II listed. No. 3 The Green, which is situated on the western side of The Green, is a mid-terrace building dating from the late 17th Century or early 18th Century with later alterations. The building represents one of the earliest surviving buildings within Aycliffe Village.

The other listed structure within The Green area of the village is a former gas lamp, which has been now converted to electricity and dates from the early 20th Century. Although now restored it was moved to its present position in 1980. It is a decorative addition to the streetscape and denotes the early form of lighting in Aycliffe Village.

Along the High Street are two listed buildings. No.16 Oaklea Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building dating from the early 19th Century a farmhouse illustrative of Aycliffe’s agricultural past. The second listed building is 14 High Street. This is another early 19th Century building that demonstrates the history of development within Aycliffe.

There are also many other buildings that are not listed but that add positively to the character of the Conservation Area. However, in places, there has been a loss of original features and the use of non-traditional materials.



Grade I Listed St. Andrew’s Church

LAND USE

Land use within the character area is predominantly residential with small pockets of amenity space for recreational use.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

The historical core of the village contains a village green, which creates a pleasant and quiet setting that is more open than the developed areas which are found elsewhere within Aycliffe Village. The village green is also the main focus of the conservation area. The green is maintained to a high standard, appears well used and is greatly enhanced by mature trees, seasonal bulb displays and the River Skerne, which forms the eastern boundary. Properties which overlook the village green enhance natural surveillance. Elsewhere within the village there are small pockets of amenity space and a childrens’ play facility.

The graveyard of St. Andrew’s Church provides a green and tranquil setting within a historic context.

VIEWS

Views within the character area are generally restricted by landform, buildings and mature vegetation. Within the conservation area, views across the village green to adjacent properties are longer and filtered by mature trees which allows a stronger appreciation of its historic character.



River Skerne passing through the Conservation Area

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to retaining and enhancing the village and conservation area, including:

- Traditional buildings which have retained period detailing;
- Village green which is the primary focus of the village; and
- Mature trees which significantly contribute to the verdant character.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which threaten the quality of the village and conservation area, including;

- Traffic on the A167, which dissects the character area, reduces tranquillity;
- Occasional congestion on local roads within the village;
- Views of Aycliffe Business park from St. Andrew’s Church detract from the historic setting;
- Modifications to historic buildings, which is contributing to a loss of original features; and
- Introduction of poorer quality modern architecture which detracts from the quality of the area.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to historic buildings and Conservation Area setting:

- Setting of listed buildings and the Aycliffe Village conservation area;
- Quality and openness of the village green; and
- Mature trees within and around the village green.

FORCES OF CHANGE

Any future expansion of Aycliffe Business Park could threaten the character of Aycliffe Village and its setting through an increase in through traffic. Similarly any future expansion of the village could increase congestion within the village.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on preserving and reinforcing the character and heritage of the conservation area and managing further development so as not to compromise ability of the village to function by:

- Taking a sensitive approach to developing near to buildings of historical significance;
- Ensuring improvements to the public realm are in-keeping with the village setting and free from clutter;
- Ensuring that any future development within or adjacent to the Conservation Area aligns with scale and form of existing traditional structures in order to not detract from existing character;
- Framing views of the church spire from the A167 to maximise its status as a local landmark;
- Taking a considered approach when introducing street furniture that will detract from the village green setting within the Conservation Area;
- Implementing a programme of tree replacement to manage future loss of older trees with species selected to maximise resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and increase bio-security;
- Improving signage and links with the public rights of way to improve the legibility of the area;
- Considering traffic calming measures and quieter surfacing in future

- improvements of the A167 to reduce vehicle speed and noise; and
- Supporting the local authority in preparing a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan to aid understanding of the special character and appearance of the conservation area and to inform future decisions and development.



Views along Embley Lane to the village green within the conservation area

5. OPEN FARMLAND

INTRODUCTION

This character area covers a large section of predominantly agricultural land to the east of Newton Aycliffe. It is sparsely populated with a small number of isolated farms and encompasses a small complex of buildings including the North East Centre for Autism.

The northern part of the character area encompasses a ridgeline from which the land slopes down to a shallow valley in the east. This affords long views from the south and east over well defined arable fields.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Open mixed farmland
- Rolling landscape
- Dispersed farms and buildings of traditional character
- Country lanes
- Mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Linear belts of woodland
- Influence of the A1(M) and A167

FIGURE 17: CHARACTER AREA 20 - LOCATION PLAN

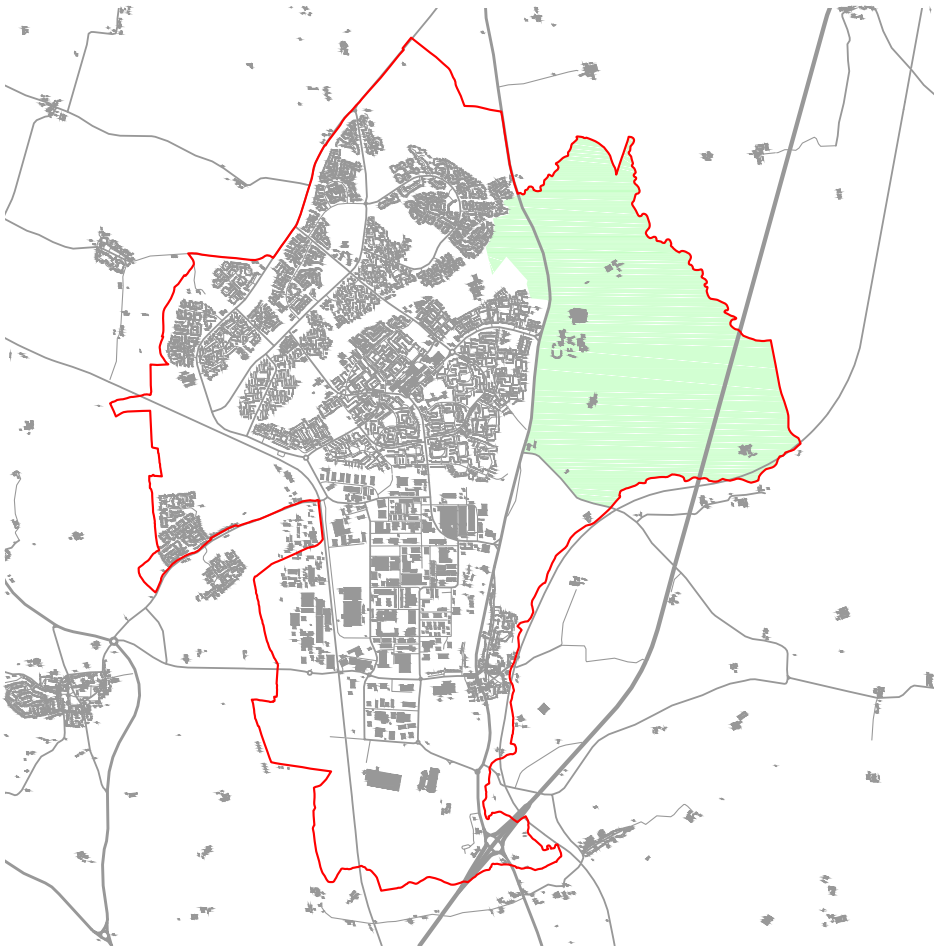
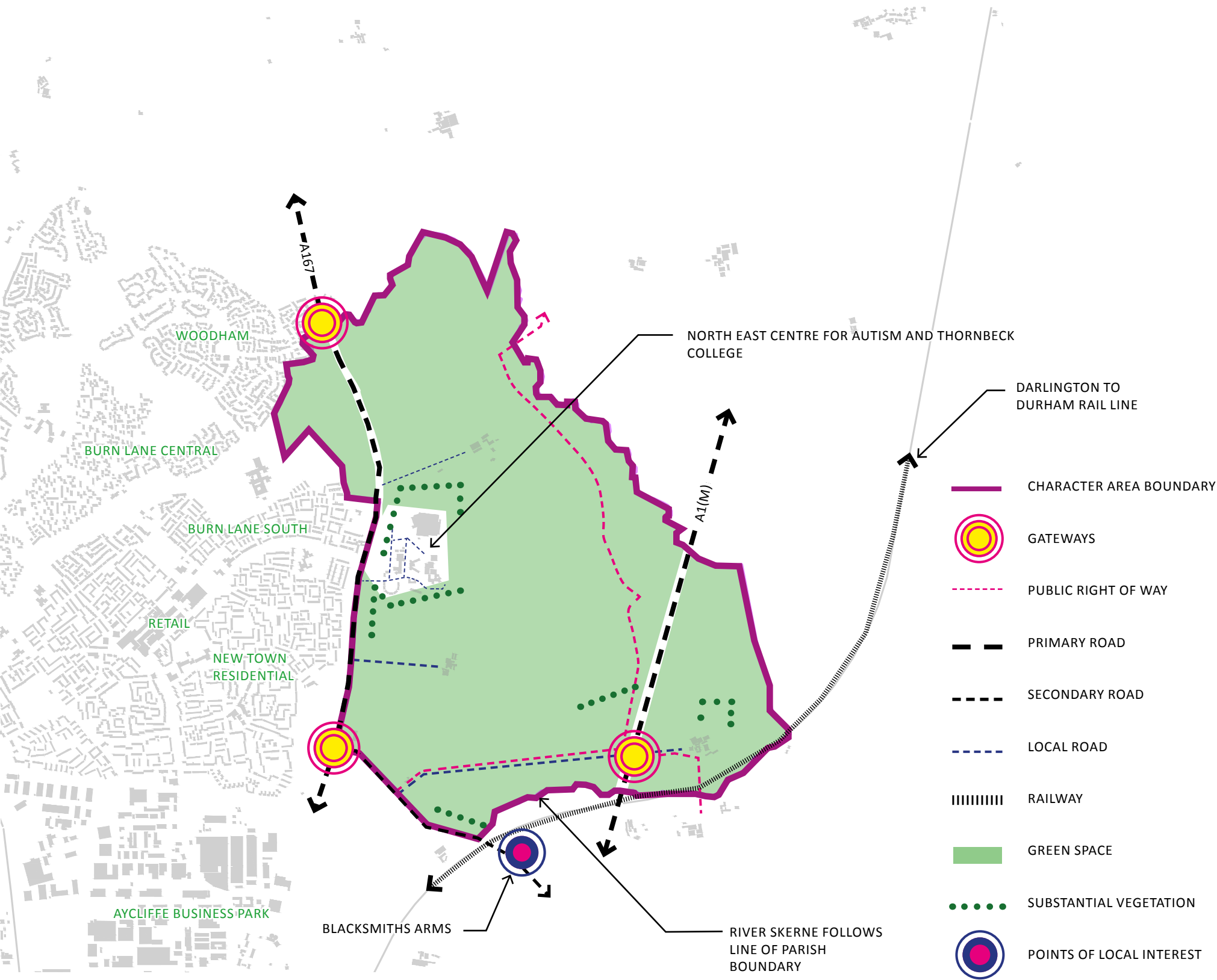


FIGURE 21: CHARACTER AREA 5 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The A167, forms a distinct edge between open farmland and the built-up residential areas of Newton Aycliffe along the western boundary of the area. The A1(M) crosses through the eastern part, forming a distinct linear feature in the landscape.

Ricknall Lane connects with the A167 and Newton Aycliffe in an east west direction, passing over the A1(M) to a network of A roads which lead beyond the study area to Stockton on Tees and Middlesbrough.

A series of tracks provide access into fields and to the widely disbursed farms throughout the character area.

The Darlington to Durham railway line skirts the south eastern edge and crosses the character area, although there are no stations within the character area.

A network of public rights of way, including bridleways provide valuable direct links into and across the surrounding rural landscape. These include FP2, FP4 and BW3 in the west and FP17 and FP20 in the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Built form is sparse and largely consists of traditional farm houses and farm buildings, including large barns which are generally located away from roads and public rights of way and which are largely screened by boundary trees.

There is a small cluster of modern buildings in the north which includes the North East Centre for Autism, Children’s and Young People’s Services and Thornbeck College Aycliffe Campus. This cluster is physically divided from the main built up areas of Newton Aycliffe by the A167, and enclosed by mature trees and vegetation.

HERITAGE ASSETS

This character area contains two listed building. A Railway Bridge, which is Grade II listed, is located in the south west with twin tunnels dating from about 1830 originally built for the Clarence Railway Company. The bridge carries a huge embankment of the disused Simpasture to Port Clarence Railway across the River Skerne. The Simpasture to Port Clarence railway was an early railway operating between 1833 and 1853, built to take coal from mines in County Durham to ports on the River Tees. Although now disused the former line is still visible as a historic topographical feature, particularly from the New Town character area.

Further to the north east beyond the A1(M) is the Grade II Ricknall Grange, dating from c.1840. It is an impressive house that sits proudly within arable farmland. The presence of the A1(M) provides a degree of visual and physical detachment from the rest of character area but also provides a visible link to the history of the area. The boundaries probably date from the 17th or early 18th Century. There are areas of ridge and furrow east and west of High Copelaw. The area to the east is broader suggesting earlier origins although both are relatively straight and aligned with post-medieval boundaries, which would indicate a later origin.

Another building of note, whilst not listed, is the Gretna Green public house, on the A167 in the east. This was once the Gretna Green Wedding Inn, although it appears to be a later early 20th Century, it would have provided a welcome break to travellers travelling along the Great North Road. It formed part of a small hamlet called Travellers Rest, which consisted of two public houses, a blacksmiths and cartwright shop in the 19th Century into the early 20th Century.

LAND USE

Land use within the character area is predominantly agricultural comprising mostly mixed farmland. A small cluster of modern institutional buildings to the north west provide a range of social services, educational resources and a small number of dwellings.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Although there is no formal green space within the area, a number of public rights of way cross through the farmland which increases its recreational value.

There are small pockets of formal green space in and around the modern buildings in the north west, although, whilst accessible to the public, they are largely associated with the group of buildings located there.



Views into open farmland from Preston Lane

VIEWS

Due to the openness of the agricultural landscape, there are long-range views from the south across the area to a wooded backdrop which screens the built up areas of Newton Aycliffe. Views are in places curtailed by substantial hedgerows and boundary trees which create shorter views and an impression of a more intimate landscape.

Whilst longer range views from the east are predominantly rural, the A1(M) detracts in many locations.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to retaining rural context, including:

- Dispersed buildings of a traditional character which typify the wider agricultural context;
- Extensive open areas of farmland;
- Mature boundary trees and hedgerows, which create strong field patterns; and
- Recreational assets such as public rights of way, the River Skerne and Blacksmiths Arms.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified, which threaten the quality of the character area, including:

- Legibility of the network of public rights of way and a lack of signage; and
- Severance of residential areas to the west by the A167.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to character of the open landscape and recreational assets:

- The lack of development gives rise to a sense of remoteness and isolation, which is not found to the same degree in other parts of the study area;
- Buildings of traditional character, which are also typical of that found in the wider landscape; and
- The strong cultural association of the Blacksmiths Arms

FORCES OF CHANGE

Proposals for up to 900 homes at Low Copelaw in what is currently open farmland would greatly change the character of the area.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on the open and rural aspects which are typical of that of the wider landscape by:

- Carefully considering the siting of future development to as far as possible avoid areas which will be visible in views from the east;
- Creating a strong landscape framework to integrate any future development through planting and the retention and enhancement of existing vegetation;
- Providing access to new developments from the existing A167 in order to retain the network of country lanes in the east;
- Applying Garden City Principles to the design of new developments, which maximise the value and functions of green space to local people, the environment and economy; and
- Enhancing existing public rights of way to improve pedestrian access and connections to the wider landscape and the River Skerne.



Gretna Green Wedding Inn 1954: Reproduced with the kind permission of Aycliffe Village Local History Society



A need for greater accessibility and promotion of the character area as a recreational asset



The Blacksmiths Arms is a valuable recreational facility that embodies the character of the area



Views into open farmland from the A1(M) overbridge

6. NEW TOWN

INTRODUCTION

This character area comprises the first phase of the development of the Newton Aycliffe New Town. From the outset the New Town board’s policy had been that good landscaping and generous planting were one of the cheapest and most effective ways of making the New Towns more attractive. This is still evident today. The combination of homes, amenities and proximity to employment which survive embody the New Town ‘self-sufficient’ philosophy.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A mix of housing including terrace, semi-detached and pre-fabricated bungalows
- Houses arranged around formal, communal greens
- Mature tree lined avenues
- Pedestrian routes within wide grass verges
- Relatively quiet setting
- Uniformity in building density
- Substantial landscape buffer which separates the residential areas from the A167

FIGURE 22: CHARACTER AREA 6 - LOCATION PLAN

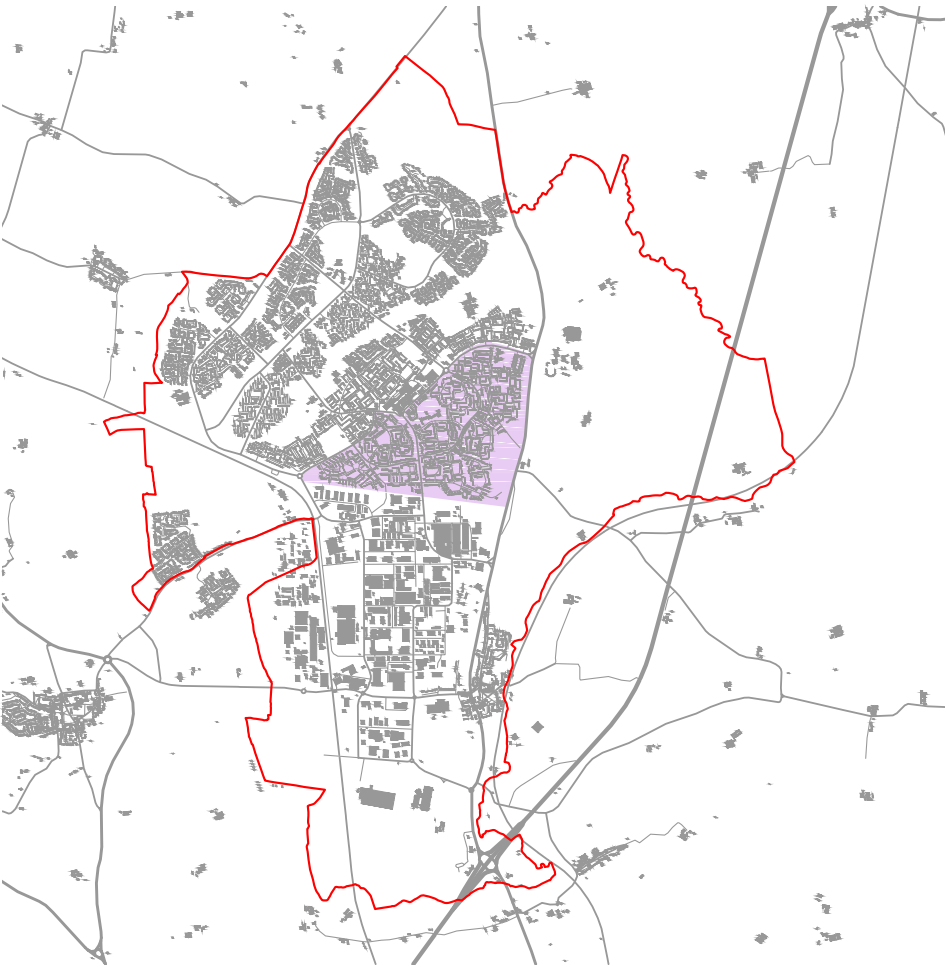
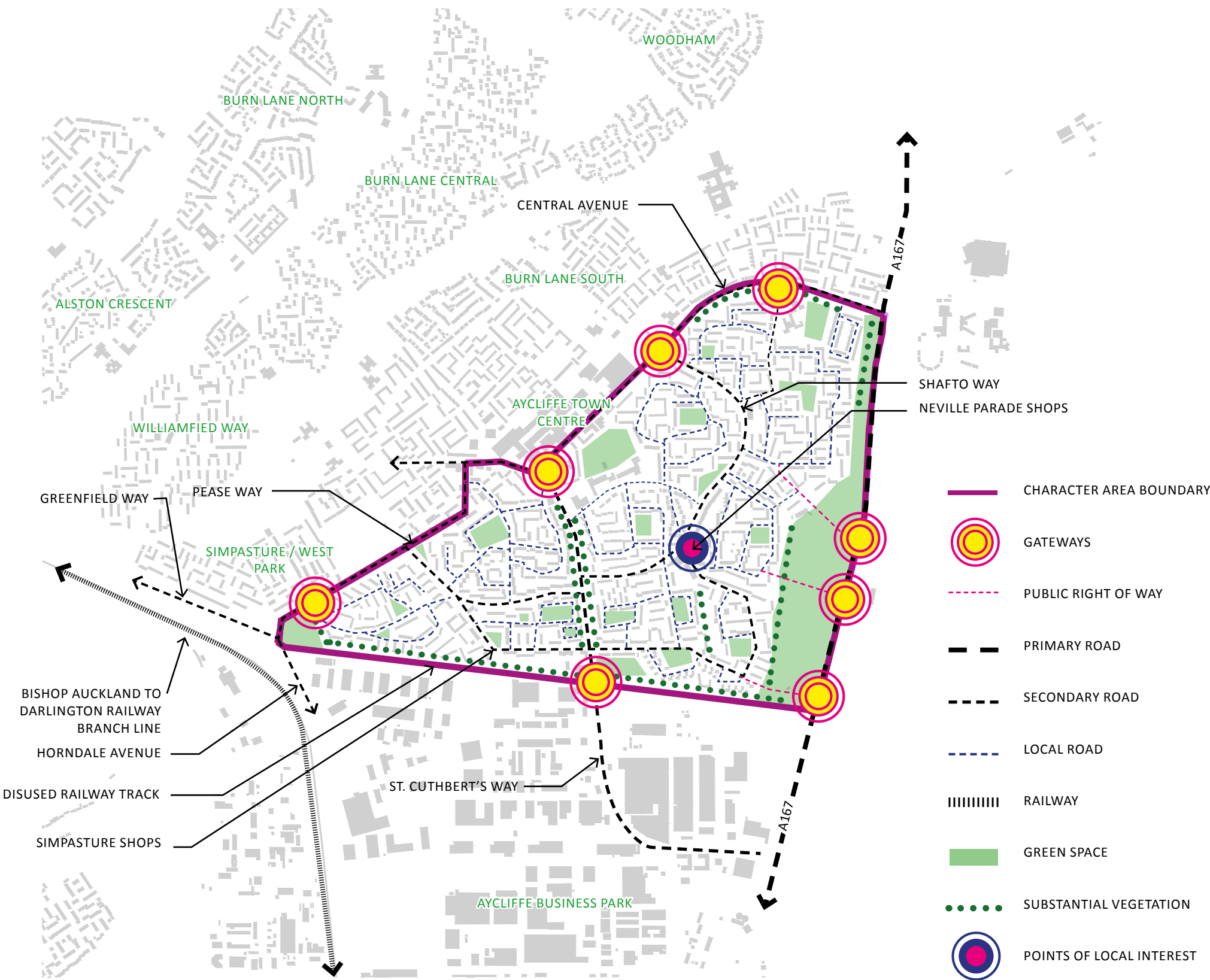


FIGURE 23: CHARACTER AREA 6 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The character area is bound by a number of primary roads which connect it to other parts of the town. The A167 forms the eastern boundary, which provides easy access to the A1(M). St. Cuthbert's Way crosses the character area in a north to south direction providing a direct route into Aycliffe Business Park. Central Avenue forms the northern boundary, which connects the A167 to the town centre.

New Towns were designed to be well connected and planners recognised that roads were detrimental to social environments. As a result, roads and footpaths were designed to be independent of each other. This is still evident today in the strong network of pedestrian routes, inter-connected communal greens and road layouts that limit through traffic.

A dedicated public right of way (FP21) is located in the south east corner of the character area, which provides access to a network of footpaths in the adjacent rural areas to the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

There is variety in the form of houses within the area including terraces, crescents, semi-detached and pre-fabricated bungalows. However, as a planned estate, there is a clear repetition of house types, style and architecture. Houses are largely positioned around communal greens, which creates distinct breaks in the urban fabric and natural surveillance of the green space.

Much of the area was originally laid out as council housing. The "Right to Buy", which was established in the 1980s, has led to modifications being carried out to individual properties on an ad-hoc basis, which has reduced uniformity and led to a broader palette of materials and finishes. However, the consistency in scale and strong layout of the original design remains largely intact and consequently the identity of the area remains strong.

Other buildings include local amenities, such as shops, health clinics, schools, churches and blocks of garages.

HERITAGE ASSETS

The historical layout represents the original intention to create a social and physically balanced community. Whilst there have been some changes, the original plan is still legible. Buildings which add to significance of Newton Aycliffe as a New Town include Neville Parade shops. These shops, whilst not architecturally unique, embody the initial social concepts that were a strong influence for the design of the Grenfell-Baines group masterplan.

Although not listed, prefabricated bungalows are a reminder of the early origins of the New Town. These buildings were initially built to address an urgent need for homes for key workers on the industrial estate and for the Development Corporation's own staff. As a result, 41 aluminium bungalows were erected on the site adjoining the railway at Clarence Farm. They were first occupied in November 1948 and a close-knit community evolved. When it was proposed to replace these buildings there were protests from the occupants and they were subsequently rebuilt with timber frames and tile hung façades, on the existing concrete foundations. These buildings remain today but have, in some cases, been individually altered. These buildings are of local merit and historical interest.



Dedicated pedestrian routes through green space are common



Communal green space overlooked by surrounding properties



Grass verges line the streets of the New Town's prefabricated bungalows

LAND USE

Land use is dedicated to residential use with associated amenity space. There are occasional ancillary uses such as schools, places of worship and shops.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

The communal greens around which buildings are arranged, together with generous grass verges and a broad landscape buffer to the east, contribute strongly to the verdant character of the area.

Communal greens are largely laid out as areas of amenity green space with mature trees, which creates an attractive setting. Some trees pre-date the establishment of the estate and create strong focal points. Links between green spaces, residential areas and amenities allow freedom of movement for pedestrians and cyclists independent of roads.

In a small number of places, the large extent of amenity green space creates areas which appear to be empty and little used.

VIEWS

Views out of the character area in the east and south are contained by mature vegetation, which line the A167 and a disused railway line respectively.

Moving through the area, views are largely contained by buildings and mature vegetation which creates a sequence of views. As the style of buildings can change from street to street, views assist in legibility and wayfinding. Views open out adjacent to greens where occasional views towards buildings in neighbouring areas and towards distant hills are possible.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

Positive aspects of character, which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced relate to retaining the strong characteristics of the New Town design including:

- The arrangement of buildings around communal greens, which creates an attractive setting and contributes to natural surveillance;
- Property proportions and common detailing;
- Tree lined roads and grass verges; and
- Pedestrian and cycle routes which are free from traffic.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which threaten the quality of the New Town character area, including;

- Pressure on parking due to an increase in the number of cars;
- Ad-hoc modifications to building façades and architectural detailing;
- Poor definition of the local centre around Neville Parade shops, which is now dominated by car parking; and
- Lack of gateway features to highlight the significance of the New Town character area.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to green space, dedicated pedestrian routes and the strong urban structure:

- The quantity and accessibility of inter-connected communal greens which provide a landscape setting to homes and amenity space;
- Pedestrian routes, which are independent from roads; and
- Buildings which face immediately onto roads.



Original parking provisions do not meet current demand



Basic materials used within the public realm



Grass verges and street trees enhance the streetscape setting

FORCES OF CHANGE

Continued pressure to accommodate more off-street parking has the potential to further erode the provision of green space. Furthermore, poor quality alterations to individual properties could reduce the strong unity of the area.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on preserving the layout and design of the New Town by:

- Taking a sensitive approach to future development to ensure it maintains the layout, common detailing and high degree of permeability of the New Town;
- Ensuring that any modifications reflect existing rooflines, scale and proportions;
- Establishing a tree replacement programme to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change and ensure bio-security;
- Creating a simple palette of materials and street furniture which enhances the character and quality of the area and meets modern needs of durability and safety;
- Pro-actively planning for the provision of parking that does not adversely affect valuable green space or create large areas of impermeable paving;
- Retain and enhance communal greens to provide for a range of functions which encourage greater community use, increase biodiversity and help to mitigate the impacts of climate change;
- Relaxing the management of landscape buffers to provide more informal green space; and
- Improving the quality of the public realm around Neville Parade shops to enhance the value of the place as a local centre.



A series of communal greens provide valuable amenity space and interlinked pedestrian routes



Neville Parade shops provide a valuable local centre

7. SCHOOL AYCLIFFE

INTRODUCTION

This character area comprises the Oakleaf Golf Course, which forms a large open area in the north of the character area, West Cemetery and a residential area situated in the south west of the study area.

The residential area is split in two by School Aycliffe Lane. Houses are mostly modern, although there are a small number of Grade II listed buildings. The southern part of the village, which comprises the recently developed ‘Chestnuts’ housing estate sits in the neighbouring Borough of Darlington.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large open area of recreational space which includes Oakleaf Golf Course
- Medium to large sized modern houses arranged around cul-de-sacs
- Two listed buildings in prominent location on School Aycliffe Lane, which divides the area
- Slightly elevated position with filtered long range views north
- Vegetated road verges and tree groups

FIGURE 24 - CHARACTER AREA 7 - LOCATION PLAN

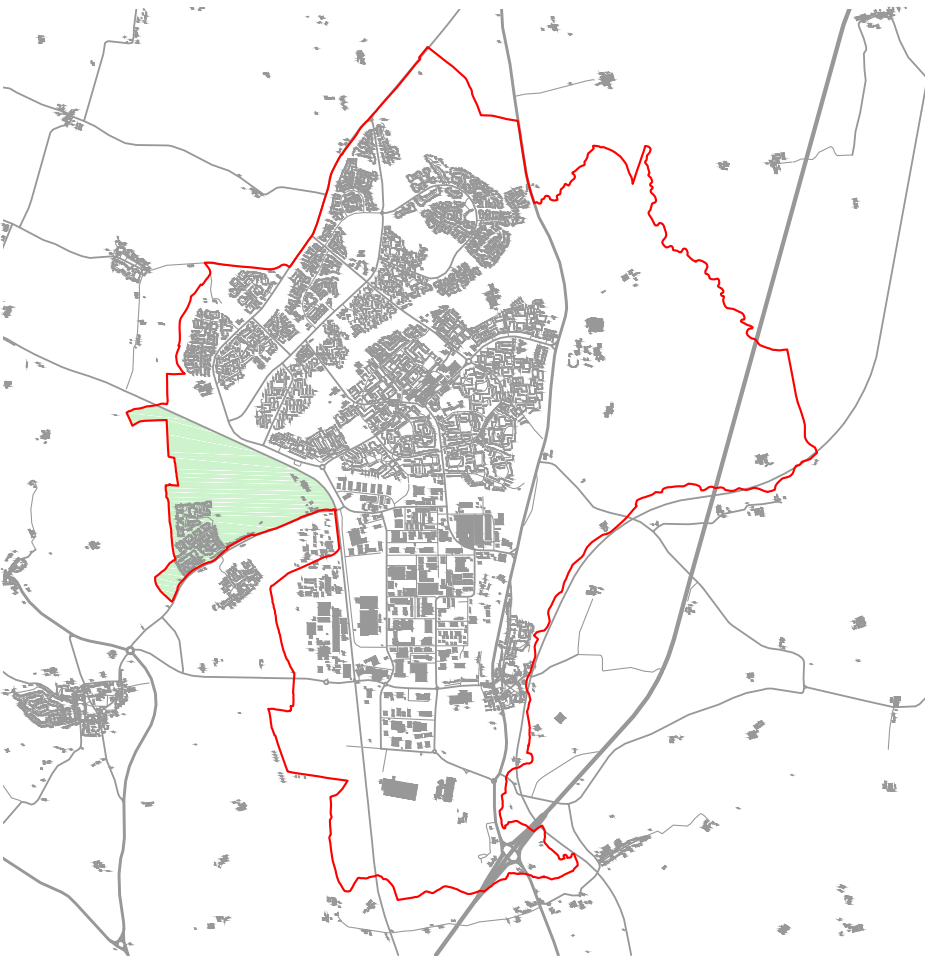
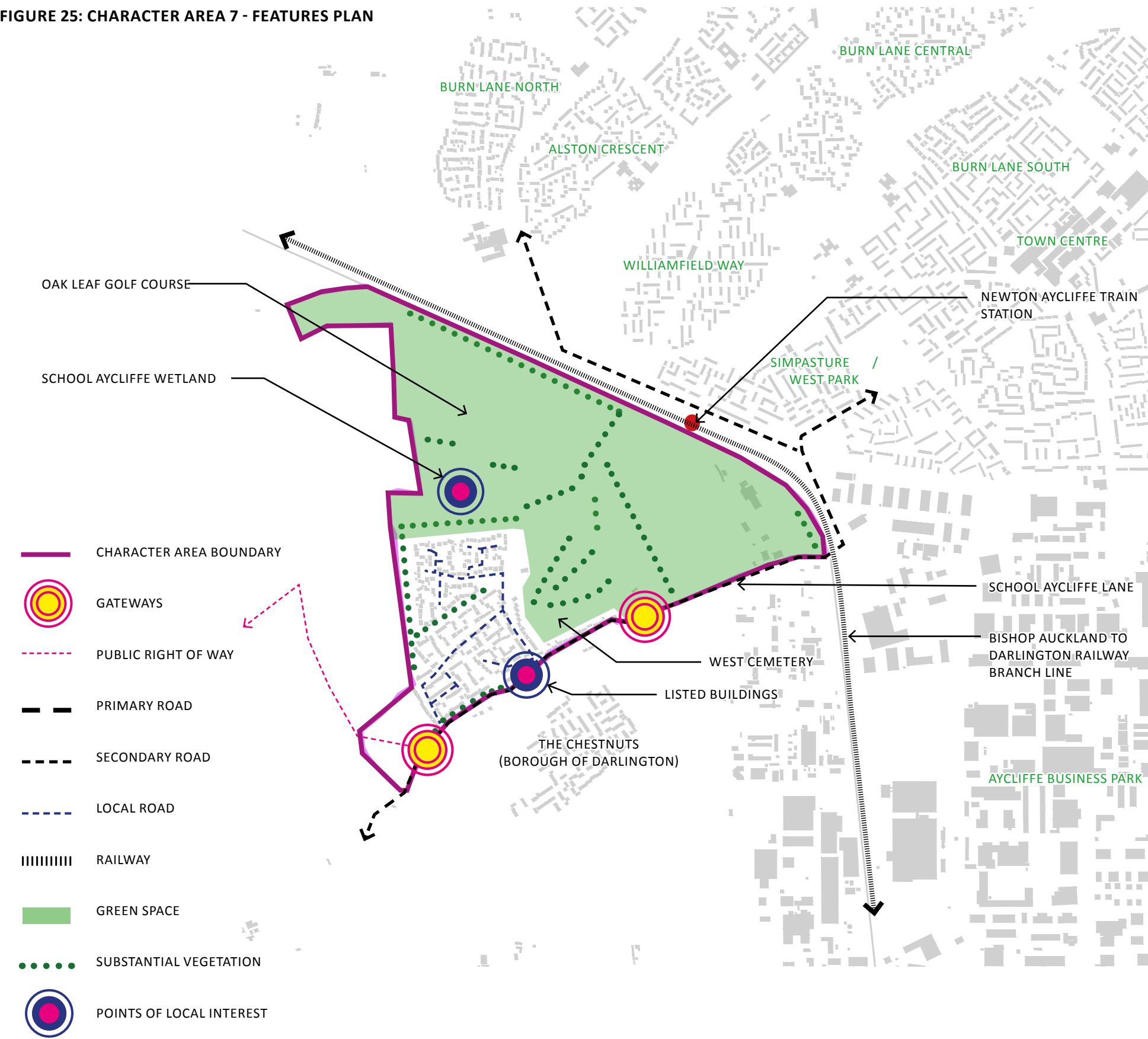


FIGURE 25: CHARACTER AREA 7 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The main route from Newton Aycliffe into this character area is School Aycliffe Lane, which is a busy primary road that crosses the centre of the village and physically divides the residential estates. The road connects with the A6072 in the west, which provides direct access to Darlington to the south and Shildon to the north.

Pedestrian routes within residential areas are largely aligned with roads. There is a dedicated cycle route along part of School Aycliffe Lane but this becomes difficult to navigate around pedestrian crossings.

To the west of the main residential area is a public right of way (FP22 and 35) which provides access to tracks running north to Red House Beck and School Aycliffe Wetland and Woodland.

The Bishop Auckland to Darlington rail line forms the northern boundary of the character area. Newton Aycliffe train station, which is outside the character area , has no direct pedestrian links from the main School Aycliffe residential area.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

The area is split between the open, well vegetated areas in the north and the residential area of School Aycliffe in the south.

Great Aycliffe Town Council offices and the Oakleaf Sports Complex are located in the eastern part of the character area. These buildings lie adjacent to sports fields and the Oakleaf Golf Course and stand alone in contrast to the higher density of the residential areas.

Houses in School Aycliffe are generally semi-detached or detached and date from the latter part of the 20th Century and are arranged along streets or cul-de-sacs. A small number of listed buildings are located on School Aycliffe Lane in positions which are prominent to through traffic and add greatly to the diversity of the area.

HERITAGE ASSETS

The character area contains two listed buildings, both of which are located on School Aycliffe Lane. The former Nurses’ Teaching Centre is Grade II listed and includes the boundary wall and gate piers. Although referred to in the list description as the nurses teaching centre, it is now referred to as Aycliffe Hall. It is an attractive villa dating from 1835, which stands proudly with fine architectural detailing within mature landscaped setting.

To the east is Old Farm Cottage, also a Grade II listed building but much older than the adjacent Hall. It dates from the 17th Century, although it is believed to have been largely rebuilt in the late 20th Century as there are many renewed elements. However this does not detract from the positive contribution that these make to the building. Aycliffe Hall and Old Farm Cottage are two of a small number of buildings that used to form the small hamlet of School Aycliffe. These buildings are prominent due to their scale, age and use of traditional materials on School Aycliffe Lane with mature landscaping and stone boundary walls that add positively to the streetscape.



Elevated position of the village allows for long distance views

LAND USE

The land is divided between residential, recreation a cemetery and nature conservation uses. The area defined as School Aycliffe is predominantly residential. School Aycliffe Wetland and Woodland comprises approximately 8 hectares of land given over to nature conservation, which is located to the north of the village. Oakleaf recreational facilities account for the rest of the character area including sports fields and golf course.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

There is little in the way of informal and shared green space within residential areas, although private gardens are mostly generous. The exception to this is a section of land around Lord Neville Drive where there is a small area of amenity green space with mature trees, which forms a distinct break in the development.

Outside of the developed areas, the large and open recreational green space forms a significant proportion of the character area. Provisions include a golf course, sports fields, wetland and open farmland with a number of public rights of ways.

VIEWS

There are distant views east from elevated land in the west and from homes which back onto the Oakleaf Golf Course. However, most views within the residential areas are restricted by mature vegetation and the density of buildings. Long distance views are also available through breaks in vegetation from School Aycliffe Lane over sports fields. Due to the elevated landform, views here reach to the north of Newton Aycliffe. Views of this range are uncommon in other character areas within the study area.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to historical aspects and the landscape setting of residential areas, including:

- The group of older buildings which retain their setting along School Aycliffe Lane;
- Grass verges between footpaths and roads;
- Extensive open areas of recreational land which also provide a buffer between Newton Aycliffe and School Aycliffe; and
- School Aycliffe Wetland, the semi-natural habitats of which are distinctly different from the more urban character of both the residential areas and recreation areas.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified, which threaten the quality of School Aycliffe character area, including;

- The busy School Aycliffe Lane creates a barrier across the area; and
- Over complicated pedestrian and cycle routes.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to:

- The setting and group value of the listed buildings located along School Aycliffe Lane.

FORCES OF CHANGE

School Aycliffe Lane is a busy road which provides primary access from the west. An increase in traffic due to further development outside of the character area could further increase the issues of severance.



Wide grass verges provide a distinct division between footpath and roads



Overcomplicated cycleways on School Aycliffe Lane



School Aycliffe Lane divides the north of the village from the south

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on enhancing School Aycliffe by:

- Retaining and reinforcing the setting of listed buildings located on School Aycliffe Lane;
- Any new development on School Aycliffe Lane should be sensitive to the scale and setting of listed buildings and be of a high architectural standard;
- Future traffic calming and alternative surface treatments of School Aycliffe Lane should be considered to reduce noise but also enhance the setting of buildings fronting the street;
- Developing pedestrian links with Newton Aycliffe train station;
- Rationalising cycle routes, street furniture and road markings which are currently confusing;
- Strengthening the connections between the residential estates in the north and south by improving and rationalising crossing points;
- Sustaining and enhancing the biodiversity of School Aycliffe Wetlands; and
- Retaining areas of open space between School Aycliffe and urban areas of Newton Aycliffe.



Grade II listed - Aycliffe Hall



Views to the rear of Aycliffe Hall and Old Farm cottage



Grade II listed - Old Farm Cottage

8. SIMPASTURE AND WEST PARK

INTRODUCTION

The Simpasture and West Park character area consists of residential properties focused around two large areas of green space, which prevent the coalescence of a number of housing estates.

Simpasture Park, which is focused around sports and West Park, which contains a lake and encourages less formal activities such as walking, are two of the largest formal parks in the town.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Extensive areas of pubic green space
- Houses of various types arranged around cul-de-sacs
- Streets dominated by vehicles
- Small groups of mature trees
- Distinctive feature lake within West Park

FIGURE 26: CHARACTER AREA 8 - LOCATION PLAN



FIGURE 27: CHARACTER AREA 8 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

Vehicle access to residential areas is gained from Greenfield Way and Pease Way, which are primary routes that form the western boundary of the town. A number of local streets form a complicated network of cul-de-sacs and dead ends, which restricts traffic from traveling through the residential area. On street and pavement parking is commonplace, which restricts pedestrian movement in places.

Pedestrian routes through open parkland are a fundamental aspect to the character of Simpasture and West Park. The network of paths connects a number of residential estates and provides good pedestrian access to Woodham Burn, which traverses Newton Aycliffe in a west to east direction.

Footpaths within the residential areas allow pedestrian movement which is relatively independent from vehicles. This creates uncertainty in places as to the boundary between public and private space.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Houses vary in type and appearance. The predominant style is one or two storey terrace housing laid out originally as a council estate. Throughout the estate many of the properties appear to have subsequently been purchased and modified, which creates a varied appearance in places. The density of housing is generally high with occasional pockets of amenity space. Houses which form the northern and western boundaries of the residential area overlook Simpasture Park and West Park.

HERITAGE ASSETS

Simpastures was one of the first residential areas of the New Town to be built. The layout represents the intentions of the original masterplan to create a social and physically balanced community and, whilst there have been some alterations, the original plan is still legible.

The Iron Horse is not a listed building but is notable as it a post-war public house built specifically for the community. The large and spacious building harks back to an early period. Post war pubs are a severely threatened building type, with many being converted to other uses or demolished altogether. The Iron Horse has group value with the row of shops at Simpasture Gate.



West Park lake provides a central focus for the large, open areas of green space

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly residential. However, Simpasture Park and West Park provide a range of recreational uses.

Stephenson Way Community Primary School stands alone in the north eastern corner of the character area.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Simpasture Park provides open areas of marked sports fields, a multi-use games area and a children’s play area. West Park also has a small children’s play area but largely provides for informal activities with large open areas of gently undulating grassland with mature trees. A lake, which was previously used as a boating lake, is now more informal in appearance. Both parks provide a landscape setting to residential areas and prevent the coalescence of adjacent estates. Blocks of mature trees enhance the parkland character.

The public realm has been modified and repaired over time which has resulted in an inconsistent palette of materials. The paving over of areas of grass and planting beds between building blocks to provide additional space for parking vehicles has blurred the boundaries between public and private space.

VIEWS

Due to large areas of open space, views across the parkland are relatively open. They are however confined to the parkland boundary edge where adjacent residential developments and groups of trees form a strong visual backdrop.

Typical views within the residential areas are framed by the buildings, fences and walls which line the streets. Views open out to parkland where there are gaps between buildings.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the large areas of formal parkland and permeability between areas, including:

- Extensive areas of public parks and green space;
- Strong pedestrian links and gateways to the parkland areas from surrounding estates;
- The Iron Horse is a notable post war public house;
- Green wedges break up the developed areas.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which threaten the quality of residential areas within the character area, including;

- Lack of local centre;
- Limited range of functions and activities within Simpasture Park and West Park means that some areas appear little used;
- On-street and pavement parking; and
- Uncoordinated public realm improvements with poor quality materials which has created a patchwork of materials.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to notable buildings and connections to and quality of areas of green space, including:

- Access to green space is a defining quality within residential areas;
- Views into areas of parkland from residential areas;
- The Iron Horse public house and its setting, particularly given the recent demolition of The Oak Tree public house opposite Neville Parade shops.



The paving over of green space degrades the public realm



On street parking restricts movement and clutters the street.

FORCES OF CHANGE

An increase in vehicle ownership may further increase congestion within the narrow roads of residential areas. Furthermore, the loss of trees over time could change the character of the area unless future replacements are planned and managed.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on the enhancement of existing parkland and residential areas by:

- Formalising parking and improving pedestrian orientation within the residential estates;
- Reinforcing pedestrian links and gateways into parkland areas;
- Diversifying the soft estate to reduce areas of unused space and increase the range of functions and biodiversity value;
- Improving the palette of materials used in the public realm around the convenience store to create a local centre;
- Securing the future of the Iron Horse Public House and sensitively enhance its condition and setting;
- Developing a hierarchy of materials which differentiate between public and private space.



Wildfowl now inhabits the lake previously used for recreational boating



Wedges of green space provide breaks in development and strong pedestrian links to the surrounding parkland

9. TOWN CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

The town centre is focused around a shopping street which has been pedestrianised with recent upgrades to the public realm. The addition of large-scale Tesco Extra and Argos stores has extended and reoriented the retail area. These larger scale outlets have now become a primary focus within the town centre due to increased visibility and their location adjacent to the primary route of Central Avenue.

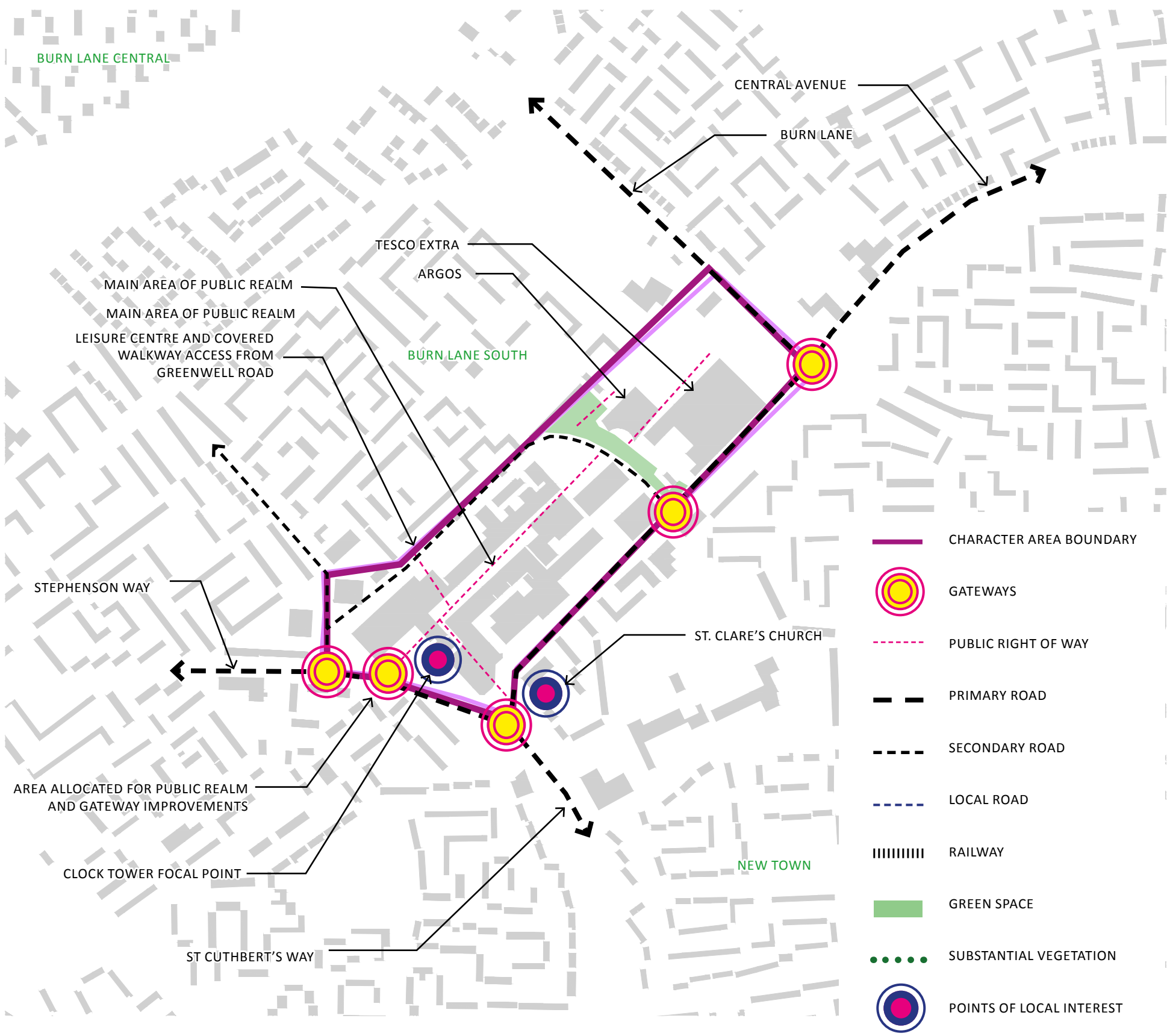
KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Main shopping street with building façades which have been recently modernised to include an elevated walkway
- Inward facing arrangement of buildings with service areas and accesses facing the neighbouring streets
- Pedestrianised public realm with modern seating and sound installations
- Original clock tower, which forms a strong focal point due to simple architecture, position and height
- Covered arcade, typical of post-war architecture
- Modern large-scale Tesco Extra, Argos and extensive car park

FIGURE 28: CHARACTER AREA 9 - LOCATION PLAN



FIGURE 29: CHARACTER AREA 9 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

A pedestrianised plaza replaces what was originally the equivalent of Newton Aycliffe’s High Street when it was first laid out. This plaza is accessed through a number of covered arcades, which now forms the heart of the town centre. Work is currently ongoing to create an area of public realm which includes a significant gateway into the town centre from Stephenson Way. A raised walkway and spiral staircase overlooks the main shopping streets and provides access to shops located on the first floor.

The town centre is encapsulated by a number of primary roads including Central Avenue, Stephenson Way, Greenwell Road and Burn Lane. There is a reasonably good degree of permeability for pedestrians though a number of gateways, although these are not clearly defined.

There are a number of options for parking including Aycliffe Shopping Centre, Tesco Extra, a multi-storey car park and a number of small scale car parks accessed from Greenwell Road.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

The linear form of the original 1950s town centre is still evident and largely consists of two-storey buildings. However, these have been substantially modified to include first floor shops and walkways which are accessed by a ramp and staircase. Glass fronted shops face onto the pedestrianised plaza forming a wall of active frontages.

Churchill House, which previously enclosed the eastern end of the main plaza, has been demolished, although the distinctive clock tower has been retained. The clock tower is simple in design and detailing and acts as a strong local focal point and wayfinder.

Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre is a large brick building which sits at the western end of the shopping plaza. The building’s size and position make it a visible landmark in views from the west.

In recent years large Tesco Extra and Argos stores have considerably increased the size of the town centre. Due to its large scale and modern glass facade, the Tesco Extra store has now become a prominent feature in the town centre. This is further enhanced by the buildings location fronting onto Central Avenue which makes it prominent to users of primary routes.

HERITAGE ASSETS

The architectural and historic interest of the town centre has been diminished due to the rapid rate of alteration, enlargement and renewal of the original design in a relatively short space of time. However the 77ft campanile and clock tower forms an important focal point for the town centre that is typical of the period of development. The clock tower is not listed but has local interest due it being one of the few unaltered parts of the original design of the Town Centre. Other elements, such as the linear form show of the plaza, make reference to the original layout of Beveridge Way.



The present, pedestrian orientated town centre



The original layout of the town centre



The surviving campanile and clock tower is a strong landmark and orientation point

LAND USE

Retail is the principal land use. Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre provides recreational facilities and there are also a small number of offices throughout the town centre, usually above shops. Aycliffe fire station is located on Central Avenue and car parks supporting the various shops also account for a large area of the town centre.

The leisure centre provides a small amount of concentrated night time activity, however, the town centre is largely unused at night.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

The main shopping plaza is the most significant area of dedicated public realm within the whole of Newton Aycliffe. The plaza has recently been modernised with new surfacing, seating, interactive sound installations and street trees. This area of public realm is currently being further expanded to include the previous space of the now demolished Churchill House. A small area of green space fronts a number of businesses along Greenwell Road, which provides a break from buildings and car parks.

VIEWS

The inward facing nature of the main shopping plaza prevents outward looking views. However, there are framed views of the clock tower and Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre from the west which provide valuable orientation points.



Unwelcoming gateways into the main shopping plaza

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to areas of public realm, parking provisions and the visibility of the town centre, including:

- The clock tower is a prominent structure which acts as an orientation point and is a rare unaltered survival of the original town centre;
- Significant area of recently renovated public realm; and
- Adequate car parking facilities;

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which threaten the identity and functionality of the town centre, including:

- Blank and unattractive outward facing façades along Central Avenue and Greenwell Road;
- Uncoordinated public realm improvements outside the main plaza which create a patchwork palette;
- The dominance of modern buildings, such as Tesco Extra, which are out of scale with other buildings in the area;
- Poor definition of gateways into the main shopping area;
- A lack of night time economy; and
- Failing trees within the main pedestrian plaza.



Blank and unattractive façades along Central Avenue

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to shops and public realm and include:

- Glass fronted shops within the main shopping plaza, which create active frontages and a strong focus of activity; and
- The campanile and clock tower, which is one of the few remaining features of the original town centre.

FORCES OF CHANGE

Alternative forms of shopping, such as the internet or larger superstores may deter people from using the shops in the town centre. Over time, this could result in a change of use of some of the buildings in this area.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on enhancing the town centre as an attractive destination, retaining and attracting shops and shoppers by:

- Gradually renovating ageing buildings with modern, vibrant architecture in order to distinguish the town centre from the surrounding residential areas;
- Sensitively modernising the covered walkway and shopping arcade to create a welcoming entrance into town;



Outdoor seating, active frontages, clear sight lines and signage encourage people into town

- Introducing active frontages along Central Avenue to increase vibrancy;
- Retaining the clock tower as a focal point and as a rare survival of the original town centre layout;
- Developing public art in prominent locations throughout the town centre;
- Strengthening links and unifying Tesco Extra with the main shopping plaza in order to retain shoppers;
- Strengthening pedestrian routes with the surrounding residential areas in order to reduce short car journeys;
- Establishing a night time economy which maximises the use of the public realm within the town centre;
- Seek opportunities to introduce new green space within the town centre to connect with the wider network of green infrastructure of Newton Aycliffe;
- Introduce high quality public realm to key gateways at Greenwell Road; and
- Ensure that public realm in the town centre is implemented and maintained to a high standard.



The clock tower is a wayfinder and orientation point



New public realm and street furniture within the main shopping plaza



The scale of Tesco Extra and Argos are at odds with that of the traditional town centre

10. BURN LANE SOUTH

INTRODUCTION

The Burn Lane South character area consists of residential estates built around the north of the town centre. The varied types and style of housing and pockets of green space which punctuate the densely developed residential area are distinctive. Woodham Burn forms a strong feature along the northern boundary.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Relatively flat topography
- Various types of housing
- Predominantly road facing properties
- Modified properties with few common characteristics
- Small pockets of shared amenity green space

FIGURE 30 - CHARACTER AREA 10 - LOCATION PLAN

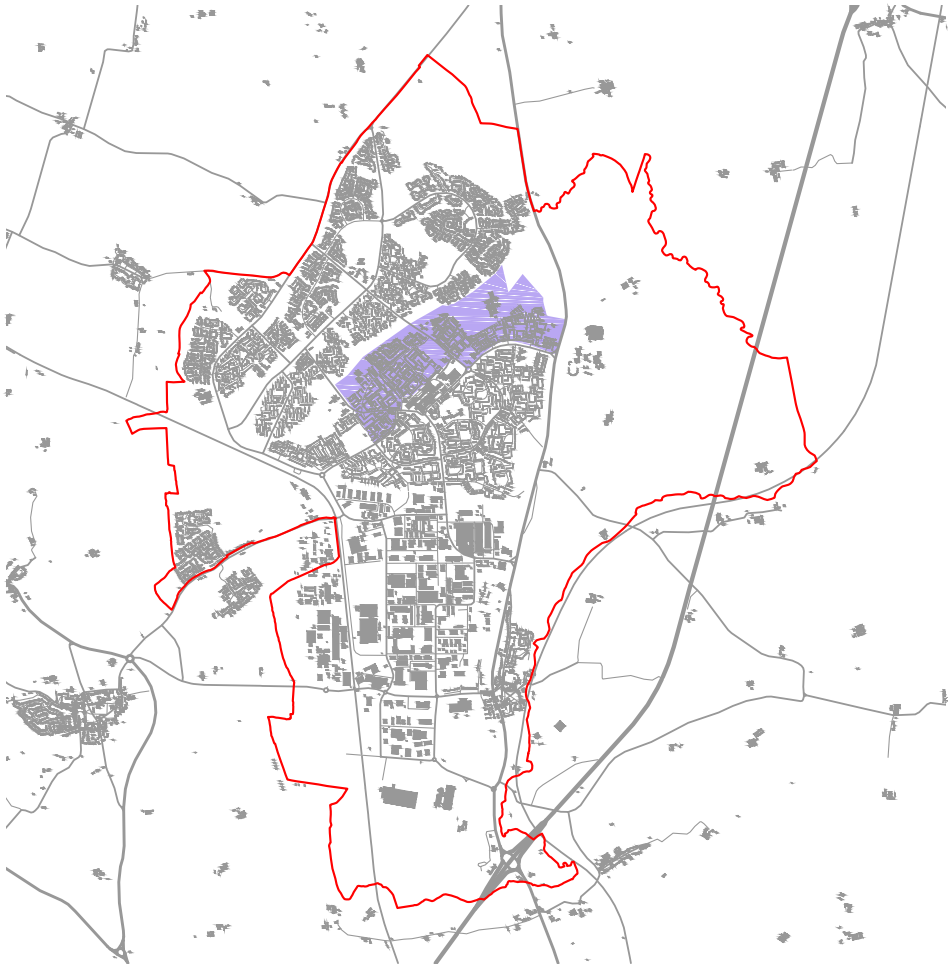
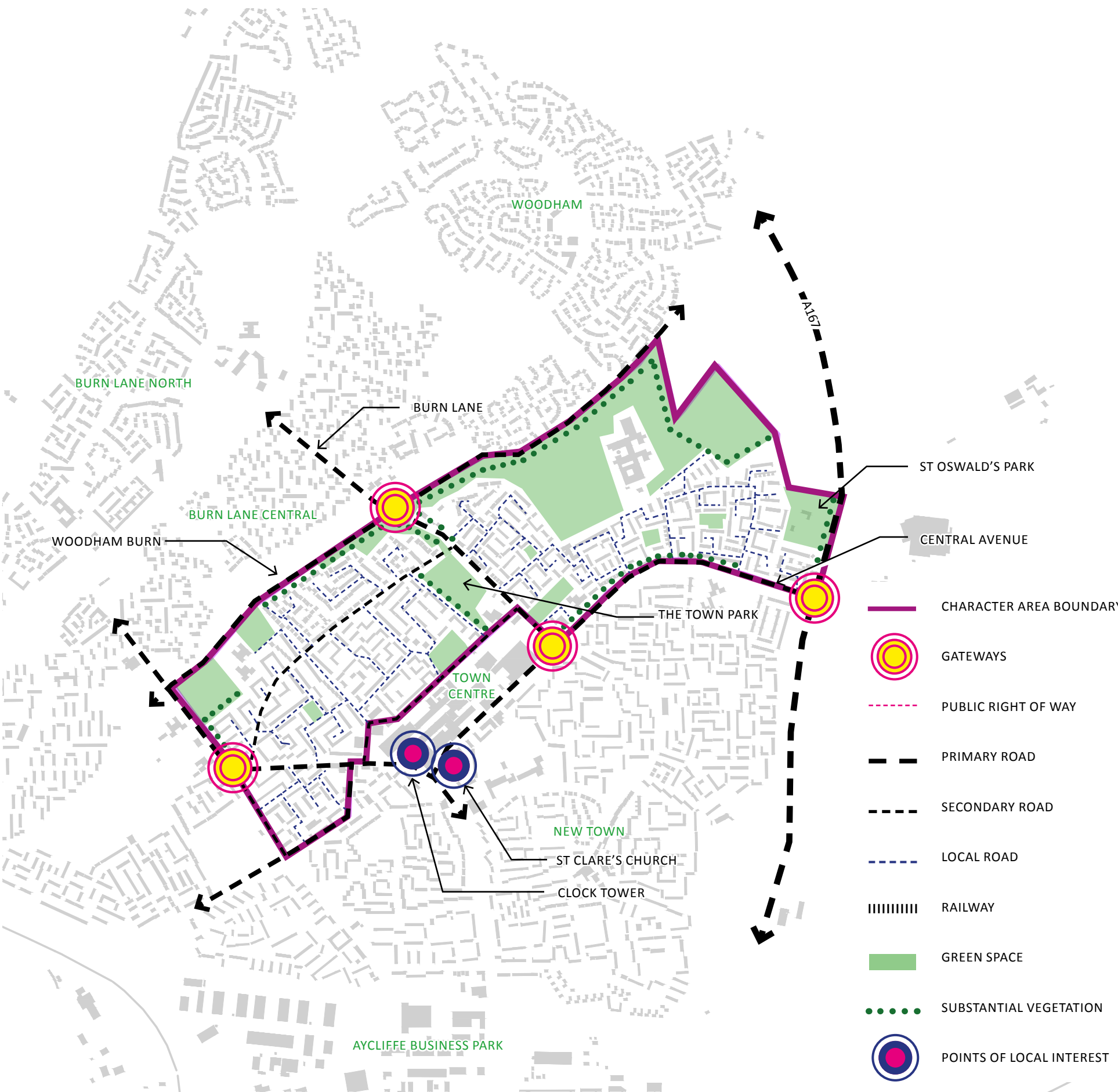


FIGURE 31: CHARACTER AREA 10 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

A series of primary roads circumnavigate a broad residential area, from which a complicated network of local roads cross the intricate estates. Minor routes include Burn Lane, Stephenson Way, Greenwell Road, Westmorland Way and Central Avenue as well as the A167.

Whilst there are a number of dedicated pedestrian routes through residential areas, a lack of direct or well defined routes into the town centre creates segregation despite a close proximity between the two.

Public rights of way along Woodham Burn and a linear belt of woodland, provides unbroken access to West Park (in the west) and a series of public rights of way in the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

The houses which typify the estates range in type and scale. Many are road facing although some are focused around communal greens. In some cases there is little definition between public and private space due to a lack of boundary treatments. Houses are largely two-storey and of high density.

Aside from residential properties a number of schools are scattered across the character area including; Woodham Academy, St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Woodham Burn Community Primary School.

HERITAGE ASSETS

The area was part of the original masterplan of the 1950s and as a consequence the housing is of a similar type and age. The main interest of the area is attributed to the layout of the residential areas and the spaces between reflecting the ideals of the New Town. There are no listed buildings within this character areas.

LAND USE

This predominantly residential area is interspersed with pockets of land used for education and green space. The dense woodland belt of Woodham Burn forms the northern boundary.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

The Town Park is a major recreational space and houses the Newton Aycliffe Youth and Community Centre. The park adjoins the town centre and provides the landscape setting to a number of properties centred around Burn Lane.

Woodham Burn is a stream set in woodlands which forms green wedge between residential areas and a network of pedestrianised routes. As a semi-natural feature, this woodland is distinctly different in character from the dense urban areas it cuts through.

A number of small areas of green space are located within residential areas that provide breaks in development.

A variety of materials have been used within the public realm, although there is no emphasis placed on using the materials palette to develop a hierarchy of spaces or to define functionality.



Tree lined Central avenue provides an attractive gateway into the town centre



Designated pedestrian routes allow movement which is free from vehicles



Dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes in a pleasant setting lead through Woodham Burn

VIEWS

A relatively flat topography combined with the high density of development limits notable or long distance views. There are views of the leisure centre within the town centre from the western part of the area, which provides a valuable orientation point.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CHARACTER

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the green space and links to the town centre, including:

- Proximity to the town centre;
- The Woodham Burn network of footpaths and woodland;
- Pockets of green space which punctuate the otherwise dense development and provide the setting of some buildings; and
- Town Park which provides a landscape setting.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified that affect the visual appearance and the relationship of the character area to the town centre, including:

- Inconsistencies and general condition of public realm materials;
- The paving over of front gardens to provide off-street parking has reduced the quality of the area in places;
- Vandalism and fly tipping along parts of Woodham Burn; and
- Lack of a relationship to the town centre.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change and which relate to access to green space and include:

- Town Park which provides valuable open areas; and
- Woodham Burn, which forms a distinct green wedge and wildlife corridor.

FORCES OF CHANGE

This area is stable in terms of growth but further paving over of public and private green space to create areas for parking could continue to erode the quality of the area.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on developing a cohesive public realm with clear links to the town centre, by:

- Enhancing pedestrian links from residential areas to the town centre to reduce short distance car journeys;
- Enhancing views of the town centre from within the residential area;
- Reinforcing pedestrian links and gateways through green space;
- Developing a palette of materials which will improve the quality and appearance of the public realm;
- Developing a strategic hierarchy of materials to define important routes and aspects of the public realm to improve legibility;
- Ensuring that new development on primary routes including Burn Lane, Central Avenue and Stephenson Way close to the town centre is of high architectural quality and detailing to create a sense of arrival upon approaching the town centre.



Pedestrian routes following Woodham Burn



Views to Netwon Aycliffe Leisure Centre and the town centre from residential areas



Westmorland Way which is a primary route creating long views through the character area



Attractive wooded pedestrian routes through Woodham Burn

11. BURN LANE CENTRAL

INTRODUCTION

Burn Lane Central was originally laid in the 1970s. The character area comprises a number of housing estates which bear the same characteristics, with the exception of brick colour. As a result of this the estates are known locally as the black, yellow and red estates.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Houses with steeply pitched roofs
- Cul-de-sacs leading off circular roads
- Green space is predominantly amenity green space and boundary trees
- Private green space with increased amounts of shared amenity space
- Blank and windowless building façades in places

FIGURE 32: CHARACTER AREA 11 - LOCATION PLAN

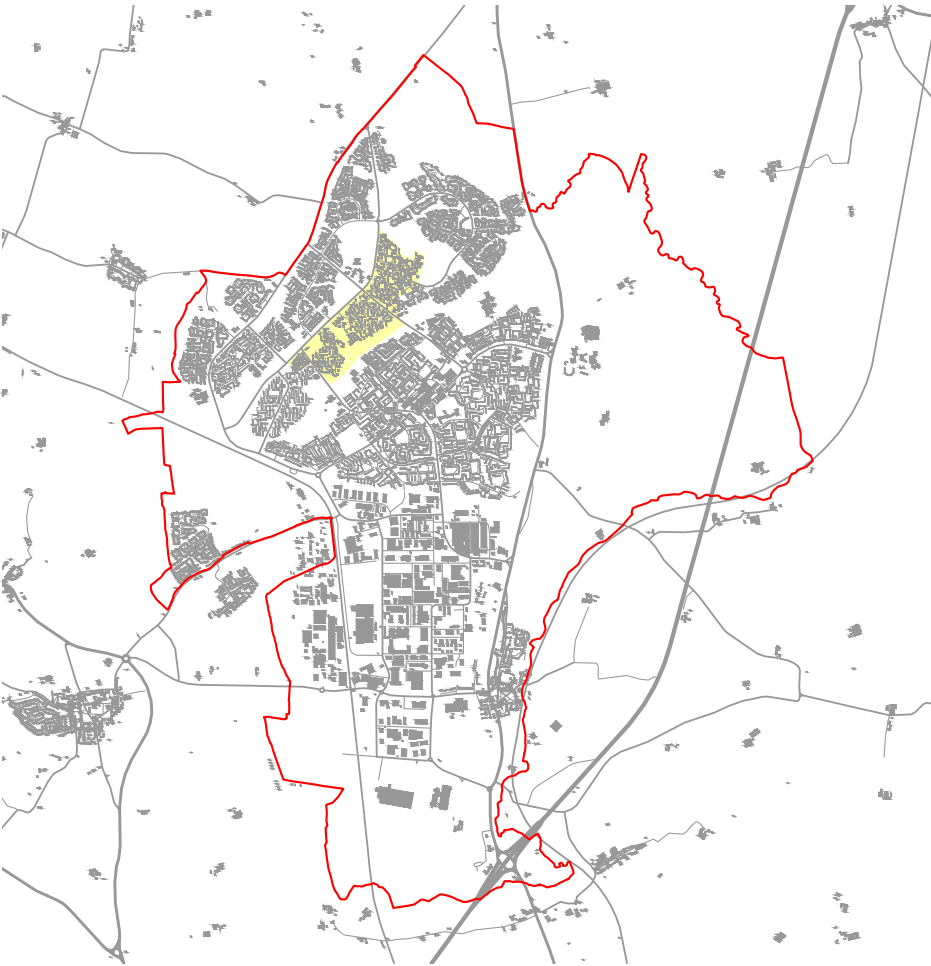


FIGURE 33: CHARACTER AREA 11 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

Primary roads, including Burn Lane and Burnhill Way, bound the residential estates which are accessed through dedicated gateway entrance points. An internal secondary road circulates each estate with a number of local roads feeding into cul-de-sacs.

A network of footpaths lead through green spaces and in between blocks of development which results in a good level of permeability.

Public rights of way follow Woodham Burn through a linear belt of woodland, which provides unbroken access to West Park in the west and a series of public rights of way in the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Houses are of a consistent design with little variation in form or detailing. They consist of two-storey dwellings with steep, single pitched roofs which creates a strong identity. This identify is further heightened by the use of black, yellow and red bricks which define each estate. The position of buildings in relation to the streets and the design of these buildings results in a number of blank façades. The consequences of this are dead spaces with no natural surveillance or obvious ownership.

Despite a high number of properties, building density is moderate with ample space between buildings as a result of the high quantity of green space.

A small pocket of more recent development is located in the north western corner of the character area. This cluster of houses is more in line with modern developments found to the north of the town and is distinctly different to the buildings typically found in the area.

HERITAGE ASSETS

This area was part of the later 1967 masterplan. The area is distinctive due to the use of differing coloured bricks. The area continues, to a certain extent, the original ideals of the New Town with generous space in between the residential areas. However, there are not considered to be any heritage assets within the area.

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly residential with an abundance of green space.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Green corridors intertwine between blocks of houses which lead into large areas of amenity green space. This prevents neighbouring estates from coalescing and

creates a spacious landscape setting. The value of these larger areas of public green space, which are generally laid out as amenity green space with trees, is limited by the lack of facilities and functions they perform. As a consequence, these areas appear to be poorly used and empty much of the time.

The dense, mature vegetation which lines Woodham Burn and the associated woodland are in distinct contrast to the more open areas described above.

VIEWS

The gently sloping topography gives the residential area a slightly elevated position. This combined with wide open areas of amenity green space and creates opportunities for relatively long views across the estates, which are set against a wooded back drop of Woodham Burn.

Within residential areas there are framed views into open areas of grassland through breaks in development which adds to the feeling of space. However, as the houses within each estates are all of the same design, legibility is reduced.



Dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes through amenity green spaces which prevents neighbouring estates from coalescing

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to identity of the housing estates and quality green space, including:

- Woodham Burn and associated woodland are valuable resources which are distinctly different to green space found elsewhere within the character area;
- Pockets of green space between homes which are appropriate in scale provide a valuable landscape setting; and
- The black, yellow and red bricks used to create a strong identity for each estate.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which effect the functionality of the character area, including:

- Blank outward facing façades of residential buildings; and
- Areas of low value and under used green space.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to:

- Woodham Burn, which provides a valuable green link;
- Black, red and yellow bricks form a strong identity to each estates.

FORCES OF CHANGE

As the site sits in a prominent position north of the town centre, it is susceptible to an increase in through traffic as a consequence of urban expansion to the north.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on maximising the value, function and appearance of underused areas of green space, by:

- Improving pedestrian links and gateways into parkland areas and Woodham Burn;
- Retaining the strong character created through the use of black, red and yellow bricks;
- Adapting maintenance of the soft estate in places to encourage greater biodiversity and habitat potential; and
- Increase the use and quality of underused amenity green space.



Blank walls create dead space and limit natural surveillance



Mature trees help to create enclosure and enhance the setting of buildings



A lack of trees in some areas results in large swathes of underused and of low value grassland



Strong character created by steeply pitched roofs

12. WILLIAMFIELD WAY

INTRODUCTION

The Williamfield Way area consists of a planned housing estate with a distinct character owing to flat roofed houses. Blocks of residential development are set in large, open areas of amenity green space.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Predominantly flat roofed properties
- Large, open areas of amenity green spaceland
- Minimal variety within the public realm or soft estate
- Strong geometric layout
- Dissected by Williamfield Way

FIGURE 34 - CHARACTER AREA 12 - LOCATION PLAN

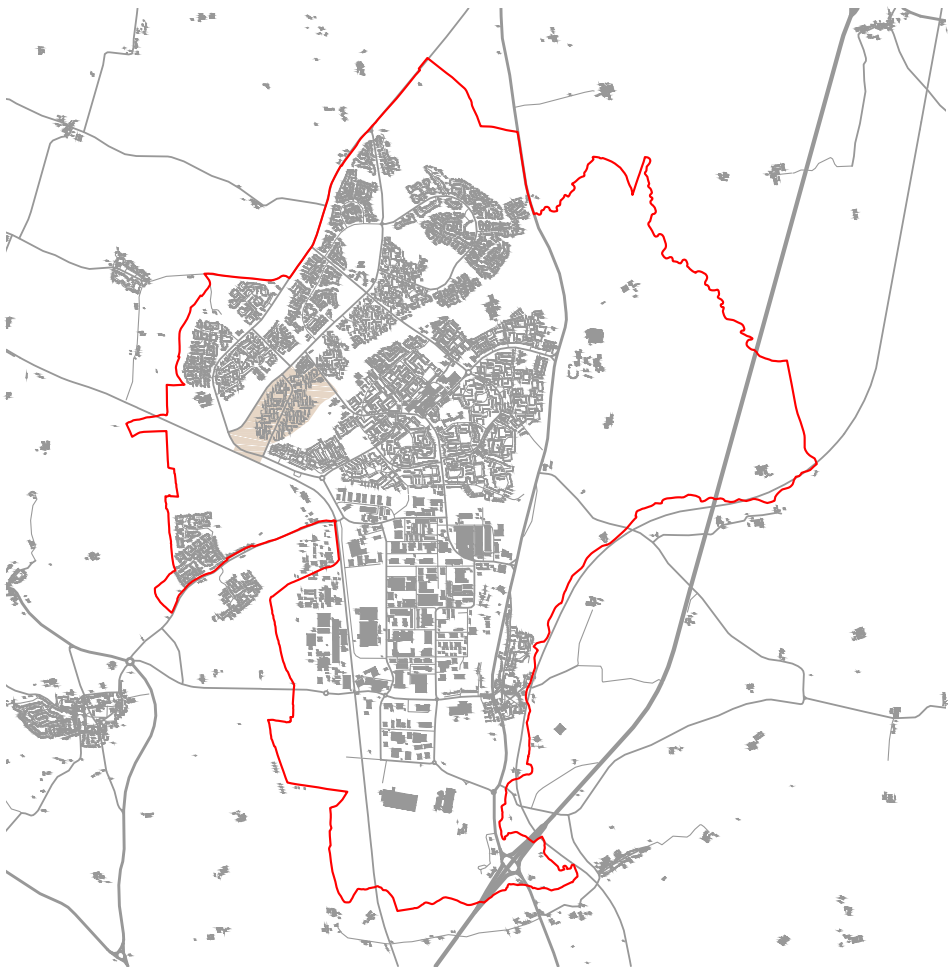


FIGURE 35 - CHARACTER AREA 12 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

Leading from the arterial routes of Greenfield Way and Burnhill Way, Williamfield Way diagonally dissects the residential area and provides links to a number of local roads and cul-de-sacs.

A network of footpaths provide segregated routes for pedestrians between properties and into adjacent green spaces, including West Park and Woodham Burn, which are located to the south east of the residential estate. Here pedestrians can access FP15 which leads in a south west to north east direction, linking with FP31 and open countryside in the east.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Houses are predominantly two-storey with flat roofs and are arranged in linear blocks of five to eight terraced properties. A lack of individual modifications to properties creates a strong uniformity in character, although the design detail palette is very basic which results in a degree of monotony. Blank and windowless walls at the end of blocks creates inactive edges adjacent to public green space. A

section of houses with gabled roofs in the north west of the area adds some variety locally. Density is consistently low throughout the character area, despite building blocks being located close together, due to the large areas of surrounding green space.

St Joseph’s RC Primary School is located to the east within the character area and is accessed from Stephenson Way. The flat roofed school echoes the character of the surrounding properties.

HERITAGE ASSETS

This area was part of the original masterplan and the architectural form reflects the period in which they were built. However, there are no specific heritage assets within this area.

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly residential with large areas of associated amenity green space. St Joseph’s RC Primary School has a large area of play space and recreational facilities including sports pitches.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

An abundance of green space and green corridors intertwine between residential blocks and seamlessly blend with neighbouring parkland. This both prevents neighbouring estates from coalescing and provides significant amounts of space between blocks of buildings. The palette of the soft estate is limited and around the edge of the developed areas are large and mostly empty resulting in areas of under used space.

A simple palette of materials is also used in the public realm. Asphalt is used almost exclusively for paving and as a result, there is a lack of hierarchy between routes and gateways in the area.

VIEWS

Views within the area are defined by the openness of the amenity areas which surround and divide blocks of buildings. These blocks tend to enclose views, with only occasional views out to the wider area. Furthermore, as there is generally little variety in the style of buildings or green space, views are similar throughout the area which limits legibility.



Large areas of amenity green space which are appear to be poorly used and of low recreational or environmental value

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to accessing neighbouring parkland and include:

- Green corridors that seamlessly blend into neighbouring parkland.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which effect the functionality of the character area, including:

- Blank, outward facing façades of residential buildings which create hard edges facing onto the amenity green space;
- Poor quality architecture which appears dilapidated in places;
- Extensive areas of bland, underused amenity green space; and
- Poor quality public realm materials palette.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to access to green space and include:

- Access to parkland in neighbouring areas.

FORCES OF CHANGE

Under used green space may be further exacerbated as residents make short journeys to areas which have a more diverse range of facilities.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on improving the quality and value of residential areas, public realm and amenity green space, by:

- Enhancing public realm to develop a hierarchy of spaces and to increase legibility;

- Introducing more variety into the green space to encourage greater community use and ownership, increase biodiversity and enhance the setting of buildings; and
- Enhancing both the appearance and function of buildings and their relationship to the surrounding landscape.



The arrangement of blocks and bland landscape features result in a lack of privacy



A basic building materials palette and minimal treatment of the soft estate results in a low quality environment



Occasional trees reduce the scale of the public realm and provide structure and shelter

13. ALSTON CRESCENT

INTRODUCTION

The Alston Crescent Character area defines a residential estate with properties that vary in size and type, interconnected by a network of pedestrian routes and pockets of shared amenity space.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Varied property types
- Good balance between building density and green space
- Variety of mature trees
- Minimal variety within the public realm
- Large area of public green space to the south

FIGURE 36: CHARACTER AREA 13 - LOCATION PLAN

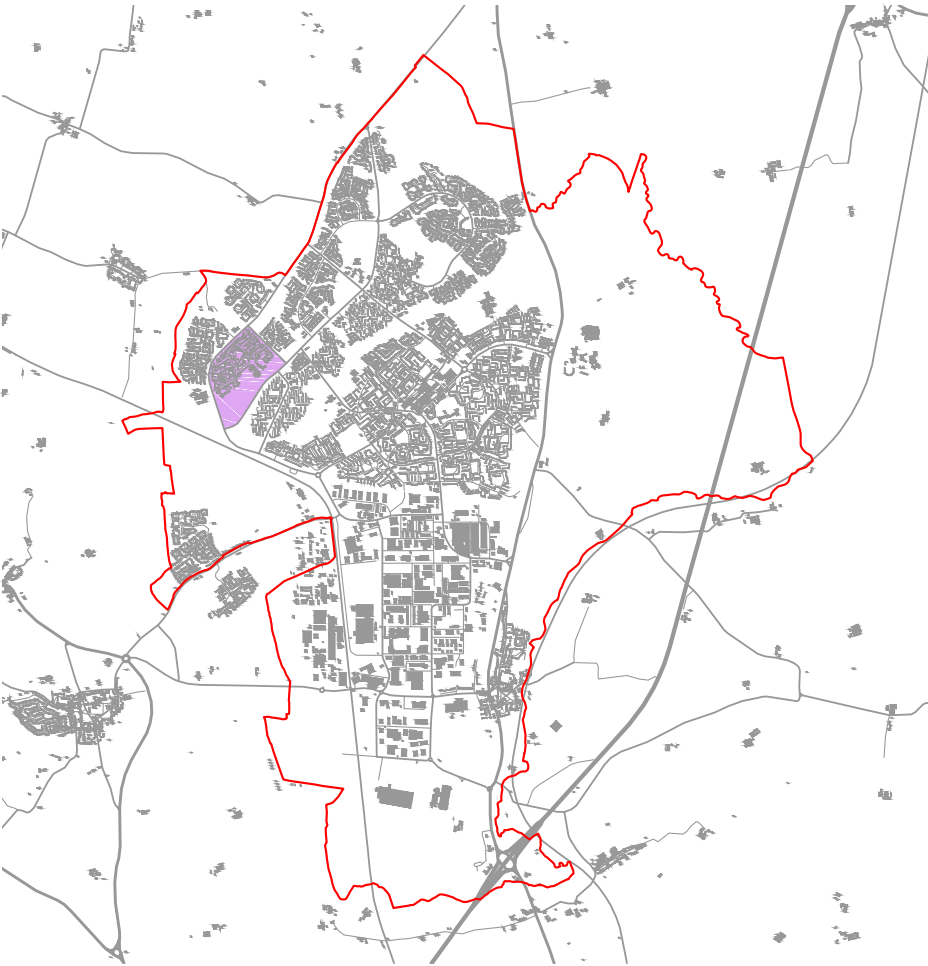


FIGURE 37: CHARACTER AREA 13 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

This character area is bound in the north and west by the arterial route of Greenfield Way and in the south by Burnhill Way. Meadowfield Way forms the eastern boundary. Alston Crescent forms a primary route through the residential area from which local roads lead to designated parking areas which result in dead ends.

A network of footpaths provide dedicated pedestrian routes which pass in between properties through areas of amenity green space. The footpaths provide good access to outer radial paths which lead into adjacent green space.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

There is a good variety of building types and styles which add visual interest whilst the layout and medium density provides a hierarchy of public, semi-private and private space.

Some properties have been modified but collectively they retain the original design intent. Whilst the architecture within the estate is basic, changes in scale and orientation of blocks and buildings create diversity.

The buildings which house amenities such as shops, are of a similar scale and form to the surrounding buildings. As a consequence, they lack distinction and are difficult to locate.

St. Francis CE Primary School is located on the southern boundary and is set within large grounds which are inaccessible to the public. However, the open playing fields create a break in development between residential estates.

HERITAGE ASSETS

This area forms part of the later phases of development of the New Town during the late 1960s early 1970s. It is a residential area of similar style and period of housing. No heritage assets have been identified within this area.

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly residential. However, a substantial area of green space forms the southern boundary of the character area, which is used for recreation.

St Francis CE Primary School and associated recreational space account for a large area of land.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Amenity green space within the character area is appropriate to the scale and density of development and slight variations in landform add localised interest. There is a good variety and amount of street trees located within the residential areas, which help to define and soften the appearance of streets.

A large area of playing fields acts as a landscape buffer between residential areas and Burnhill Way. The large expanse of grass includes marked sports pitches. However, during the day the area lacks diversity and appears underused.

The use of asphalt throughout the character area limits the legibility of the hierarchy between gateways, primary routes and secondary routes and public and private areas.



A large area of green space which acts as a buffer between estates and is used for sports

VIEWS

Views are largely contained by mature trees and buildings. This helps to define semi-private space and creates an interesting sequence of views through the area, which enhances legibility.

Views open out to the south over playing fields. Due to groups of mature trees and low-lying land at the southern boundary of the character area, views are largely contained with only oblique views available to adjacent residential areas.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the form and density of buildings and their relationship with amenity green space. These include:

- The existing amenity green space per built form ratio within the residential areas;
- Diversity and amount of street trees; and
- Good pedestrian routes and gateways to the main playing fields

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which affect the functionality of the character area, including:

- Poor definition of the hierarchy within the public realm;
- The lack of a local centre defined by amenities, such as shops; and
- Large areas of green space of limited function.



Local amenities such as shops blend into the surrounds

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to access to green space and the quality and variety of trees, including:

- The large area of green space in the east which provides a substantial buffer between the residential estate and Burnhill Way; and
- Street trees within the residential areas which are distinctive to this area.

FORCES OF CHANGE

The quality of areas of the public realm has deteriorated in places which could impact the use and appearance of community spaces. Furthermore, increases in vehicle ownership is beginning to change the public realm. An increase in on street parking can restrict the way in which pedestrian, cyclists and drivers navigate the area.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on enhancing character, green space and public realm by:

- Creating formal gateways and paths leading to high quality green space;
- Developing a management strategy for the large green spaces to enhance biodiversity and habitat potential and to encourage greater community use and interaction;
- Improving the quality of underused areas of amenity green space;
- Improving the quality of the public realm, particularly in communal areas such as around shops and amenities to help them stand apart from houses; and
- Sustaining the ratio between buildings and green space.



Gateways to amenity green space could be improved



A good balance between built form and green space



Views across amenity green space

14. BURN LANE NORTH

INTRODUCTION

Burn Lane North Character Area is a swathe of modern residential development which forms the northern boundary of Newton Aycliffe. Beyond the residential areas to the north, land use changes to open mixed farmland. The residential areas are integrated into a belt of mature woodland, which provides screening and enclosure of the built up areas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Variety of modern properties
- Garden fronted cul-de-sacs
- Minimum shared green space
- Broad belt of woodland and green space to boundary edges
- Defined public realm around shops at Cobbler's Hall

FIGURE 38: CHARACTER AREA 14 - LOCATION PLAN

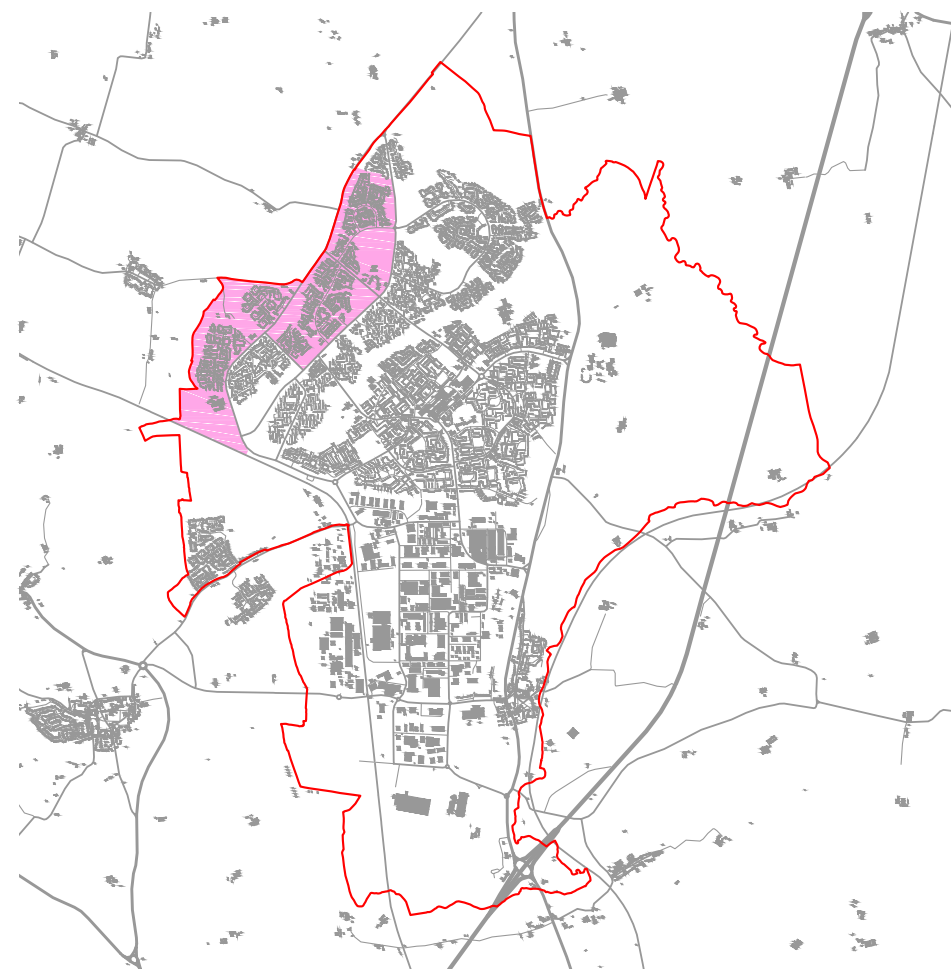
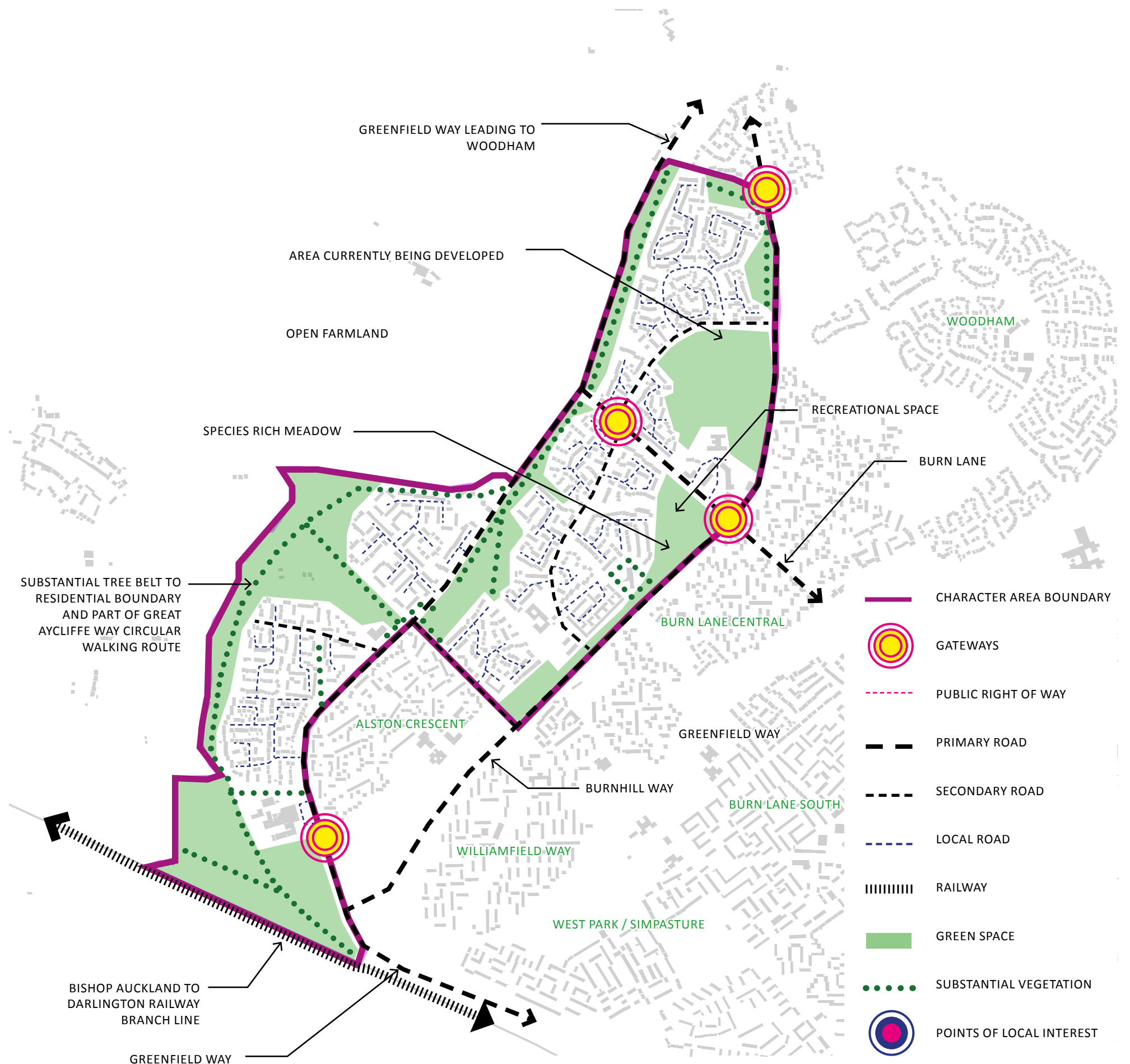


FIGURE 39: CHARACTER AREA 14 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

The character area is accessed from the arterial routes of Greenfield Way, Burnhill Way and from Burn Lane, which is orientated from north to south. A series of secondary routes provide access into the residential areas off of which local roads provide access to small groups of houses.

Pedestrian routes include specifically designated routes which form internal boundaries between sub-plots of development. The cul-de-sac formation also creates exclusive zones that restrict pedestrian movement.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

The predominant building type is two-storey houses dating from the late 20th Century with private front gardens facing onto cul-de-sacs. Houses are set back from the street behind front gardens. Despite this, building densities are greater than that found in other housing areas within Newton Aycliffe, which results in a finer grain of development.

HERITAGE ASSETS

This area represents a later stage of development within the 1980s and 1990s. The residential developments of this time were built by private developers rather than the council and the ideals of the New Town not followed through. Whilst there are no identified heritage assets within this area it is interesting to note that the

equestrian themed street names such as ‘The Meet’, ‘Staintondale’ and ‘Zetland Hunt’ are intended to denote that the Woodham Manor was famous for horse racing during the reign of King James I who attended meetings here personally in the early 17th Century. The adoption of equestrian related street names maintains this link although there is no physical link to this history.

LAND USE

Land use is predominantly residential with woodland and green space encapsulating the developed areas. Whilst the grounds of Byerley Park Primary School are inaccessible to the public, it does offer a break in developed space. Cobblers Hall offers a small core of retail and community services which acts as a local centre.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Whilst public green space is generally limited within the residential estates, larger private gardens than in other areas enhances the quality of the public realm. The largest provision of green space encapsulates the developed areas and provides areas for recreation and woodland paths in the north.

Variations in the public realm materials palette offer definition and hierarchy of public space. Public realm at Cobbler’s Hall is defined by a change in material from tarmac to setts. This provides definition of space which enhances the legibility of the area as a localised centre.

VIEWS

Woodland belts screen the developed areas from views in the north and provide a wooded setting of residential areas.

Views are largely contained within residential areas due to the density and layout of buildings. This restricts views out of each individual cul-de-sac. As the majority of buildings are similar in style and appearance, this reduces legibility.

There are occasional longer views along green corridors which divide residential areas. This increases in the south over an open area of amenity green space which extends to long range views along Burnhill Way.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to areas of green space which enhance the landscape setting of buildings and reduce the impact of development upon the wider context. These include:

- Green corridors that enclose the residential areas and provide good accessibility to public green space;
- Woodland to the north that enhances the setting of the development;
- Landscape buffer along Burnhill Way which provides designated pedestrian routes and prevents residential areas from coalescing;



Many residential streets are hard in appearance despite buildings having front gardens



Green corridors divide estates and provide a strong network of routes for pedestrians



Tree lined green space forms a landscape buffer between primary roads and residential areas

- Cobbler’s Hall provides a local centre; and
- Materials used to surface the public realm creates a hierarchy and definition of spaces.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which effect the functionality of the character area, including:

- Paving over of front gardens to create areas for off-street parking;
- Lack of permeability and legibility within cul-de-sacs; and
- Limited functionality of some areas of public green space surrounding the residential estates.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to access to green space and woodland, including:

- Woodland that forms the northern boundary is a valuable asset which screens development and enhances the landscape setting of the area; and
- Landscape buffer along Burnhill Way provides dedicated pedestrian routes.

FORCES OF CHANGE

Ad hoc modifications to individual properties are likely to continue. Given the lack of public green space within the area, the continued loss of front gardens to create private areas for parking may further degrade the appearance of streets.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on retaining and enhancing green infrastructure and access to green space by:

- Creating small pockets of green space and increasing the provision of street trees;
- Limit further loss of vegetation within private front gardens through the creation of private parking areas;
- Maintain and enhance the pedestrian network, including green corridors to compensate for the amount of impermeability within the cul-de-sacs;
- Develop a management strategy to increase the variety of the soft estate in areas which align with Burnhill Way to reinforce the wildlife corridor from east to west; and
- New developments should make provisions for green infrastructure within the residential area.



Front gardens have been removed to accommodate off-street parking in places



A landscape buffer on Burnhill Way creates a pleasant landscape setting



A clear hierarchy and definition of space through the use of materials



Green corridors between residential areas provide a good network of footpaths

15. WOODHAM

INTRODUCTION

Woodham is a modern private residential estate bound in the west by mature woodland and Woodham Park, and in the north and east by Woodham Golf Course and open farmland. Residential areas are focused around a communal green that is overlooked by the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church and a parade of shops which function as a local centre. Footpaths provide good access into the surrounding rural landscape.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Variety of modern house styles
- Dense clusters of garden fronted cul-de-sacs
- Good access to large open areas of green space
- Segregated from adjacent development by a significant woodland blocks
- Centrally located amenities
- Open farmland setting

FIGURE 40: CHARACTER AREA 15 - LOCATION PLAN

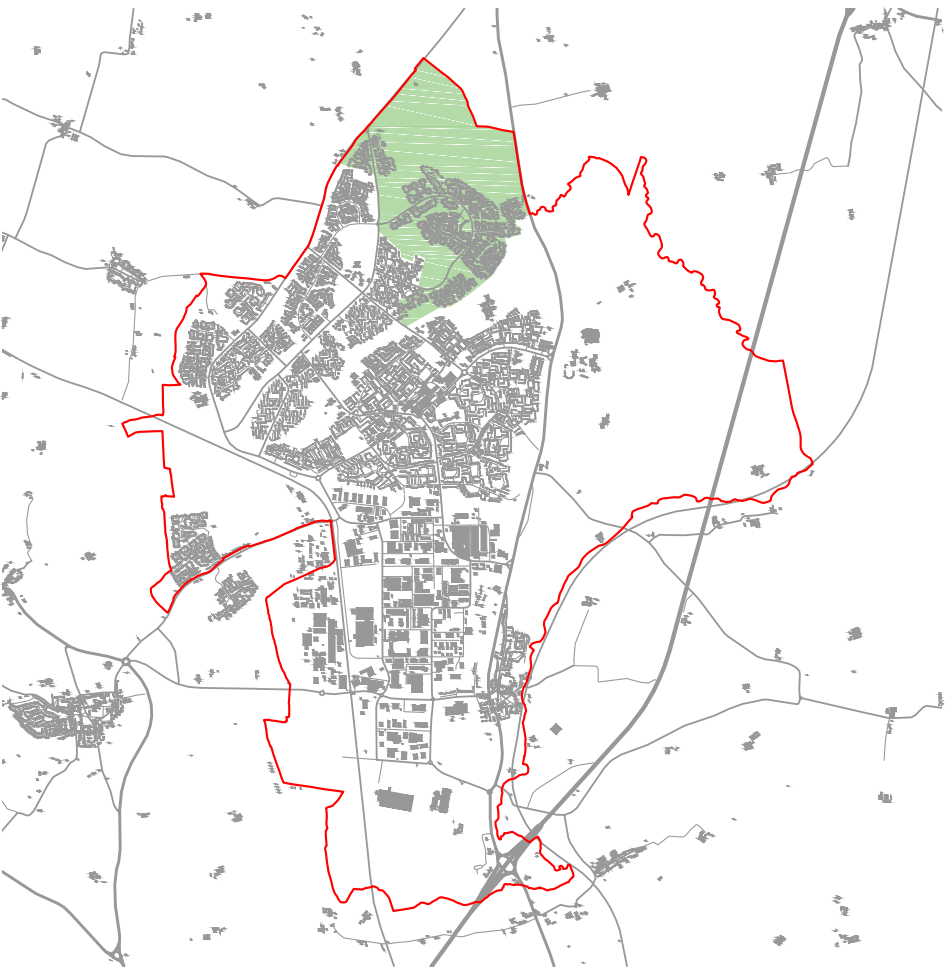
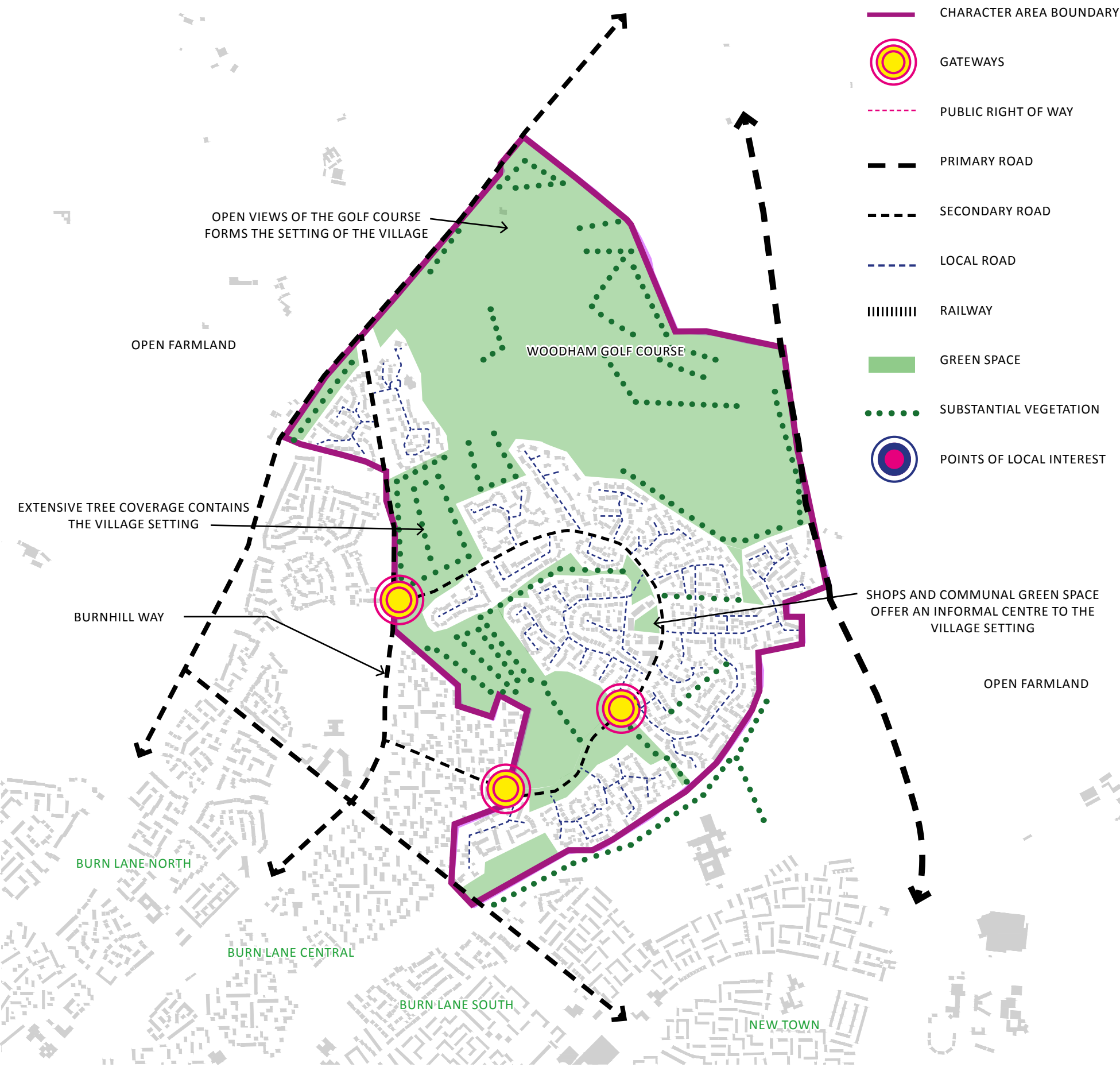


FIGURE 41: CHARACTER AREA 15 - FEATURES PLAN



MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

Burnhill Way is the primary route which connects Woodham with the rest of Newton Aycliffe. Woodham Way provides an internal loop road through the character area from which local roads provide access to residential cul-de-sacs.

Strategically placed gateways allow good access to local amenities and a series of designated public rights of way provide good access through the residential areas into the surrounding agricultural landscape. These include FP33, FP33a and FP8.

URBAN STRUCTURE AND BUILT FORM

Private developers planned and laid out this area in the 1980s around Woodham Golf Course and consequently the style and layout of buildings is different to the residential areas of the original New Town. Buildings are predominantly two-storey, detached houses which front on to cul-de-sacs. Plots and buildings tend to be larger than in other areas and houses are mostly detached and increase in size closer to Woodham Golf Course in the north. Building density is greater than that of the estates found in other areas to the south although most houses are setback from the street behind private front gardens.

HERITAGE ASSETS

No heritage assets of significance were identified within the character area.

LAND USE

Apart from the extensive Woodham Golf Course, this area is predominately residential. There is a focus of activity around the two storey shops, St Elizabeth of Hungary Church and the Huntsman public house which are located around a green in the form of a crescent at the centre of the area.

GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM

Whilst Woodham Golf course contributes to the landscape setting of the area, it is inaccessible to the general public. In contrast, Woodham Park is a large public park and includes open fields, extensive tree cover, children’s play area and BMX track.

Whilst a small number of amenity areas provide space and enhance the aesthetics of the residential areas, residential streets largely rely on private front gardens to provide the landscape setting. A central green, focused around the Huntsman public house, community centre and local convenience stores, lies at the centre of the area but lacks facilities. Street trees line Burnhill Way, which reinforces its function as a gateway to Newton Aycliffe.

There is a hierarchy of materials within residential areas, which helps to define aspects and functions of the public realm. Coloured aggregate within tarmac and raised setts combine to define residential areas, road crossings and gateways.

VIEWS

There are wide, long distance views across Woodham Golf Course, where a break in development increases views out into the landscape to the east.

Views into Woodham Park are largely contained by mature trees but provide a distinctly different outlook to the dense urban areas to the north. Views within residential areas are largely contained due to the density and layout of buildings.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER AREA

- There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the village setting and include:
- Church and a parade of shops overlooking a central green provides a local centre;
 - Strategically placed gateways aid pedestrian movement and provide access to local amenities;
 - Panoramic views over Woodham Golf Course are unique within the context of Newton Aycliffe;
 - Variations in the materials palette increase definition and legibility of the public realm;
 - Well vegetated gardens positively contribute to the streetscape; and
 - Avenues of trees along Burnhill Way creates a gateway feature to Newton Aycliffe.



Woodham Golf and Country Club creates a transition between urban and rural landscapes

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The following issues have been identified which affect the functionality of the character area, including:

- Lack of definition within the public realm around St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church, the Huntsman public house and parade of shops that restricts its role as a local centre.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

There are some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the open setting of the landscape to the north of area and strong contribution of public and private green space to its verdant character, including:

- The avenue of trees which line Burnhill Way;
- The open character of Woodham Golf Course, which is a transitional landscape between the urban residential areas and the agricultural land to the north and west

FORCES OF CHANGE

The paving over of front gardens is less evident in this area than other areas where private housing predominates. However, increased car ownership could exacerbate this issue.

CHARACTER AREA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Managing change in this area should focus on retaining setting and enhancing the quality of communal public space by:

- Enhancing the public realm surrounding the Huntsman public house, restaurants and local amenities by implementing a hierarchy of high quality materials and street furniture to strengthen identity and communal use; and
- Rationalising the public realm palette across all residential areas to reinforce identity, and develop structure and hierarchy of use; and
- New developments should be of a similar scale and layout to existing development and include greater provisions for green infrastructure, including street trees and sustainable urban drainage within residential streets.



Well maintained gardens contribute to attractive streets



Houses are usually set back from the street, although density is higher than other areas



Avenues of trees along Burnhill Way creates a gateway feature to Newton Aycliffe



A parade of shops and central green area provide a central focus to the modern village setting

APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

ID	List Entry	Name	Grade	Easting	Northing	List Date
Listed Buildings						
1	1322806	Church of St Andrew's	I	28306	22163	12/11/1980
2	1121507	Hodgson Chest Tomb, 5m. south of south porch of St Andrew	II	28286	22146	24/02/1986
3	1322807	Headstone to John Gibson, 7 m. South of south porch of St Andrew	II	28302	22147	24/02/1986
4	1159681	14 High Street, Aycliffe Village	II	28323	22415	24/02/1986
5	1121509	Oakles Farmhouse, High Street,	II	28315	22434	24/02/1986
6	1121508	3 The Green, Aycliffe Village	II	28387	22467	24/02/1986
7	1310948	Lamp post 7 m. east of number 7, The Green	II	28404	22512	24/02/1986
8	1322808	Locomotion One Public House and East Platform	II	27131	22515	10/04/1980
9	1391940	Heighington Signal Box	II	27111	22536	23/04/2007
10	1159723	Nurses' Teaching Centre, Wall and Gate Piers, School Aycliffe	II	25876	23590	24/02/1986
11	1322809	Old Farm Cottage, School Aycliffe	II	25904	23604	24/02/1986
12	1159693	Railway Bridge, 25m. north east of Ricknall Mill Farmhouse	II	29480	23964	24/02/1986
13	1121510	Ricknall Grange Farmhouse and Yard wall to rear	II	30588	24417	24/02/1986
Scheduled Monuments						
14	1002335	Deserted Village Scheduled Monument	Scheduled	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	1016109	Coatham Mundeville medieval village, fishpond and areas of rig and furrow Scheduled Monument	Scheduled	28543	20612	26/03/1997

