

ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

This character statement has been prepared for the St. Nicholas Hospital Conservation Area and is in accordance with Government guidance.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967, and defined as being “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. They depend on much more than the quality of individual buildings, and take into account features such as building layout, open spaces, boundaries, thoroughfares, the mix of uses, use of materials, and street furniture. It is common for a conservation area to include a number of buildings, which are designated as “Listed Buildings” because of their individual architectural or historic value.

Conservation Area Appraisals

The approach to conservation area designation has altered dramatically in recent years. It is now recognised that development plan policy, development control decisions, proposals for preservation or enhancement and the “management” of conservation areas can be best achieved when there is a clear and sound understanding of the special interest of the conservation area. PPG15 – “Planning and the Historic Environment” urges Local Authorities to prepare detailed assessments of their conservation areas and states “the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions, as well as for the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of an area”.

Value of the Appraisal

The value of the appraisal is two-fold. First, its publication will improve the understanding of the value of the built heritage. It will provide property owners within the conservation area, and potential developers with clearer guidance on planning matters and the types of development, which are likely to be encouraged. Secondly, it will enable Newcastle City Council to improve its strategies, policies and attitude towards the conservation and development opportunities and priorities within the conservation area. The appraisal will form a sound basis for establishing effective conservation area policies; support the effective determination of planning and listed building applications; and form relevant evidence in planning appeals with specific emphasis on those relating to the demolition of unlisted buildings.

Evaluation criteria

Buildings and Development sites:

- Existence/proximity to listed buildings, schedule monuments, protected trees, features of interest
- Grouping cohesiveness, linkage/relationships to other buildings
- Period, style, materials, colour, detail, proportions, status
- Uniqueness, distinctiveness, consistency, inventiveness
- Local, regional or national importance
- Completeness. Condition, construction
- Cultural, historical or “folk/popular” associations
- Archaeological and industrial archaeological value
- Orientation, access, form, height, plot shape
- Relationship to topography and urban grain

- Density/proximity to other buildings
- Historical or planning precedents
- Opportunity for creative contemporary solutions
- Threat from unsympathetic development

Streetscape:

- Historical pattern
- Effect of proportion, alignment and topography on enclosure
- Street furniture, signs and features
- Landscaping and surfacing
- Shopfronts and commercial treatment
- Period, style, materials, colour, detail, proportion, status
- Relationship to urban grain
- Relationship and hierarchy with connecting spaces
- Cohesiveness and relationship with adjacent buildings
- Local, regional or national importance
- Completeness, condition, construction
- Cultural, historical or “folk/popular” associations
- Archaeological or industrial archaeological value
- Uniqueness, distinctiveness, consistency, inventiveness
- Visual and physical activity
- Traffic and access
- Effects of differing lighting conditions

1.2 Purpose of Designation

Introduction

St Nicholas Hospital conservation area, designated in 1991, lies to the north east of the City Centre in the ward of Grange. It is bounded by Salters Road to the south,

Kenton Road to the west and Jubilee Road to the east of the conservation area. The principal developments in this conservation area are the nineteenth century hospital buildings. Open spaces are still a significant feature of the area and create a Pastoral parkland setting. Within this conservation area there are 2 Grade II buildings: the original symmetrical hospital block built in 1867 by Moffat was listed in 1998 post-designation, and the theatre/ recreation hall built in 1896 and listed in 1987.

The hospital site is regarded as special for a number of reasons:

- (i) it contains Dodds Farm, the original asylum conversion and a major group of well-built Victorian hospital buildings which are good period designs. Overall there is a uniformity of style and material, an interesting variety of massing, and a strong silhouette. All of the Victorian buildings and boundary wall were built using stone from the nearby Kenton Quarry.
- (ii) historically the site represents the development of mental health care in the 123 years between 1865 and 1988, reflected in building plan and shape.
- (iii) The whole complex stands in an attractive mature parkland, which on plan also reflects the historical development of the site. The surrounding stone wall is a local feature.
- (iv) As an area it is of local significance as it is unique in Gosforth and the City and only the mental hospital west of Stannington, Northumberland, approaches it in any way in quality and consistency of development. It also acts as a green lung for the surrounding urban area.

The purpose of the Conservation Area designation was in 1991 to provide control over:

- demolition of the hospital buildings and boundary walls;
- location, design and density of any new build development to ensure that it complements and relates to the existing buildings and parkland setting;
- protection of the trees prior to the disposal of the land by the Health Authority and the following implementation of Tree Preservation Orders.

Boundary of the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area boundary primarily includes the northern half of the original hospital site. The designated boundaries are as follows: Kenton Road to the west, Kingsmere housing estate to the south, including a section of the former cricket field, the eastern boundary cuts up at 90 degrees in between the two modern clinics (Appleby and Gilsland) and returns parallel to the hospital drive, running in front of the Royal Mail sorting office and Victorian Boiler House. The northern boundary runs around the Fisher Foods factory building and follows the original boundary wall surrounding Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Princes Meadow housing estate area.

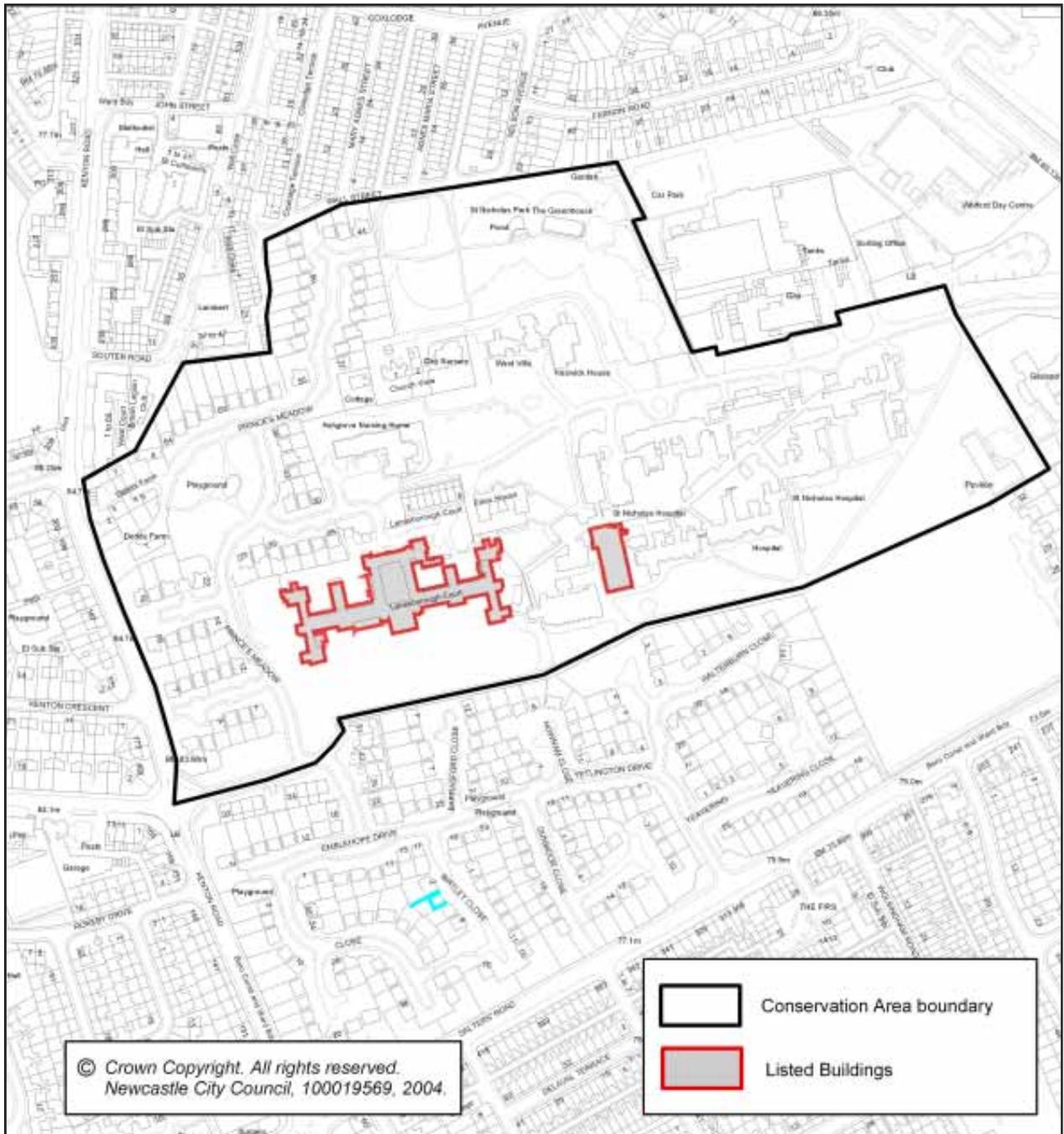
“The approved boundary was considered to provide protection for the most sensitive parts of the site where pressures will be exerted, to have well-defined boundaries, and to create a compact and easily recognisable area”. (J.Edwards, 1991, report by Director of Development following consultation).

The former cricket field, entrance drive and Victorian boiler room complex are not within the conservation area designation and are potentially worthy of inclusion. The cricket field is protected as open space within the adopted UDP. There are also certain areas within the Conservation

Area which have been developed since designation: Princes Meadow housing estate and the wildlife area.

The stone boundary wall, previously significantly higher than it is at present, marks a strong historic boundary. The St Nicholas Hospital Conservation Area occupies part of a significantly larger area which constituted the grounds of the St Nicholas Hospital site. The boundaries to this larger site are clearly visible to this day. They consist primarily of a tall, approximately 2m high, squared and roughly dressed stonewall with a half-round hand-dressed stone coping. To the southern boundary only does the wall drop down, by means of an elegant but simple concave transition, to around 1m in height, although the detailing remains otherwise similar. This would have given extensive views over the open grounds of the site, including the cricket field and farmed areas, with the southern frontage of the hospital buildings also clearly visible some 200m to the north.

“The stone boundary wall physically contains the whole site and whilst restricting views into the site emphasises its well treed nature and forms an important local feature in the residential areas surrounding the site. The wall is generally 2.5 metres in height around the site but its height has been reduced along Salters Road. It is constructed in the main of the same good quality stonework as the main hospital buildings”. (City Planning Officer to Development, 1988).



- *St. Nicholas Hospital Conservation Area*

2. CONTEXT OF ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 Historical Development

Boundary

The original boundary wall marks the land bought by the Health Commission of the Mental Health Corporation (approximately 100 acres) and appears to follow field boundaries marked on the 1st edition OS map. The wall within the conservation area can be found along the western and northern edge. There is some evidence of greenhouse structures along the northern section of the wall, now within the wildlife area, which were used for market gardening purposes. The wall surrounds the western and southern boundaries of the Kingsmere housing estate built in the late 1980s and southern and eastern boundaries of the Baronswood housing estate built 1992-1994. Immediately to the south of the conservation area and adjacent to the Cricket field but part of the original area.

This boundary wall appears to be largely as originally constructed, which is likely to have been during the first main phase of development in the late 1860's. This is reinforced by the line of the wall closely following the vagaries of the previously established boundary lines, probably those of the farm site purchased for the initial establishment of the Hospital in 1865. This is particularly notable in the north-western corner around Dodd's Farm. Elsewhere the wall follows the existing roadways of Jubilee Road, Salter's Road and Kenton Road. There were some later alterations, albeit retaining the same overall character and detailing, to accommodate the second main phase of development in the 1890's. These included the construction of a new main entrance on Jubilee Road, and

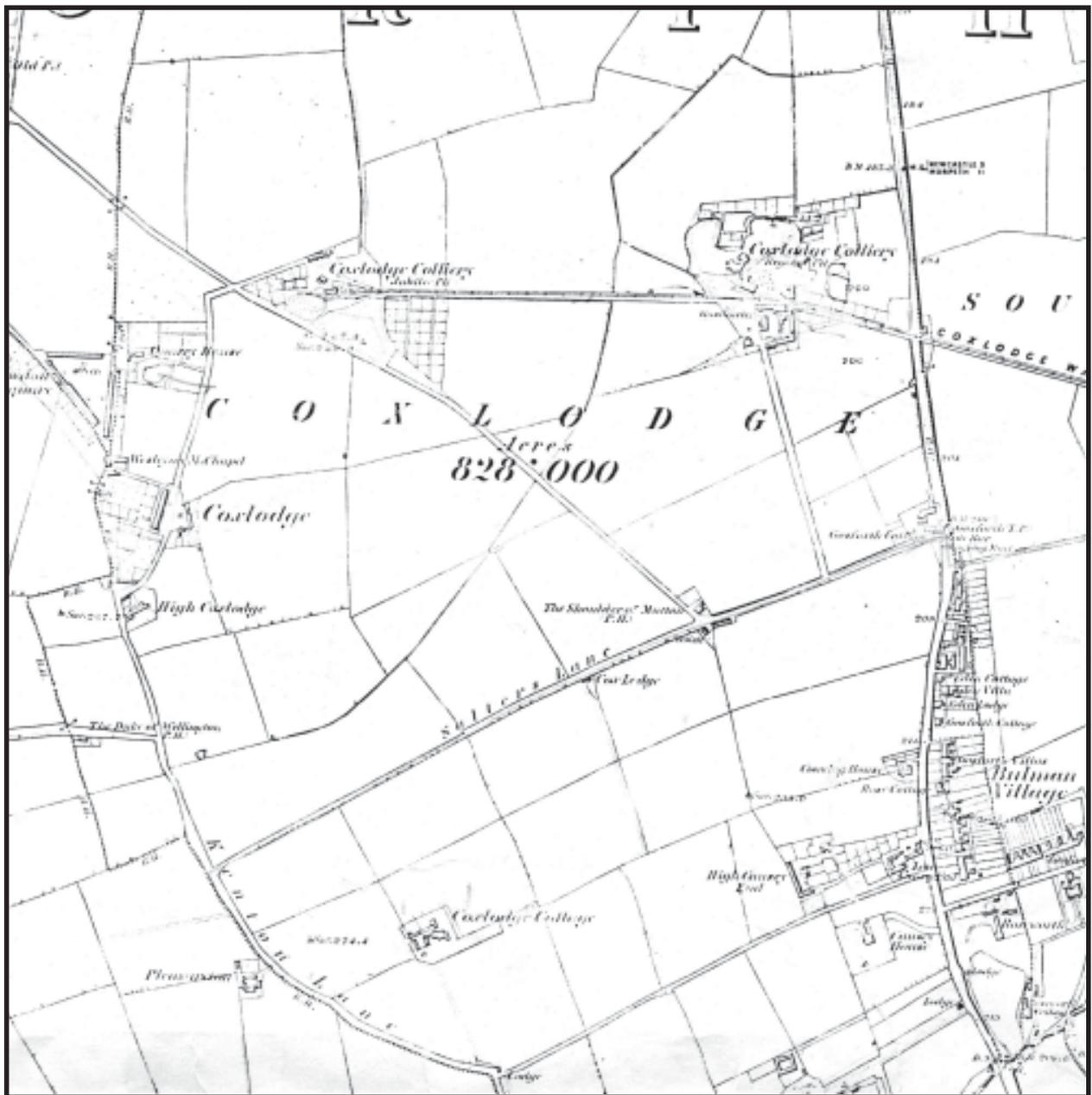
alterations to allow the erection of two terraces of housing at the south-eastern corner.

Since then the boundaries remained essentially unchanged until the 1980's when large sections of the site began to be sold off for development – notably Kingsmere housing estate - occurring before the Conservation Area was declared in 1991. As a consequence this infill development bears no relation in style, size or character to the Victorian hospital site. It is as a consequence of this that the Conservation Area designation includes only limited areas of the hospital site, concentrating mainly on the main remaining hospital buildings. In addition a number of alterations to the boundary wall were undertaken to accommodate the new developments. These included sections where the boundary walls were rebuilt to accommodate Highway sight-line requirements, some of which have been insensitively undertaken, most notably that near the Princes Meadow entrance. In addition sections of the southern boundary had stone piers added to facilitate the erection of rear garden timber fencing. Consequently much of the original open character of this boundary has now been lost. Only a short section remains, by the former cricket field, which still allows long open views into the hospital site and buildings.

High Coxlodge/Dodds Farm

The earliest use of the land now known as St Nicholas hospital appears to be agricultural, with open fields dominating much of the land surrounding the neighbouring village of Coxlodge in 1858 (first edition map).

The farmstead on the western boundary of Kenton Road appears on the first edition map (1858) as High Coxlodge. In 1865 the Magistrates of Newcastle purchased the homestead, then known as Dodds Farm, and 57 acres of land for a new asylum. Within a year alterations to the



- 1st Edition O.S. map c1858 (Northumberland)

stone cottage, barn and other farm buildings had been carried out to accommodate the 33 patients transferred from Bensham Asylum.

The 1853 Lunacy Act made local Magistrates responsible for accommodating and treating pauper lunatics in asylums. The first public asylum in Newcastle, 'Wardens Close Lunatic Hospital', opened in 1767 on the site near the present Newcastle Breweries. This asylum closed in 1856 due to chronic overcrowding. For the following years patients were boarded at Durham and

Bensham Asylums. In 1864 the Durham County Magistrates refused to renew the contract of Bensham Asylum and so the Corporation Committee were forced to find a new asylum site.

St Nicholas Hospital became established in an era when the foundations of modern Psychiatry were being laid (Alexander, 1965).

Main Hospital Block (1867, Moffatt)

Construction of the main hospital block began in 1867, designed by the architect W L Moffat of Edinburgh, who also

designed the Church of St Michael with St Lawrence in Byker. The block is symmetrically laid out, designed to face south. This building is now Grade 2 listed (this section of the building was completed in 1869). The hospital was officially opened in 1869, as 'Newcastle upon Tyne City Lunatic Asylum', with 110 patients admitted, but the premises were only partially completed. The wards in this main block of the hospital were designed to the principles of 'open wards', as promoted by Florence Nightingale. The design of the asylum buildings was similar to Stafford County Asylum, Burntwood, Lichfield. At this time the main entrance to the hospital grounds was directly south of the building.

The hospital accommodated 250 patients by 1870.

Extensions (1886, Plummer)

1886-8 saw extensions to the main block, designed by local architect A B Plummer of the Cloth Market, Newcastle. East and west wings were added to the main block and the kitchen and dining room extended and remodelled. This provided accommodation for an additional 80 patients. The east wing extension (Wards 1 & 2, Pavilion Block) was demolished in the early 1990s – the Health Authority having given notice to demolish it, along with laundry, in 1990 prior to designation.

Extensions & Additions (1896, Dyson)

By 1891 the number of patients had risen to over 400 and the city council decided to enlarge the hospital. Architects were invited to compete for the commission of a new separate building to the east of the existing hospital, which would include: recreation hall, church, residence for the Medical Superintendent, new entrance lodge and 10 cottages for married attendants. J W Dyson, architect of Grey St Newcastle who also designed Burt Hall, Northumberland Road, was accepted and added a massive extension to the east of the main block in 1896. He also designed a new laundry, church, theatre/ recreation

hall and more 'airing yards' at this time. The Medical Superintendents house was never built. The main entrance was moved to Jubilee Road. The Laundry was demolished in 1990.

The theatre/recreation hall is now listed Grade 2. The Recreation Hall was opened on 30 May 1900 and has a plaque to mark the event in the main entrance. It features a stage surrounded by an Art Nouveau scheme of highly decorative Doulton tiling. This tiling scheme is rare within a mental hospital of that date. It was designed by W J Neatby, who was a designer for Doultons 1890-1907. His most famous work can be found in Harrods Food Hall and the interior of Blackpool Tower.

By 1900 the hospital provided accommodation for eleven hundred patients, reputedly for WWI shell shock victims.

Villas (1915, Dyson)

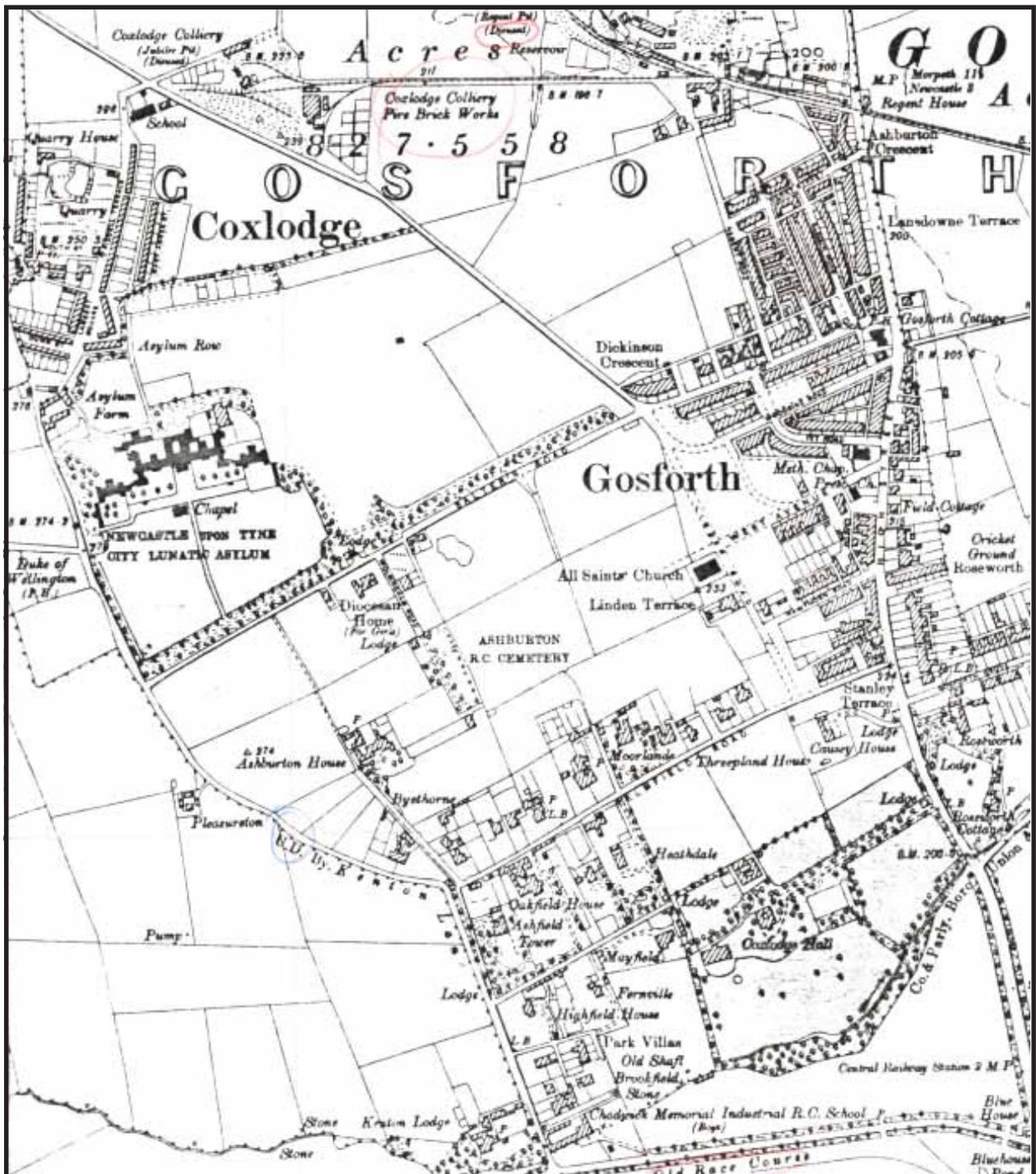
In 1915 Dyson also designed two separate red-bricked villas, North & South Villas These were demolished long before designation of the Conservation Area and the site is now occupied by a modern clinic. The villas were initially used for First World War casualties brought in by train, to West Gosforth station. The whole hospital was taken over by the 'Ministry of War' during the First World War and handed back to the city in 1920 when it was re-named 'City of Newcastle Mental Hospital'.

The hospital was taken over by the National Health Service in 1948 and renamed 'St Nicholas Hospital'.

2.2 Recent Changes

Sale of Buildings & Land (1980s)

As part of the government mental health strategy, 'Care in the Community', mid 1980s, the large hospital was no longer required as the philosophy had changed to favour smaller units around the city.



- 2nd Edition O.S. map c1898

Gradually patients were transferred from this large Victorian hospital to modern alternative accommodation. As a result the NHS wanted to generate income and sell sections of the hospital.

New Development (1990s- present, post Conservation Area designation)

- Northumberland Wildlife Trust Visitor Centre built in 1993.

- Ashgrove Nursing Home built in 1994 (on the site of the Victorian church that was burnt down).
- Planning permission for the new housing estate 'Princes Meadow' was granted in November 1994, 64 dwellings.
- Residential conversion of Dodds Farm, after appeal against



- *Extract from O.S. map c1921*

Conservation Area consent to demolish.

- Conversion of original hospital block began 2001, 'Lanesborough Court', still ongoing.

2.3 Landscape Context

Topography and Geology

The topography of the St Nicholas Hospital Conservation Area is relatively flat and undramatic, lying at between 65 and 85m above sea level. The overall area slopes gently to the east, with a shallow valley toward the eastern entrance. The drift geology consists of glacial boulder clay of varying thickness.

This overlays a mixture of sandstone and carboniferous coal measures, with a fault line (90 Fathom Fault) running beneath the southern boundary of the hospital site.

Although primarily a rural area until the mid nineteenth century there was coal mining in the area, with pits located a little to the North of the Conservation Area (Coxlodge Colliery – Jubilee and Regency Pits). In addition the southern and eastern boundaries appear to broadly follow the line of former waggonways. However by the end of the nineteenth century the Pits were already disused, and there is now little direct evidence of the effects of mining within the Conservation Area. There was also a quarry present immediately to the north west of the Conservation Area.

Parkland & Open spaces

- Vegetation

Parkland and open-spaces were incorporated within the area from the opening of the hospital, with ‘airing grounds’ being a feature of the original design by Moffat. Sunken gardens and workshops also added to the feeling of well being and provision of fresh air. Farming and gardening was a profitable part of the hospital and provided fresh food for the patients and healthy activity. 18 acres of the farmland was leased off to a local green grocer and fruiterer in 1965.

Mature trees can be found along the inside of the boundary wall at a number of places within the area, a remnant of the original boundary. Tree planting is shown around the southern, western and sections of the northern boundary on the 1898 second edition OS maps. To this day there remains a substantial perimeter of mature trees which by their age and location are clearly from the original planting, albeit with some losses and a few replacements.

In addition there are significant areas of relatively mature trees within the site. These include an informal “Avenue” along

the main entrance road, and planting in the area around the cricket field. These appear somewhat younger, and are not shown on the 1898 OS map, although they are present on the 1921 edition. Along with their size this suggests they were planted as part of the main second phase of development in the late 1890’s.

The mature tree planting consists primarily of forest scale trees such as Ash, Lime, Sycamore and Elm (although few Elms now survive). These trees all make a significant contribution to the character of the site, and this is reflected by almost all of them being covered by various Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). This does help provide some degree of long-term protection to the tree cover. However the fact that most of the trees in a given area are of similar character and age will tend to result in them all becoming over-mature at around the same time, typically over the next 50 years or so. As dangerous trees are removed this could lead to a significant and relatively rapid decrease in mature tree cover. It is therefore important in maintaining the tree cover that a managed approach to new planting is implemented. At the least this would include replacing any felled trees on a like for like basis. This should allow the new trees to develop to a significant size before the older trees need to be removed, and also help introduce a more mixed age structure to the tree planting.

The only other significant area of tree cover is in the area around the Northumberland Wildlife Trust Offices and Visitor Centre. However this is all fairly recent planting (probably 10-15 years of age), and although significant by its density it will be some time before this is on the same scale as the original hospital planting.

Shrub planting within the hospital site is almost conspicuous by its absence. Although there are some shrubs, mostly associated with the buildings, the majority of the site consists of open grassland with

trees. This is unusual for a Victorian development, where substantial areas of dense shrubbery were popular. These typically contained large and often evergreen shrubs such as Laurel, Aucuba and Rhododendron. A good example is Hunter's Moor Hospital where mature shrubbery and trees characterise much of the site. It therefore seems likely that the relative absence of shrub planting was a deliberate policy. Presumably this reflected the fact that this was an Asylum, and therefore that dense shrubbery was not felt to be conducive to safe and effective management of the patients.

Site Infrastructure

Although the site does have a relatively grand formal entrance with Lodge at the east, circulation within the "Hospital" section of the site itself is all fairly low-key. The main roadway is only around 5m wide, with a footway to one side. Other roads within this area are only 3m or less with no footways. Kerb detailing is fairly low key, consisting of relatively modern pre-cast concrete kerbs and pin-kerbs. Surface treatments are generally black asphalt or tarmacadam to the roadways and relatively recent red tarmacadam to footways. In many places inconsistent repairs and ad hoc alterations and additions, such as bollards and stones to prevent vehicle encroachment, have contributed to the present impression of a low key and relatively unplanned infrastructure.

This contrasts with the areas of new housing development. These are all accessed from new openings formed within the hospital perimeter wall, rather than from the main hospital entrance. They also all have reasonably high quality construction and a fairly typical modern layout, largely reflecting the guidelines and constraints of Highway Adoption procedures.

Other features

The recent tree planting within the Northumberland Wildlife Trust area has

already been mentioned. The remainder of this section is, as would be expected, also managed for wildlife. This includes areas of meadow grassland, ponds and the like. Although a pleasant green oasis within the site, this style of management is not particularly consistent with the overall character of the hospital site, which is much more grand and formal. This area of the site appears to have originally been a "market garden" area, and some remains of the lean-to greenhouses are visible in this section of the boundary wall, which is faced with formerly whitewashed brick on the southern face, although the northern face is stone as the rest.

The Princes Meadow section of the Conservation Area contains a number of large trees which date from the original site development. Most of these are now within an area of open space, including a children's play area, and which also helps form the setting for the Dodds Farm refurbishment.

The former cricket field area includes a substantial levelled area which appears to have been set out some time ago, although somewhat after the main site development. This also includes a grass bank forming a viewing terrace to the western side. This is backed by a stone retaining wall around 1m high. Although constructed of the same stone as the boundary wall, the workmanship is not as good, and the copings vary in slightly in width and finish, including some which have formerly had metal railings set into the top. This suggests that this is a much later addition constructed from material salvaged from various demolitions within the site.

The Sub-Division of the Conservation Area

There are three distinct sub-areas within the Conservation Area:

- (i) Victorian Hospital Buildings
- (ii) Wildlife Area
- (iii) Princes Meadow Housing Estate.

3. SETTLEMENT ASSESSMENT – BUILT CHARACTER & LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

3.1 Sub-Area 1:

Hospital Buildings

Only part of the tree lined entrance drive off Jubilee Road is included within the conservation area boundary even though the entire length makes an important contribution to the setting of the conservation area. The high sandstone wall and entrance pillars on Jubilee Road create a strong formal entrance. Behind, the meandering drive way lined by rows of mature trees provides an attractive parkland setting, integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. These trees assist in screening the adjacent twentieth century housing and car park. The CCTV camera aerials, large entrance signs adjacent to the car park and bulky industrial clad Royal Mail depot building are intrusive and insensitive features in this area and severely detract from the otherwise impressive entrance drive.

This sub-area contains the purpose built mid Victorian hospital buildings and their immediate landscape setting. The retention of these buildings and grounds was the principle reason for the designation of the conservation area.



● Jubilee Road entrance

Within this group are the only listed buildings within the conservation area: the Grade II listed Moffat block 1867-69 and the Dyson Theatre 1896. The hospital complex has developed historically in a linear arrangement, west to east, using the same good quality building materials throughout; natural sandstone and slate. This provides the complex with an overall unity together with the palette of classically influenced proportions and detailing. All the elevations of the main complex are well considered, so the buildings are seen as a whole as grand imposing structures in a parkland setting. The listed Moffat block was designed principally to face south as the original entrance drive entered from this direction. The main entrance was afterwards moved to Jubilee Road. The later Dyson block in comparison is more of a collection of buildings, centred around a large internal courtyard within this courtyard is a principal diagonal connecting corridor. This complex remains under NHS trust administration as a working hospital. It was designed to be accessed off Jubilee Road with the main administration block on the north elevation.

The change of emphasis of the principal route into the hospital grounds causes a dichotomy both to the architecture and the network of paths and roads. The main



● North entrance - Dyson complex



- *Driveway to the north of the Dyson complex*

driveway accesses off Jubilee Road run east to west immediately to the north of the Dyson complex, with numerous secondary roads and paths joining at 90°. They provide access to the hospital and links to the later developments to the north. To the south a narrow access road runs along side the present hospital boundary. The orientation of the principal through routes within the grounds are parallel to the hospital buildings, therefore the impressive building facades are never fully appreciated, seen only at a sideways glance. Appreciation of the formal south elevation of the Moffat block has been adversely affected by the late 1980s Kingsmere housing development to the south. Long parkland views from Salters Road are no longer feasible, with the exception of the cricket pitch.

The Dyson complex was built 1896-99 in an austere late Victorian style; two storey sandstone ashlar facades with timber sash windows and Welsh slate roof. The extensive elevations are relieved by projecting wings and wide bay windows. Within each pavilion block there is a discernable symmetry, the complex as a whole is, however, asymmetrically



- *South access road*

designed. The extensive footprint of the complex creates an impression of the sprawling development. The chimneys and Italianate style surveillance towers are interesting features regularly breaking the skyline. The four storey clock tower immediately behind the main north entrance is a dominant feature within the hospital grounds.

The Dyson complex is currently in the process of restoration. Notably to the south east are several modern brick extensions, links and electrical substations which all detract from the overall character of the area, as they are not in keeping with the surrounding structures.



- *Dyson complex*

There are large open spaces to the east and south of this wing, which include some mature trees. The open spaces are typical of the original hospital setting containing grassland and mature trees. The boundary of the conservation area cuts through a large green area, formerly used as a cricket field. This large, fairly flat and regular shaped area is surrounded to the west and east by modern housing developments. The boundary through the former cricket field is ad hoc, there is nothing on the ground to formally mark where it is precisely.

To the south the listed Theatre marks the

extent of the Dyson development 1896-99. The elevational treatment is dictated by the function. The tall round headed windows, with two sub-arches and a roundel to the side elevations are the only features of interest. The interior decoration is of particular merit. Between the Moffat and Dyson complexes on the southern elevation and projecting forward is the remaining Plummer east wing 1886-88. The mid-twentieth century two storey flat roofed extension to the south elevation with serrated projecting window bays together with the brick and metal fencing enclosure detracts from the character and appearance of the conservation area.



- *Moffat complex*



- *Moffat complex*

The first purpose built hospital by Moffat 1867-69 is currently undergoing renovation and conversion to dwellings. The complex as a whole has the appearance of a grand stately home. The plan form is an elongated 'I' form with a central and intermediate projecting bays. The principle elevation is the south elevation which is two storey with Georgian-style timber sash windows. This elevation is modulated by the central projecting bay which is Palladian in appearance, and symmetrical wings with intermediate symmetrical projecting bays and end wings. The end wings provide a sense of enclosure and strong stop ends. The length of the elevation is impressive, creating the single most dominant feature within the conservation area. To the south, adjacent to the access road beside Baronswood Housing Estate, is a recently

installed modern style ornate black painted railing, denoting the land now in private ownership as a result of the residential conversion. This interrupts the continuity of the landscape setting.

The west elevation of the Moffat hospital, although of the same Georgian style design as the principal south elevation, is subservient in character and less imposing. It is seen set into the landscape with a large centrally placed airing-ground from which rises a steep containing embankment. The articulated roof form, chimneys, and Italianate turrets with dainty ornate iron weather vanes are dominant features. To the south west a continuous swathe of mature trees conceal the late twentieth century loss of the parkland setting up to Kenton Road by the Princes Meadow Housing Estate.



- *Northern facade - Moffat complex*

The central projecting administrative block of the Moffat complex is all that remains visible of the extensive northern façade, previously viewed across an open parkland setting. This entire elevation was designed from the outset to be secondary to the grand south elevation with functional projecting washroom wings. The character essentially is Victorian, with eclectic detailing but with Georgian-style windows. It is now almost entirely screened by the recent developments which frame the Moffat administrative block. Princes Meadow housing estate in effect backs onto hospital. The late twentieth century detached housing, with pastiche detailing creates an unfortunate juxtaposition of scale and architecture with the Grand Victorian hospital. To the west, the late twentieth century 'Lanesborough Court' free standing row of pastiche arts and crafts style white wash cottages, projects forward of the Dyson block of 1915-17. These two developments together with the Ashgrove Nursing home form a very congested and unresolved area within the conservation area which detracts from the character and appearance as a whole.

Ashgrove Nursing Home, built in 1994, is partly on the site of the former hospital church, which sadly burnt down in 1986. It is a building of modern style with little architectural value. The brick used is slightly lighter in colour than that used in the neighbouring Princes Meadow estate. This factor combined with the different coloured window surrounds, brown compared to the white used in Princes Meadow further increases the feeling of ad hoc development and illustrates the lack of harmony between the adjacent buildings. There is a small car park to the south of the building, which neither adds to or detracts from the character of the area due to the close proximity to the housing estate.

To the north of the Victorian hospital complex there is a row of cottages and villas. The Arcadian setting of these

buildings is retained and they are well screened by hedges and mature trees. Church View, West Villa and Keswick House, single storey with two storey elements are of the same character and appearance as the Dyson complex; sandstone ashlar, slate roofs and Victorian timber sash windows. Rose cottage is a mid twentieth century house, built in red brick and pebbledash which is not in keeping with the adjacent row of Victorian villas. This building adds to the haphazard character of the area due to the many different styles and uses of



● Cottages and Villas

neighbouring buildings which are all close to each other. Rose Cottage visually is subsumed into the Princes Meadow housing estate and Ashgrove Nursing Home.

Special Characteristics:

- Impressive south elevation of the Moffat hospital block. Intricate detailing of door and window surrounds
- Quality of design and materials of the purpose built Moffat and Dyson mid Victorian Hospital Buildings
- Theatre
- Uniformity of buildings
- Pastoral Parkland Setting
significance of mature trees.

Against the Grain:

- Ashgrove Nursing Home

- Later brick extensions & sub-stations to the Dyson complex
- Modern links
- Rose Cottage

Key Issues

- Retention of the open space and pastoral parkland setting and tree cover
- Review of the conservation area boundaries to include the former cricket field, entrance drive and Victorian boiler room complex.
- Appropriate traffic management and parking on access roads.

Enhancement Potential:

- Improve quality of open spaces and damaged grassed areas and verges due to ongoing construction work and unauthorised parking
- Removal/improvement of poor quality recent development

3.2 Sub-Area 2 : Wildlife Area

This area was used for market gardening in the early days of the hospital and initially provided recreational activity and produce



- *Visitor Centre*

for the patients. Part of the land was later leased to a fruiterer (18 acres in 1965).

The area is currently used as a local miniature reserve by Northumberland Wildlife Trust. There has been the addition of several features: ponds, 'art in nature' sculptures constructed of timber and stone and a glass fronted building of modern

sustainable design used as a Visitor Centre and offices. The reserve is enclosed to the north by the original boundary wall where there is evidence of a lean-to greenhouse, to the west by fencing marking the boundary of gardens in the Princes Meadow housing estate, trees to south which screen the hospital buildings and a road to east used for access to Fisher Foods.

Once within the wildlife area the surroundings are visually screened by vegetation, creating a feeling of separation from the outside environment. Visitors could imagine they were in a rural location rather than surrounded by commercial buildings and medium density housing, if it were not for the noise from the neighbouring food factory and busy roads. This use of space conserves the area and is valuable in this sense. The ground level vegetation is purposely overgrown with a winding tarmac path leading towards the visitor centre. This largely wooden and glass contemporary



- *Garden House*

design building looks southwards onto a grassed area containing mature trees and shrubs, forming the southern boundary of the wildlife area. There is a small car park to the east of the visitor centre.

The headquarters of Northumberland Wildlife Trust is based in the Victorian Garden House, which is situated in the very north east corner of the conservation area. This cottage built in sandstone ashlar with a welsh slate roof is similar in character to the Dyson complex. The

dainty white painted timber porch creates a sense of a cottage ornée, popular in the Victorian period. It is screened from the main wildlife area by trees and bushes.

Special Characteristics:

- Large open area amongst housing and commercial development which has never been developed
- The Garden House

Key Issues:

- Retention of the open space

3.3 Sub-Area 3:

Princes Meadow Housing Estate

This estate was built in 1994 and incorporates 64 dwellings.

This modern housing estate consists of self-contained cul-de-sacs of detached two storey homes with small gardens. The fairly compact arrangement of dwellings radically changes and detracts from the character of the area, which was formerly an open Pastoral parkland setting with mature trees in informal groupings. The small, generally very well maintained gardens surrounded by fencing or brick walls, are a contrast to the more informal open spaces found elsewhere within the conservation area. The houses are built of sandy coloured modern brick with cream artstone quoins and white framed windows, in a pastiche neo-Victorian style. All of the houses are of the same style and use the same materials throughout with the exception of red or grey concrete roof tiles.

The road through the estate meanders and provides good open space linkage. It incorporates attractive, softening landscaping features of curved walkways, pavements and garden boundaries. The development is typical of a modern housing estate and once within the estate the visitor could be in any modern housing estate. The appearance and atmosphere

is very different to the adjacent hospital buildings in scale, massing, layout and detailing. Once inside the estate aside from the occasional view of the hospital towers and spires visible over the houses, there is little indication that it is within a conservation area. The original boundary wall marks the north and western boundaries of the estate. The northern area of the estate beside Rose Cottage is especially compact in arrangement. The loss of the original setting and lack of harmony with the Victorian Hospital Site detracts from the essential character of the conservation area.

When entering the conservation area from the south west corner to access the estate the Moffat hospital block can be seen to the east. Though somewhat screened by mature trees the building has an attractive, proud presence. The mature tree belt beside the airing ground of the west wing assist in screening the Victorian hospital from the new housing development. The new road and black railings strongly denote the boundary between the new and the old site character and uses.



• *Princes Meadow Housing Estate*



• *Dodds Farm House*

The sub-area contains the converted Dodds Farm, which was the original building in the conservation area. The original farmhouse and contemporary additions overlook an open green space. The green incorporates the mature trees that were present before the housing estate was built and the area now contains a children's play area. These features significantly add to the character of the area as here the new development is sensitively integrated with the historic character of the site. The retention of the mature trees and Farm House, is important as they are a reminder of the character of the original site. The original farmhouse has been re-converted for residential use and divided into smaller dwellings. There have been substantial additions to the building in the form of extensions and construction of completely new buildings adjoining it using different materials to original farmhouse: white rendering, white door surrounds, red-coloured brick.

Special Characteristics:

- Dodds Farm conversion
- Open-linked green space with mature trees

Against the Grain:

New Housing: compact arrangement, small/contemporary gardens?

Key Issues:

- Retention of the open green space with mature trees and Dodds Farm conversion
- Review of the conservation area boundaries
- Redevelopment of West Court flats on Kenton Road adjacent to Dodds Farm.

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