

1.0 Introduction

This topic paper will provide evidence to support the policy approach being taken in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan with regard to the built environment. In particular, this paper will focus on issues related to good quality design which reflects the historic character of the area, ensuring the quality of the green and open spaces are maintained and improved and the importance of the two conservation areas. It will form the basis of a chapter in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan. This paper includes proposed draft Policy Areas, and proposed Community Projects that have arisen out of the consultation that has taken place so far with the local community in the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is anticipated that a number of these projects will be delivered through the Ponteland Community Partnership or the Town Council working in partnership with Northumberland County Council and others in the preparation of Development Briefs and the Plan will identify partners to bring these projects forward.

The Topic Paper is based on the Evidence Base report produced by the 'Conservation and Heritage Subgroup' which is available on the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan website. It is also based on meetings with the subgroup, and on information available from Northumberland County Council and other sources.

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process a Community Character Statement was produced by Members of Ponteland Civic Society, the North of England Civic trust and other people who have an interest in the area and who care about its future.

The document aims to show what makes the area special so that planning decisions are taken in context, and so the unique character of the conservation areas and the area as a whole can be maintained. It includes consideration of the approaches along North Road, West Road and Ponteland Road as well as the Darras Hall Estate and the Northumbria Police Headquarters site, which all contribute to the unique character of the area.

This is a special place. The mix of buildings and the unique rural atmosphere reflect the area's history and give it a very special character that would be destroyed by inappropriate development. Future changes are inevitable, some changes are desirable, but any change must respect and understand the qualities of the area so as to preserve and enhance that character.

2.0 Consultation

Following consultation with the local community, the Steering Group formulated the following objective with regard to the Built Environment.

Objective 1: To ensure that new development contributes positively to the unique historic and natural characteristics of the parish of Ponteland

How this objective could be achieved is covered in this Topic Paper.

3.0 Key issues identified through consultation were:

- The Conservation area should be reviewed and extended.
- The need to protect green spaces, trees and the approach roads to Ponteland.
- There should be restrictions on the type of front boundaries permitted in order to maintain and enhance wildlife corridors
- Conservation Area management issues identified in the Community Character Statement

Each of these issues will be addressed in turn:

3.1 The Conservation area should be reviewed and extended

There are two conservation areas within Ponteland Parish, namely the Ponteland and High Callerton Conservation Areas. However, there is no Conservation Area Character Appraisal or Management Plan in place.

The Community Character Appraisal document is being developed into a Conservation Area Character Appraisal with the intention of it being adopted by Northumberland County Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. It will propose changes to the Conservation Area boundary and include a Management Plan

The aim of an appraisal is to ensure that the quality of townscape is preserved or enhanced as well as protecting individual buildings.

There are many factors which contribute to the character of conservation areas such as

- The relationship of open spaces, streets, paths and gardens
- The activities which take place
- The historic layout of property boundaries
- Vistas and gap views
- Characteristic materials, scaling, features and detailing
- Quality shop fronts, other joinery, street furniture and surfaces
- Trees and open spaces

Policy Area: Design and Conservation Policy for Ponteland Policy

Intention: Ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance the historic core of Ponteland, and ensure all new developments respect the special character of the built and natural environment in the Plan area as defined in the accompanying Character Statement, Conservation Area Appraisal and Proposals Map.

Conservation Area boundaries cannot be extended through a Neighbourhood Plan, so we propose a 'project' to work with Northumberland County Council to amend the area at some point in the future

Project Proposal: Conservation Area Boundary

Intention: To develop the Community Character Appraisal document into a Conservation Area Character Appraisal with the intention of it being adopted by Northumberland County Council as a Supplementary Planning Document and agree changes to the Conservation Area boundary and a Management Plan

There are 8 Listed Buildings in Ponteland Village as well as the Vicarage Gate piers and various tombstones. The Civic Society is preparing a catalogue of all listed buildings within the Parish and considering if there are other buildings which should be locally listed.

The Darras Hall Estate came into being in 1907 following the purchase at auction of three farms, Little Callerton, Darras Hall Farm and Callerton Moor Farm, in total 1,014 acres. The area was well known as poor wet farmland with heavy clay subsoil positioned on the north facing slope of Callerton Fell and into the valley of the River Pont. In 1910, a group of local landowners and businessmen created the concept of a residential estate. Joseph W Wakinshaw (one of the founders of the Trust Deed) had the vision for the potential development of the “railway” and introduction of the “motor vehicle” to allow families to reside away from the city boundaries into greener from the city boundaries into greener locations.

The Trust Deed which was first published in 1910 is still in place to ensure the overall rural ambience of the Estate is maintained. Any

changes or development of a property, including garden sheds, boundary fencing and entrances must have the consent of the Estate Committee

Despite the existence of the Trust Deed, the unique character of the estate is being eroded by the construction of increasingly large replacement dwellings and the removal of boundary planting. It is hoped that protection of the Estate can be made more robust through extension of the Conservation Area and the Neighbourhood Plan process

Policy Area: New residential development in Darras Hall (defined Character Area)

Intention: To ensure that new development in Darras Hall (or the identified Character Area on the Proposals Map) respects the unique characteristics of each area as defined in the Character Statement

At the time of writing the Housing Topic Paper is proposing restrictions on redevelopment of gardens in Darras Hall. Some rationalisation of policies remains to be carried out

There are four “green” highway approaches to Ponteland which are an essential aspect of the village character, although each has an individual style and historical association. The approaches are distinctly rural, not pony paddocks or parkland. It is proposed to divide the Conservation Area into four distinct "Character Areas" as suggested in the Community Character Appraisal. Within the

village are a number of informal green spaces in addition to Ponteland Park

At Clickemin bridge, looking back, is one of only two views out of the village looking towards Callerton Common. The wedge of open countryside here separates the south east edge of Ponteland from Darras Hall and the suburban approach and is a living link to Ponteland's agricultural past

At this point only the leisure centre and the bungalows along the side of the Fairney Burn at Fairney Edge are visible, the remainder of the village is hidden in the Pont valley

The development of Ponteland has been incremental and although the most significant growth has taken place since the late 1950's, it is hidden behind the historic plan form. This is a development pattern we would wish to see continued

There is also concern over the reduction of the strategic Green Belt gap between Newcastle International Airport and the high levels of lighting already installed on his site

Policy Area: Landscape character in the Plan area

Intention: To ensure that new development takes account of the landscape setting of Ponteland, and new development contributes to the sense of place, enhancing and maintaining the rural feel of Ponteland and the surrounding area

3.2 There should be restrictions on the type of front boundaries permitted in order to maintain and enhance wildlife corridors

Most road frontages within Ponteland Village retain the original low walls and hedgerows. This creates the "green" approaches to the village. In the case of Cheviot View on the A696 approach from Newcastle upon Tyne, the frontages are set back from the road edge behind a grass verge. Once derided, a key aim for the United Kingdom's post-War planning system was to halt such "Ribbon Development" but now in many places the pleasing suburban

Project Proposal: Front Boundary Treatments

Intention: To work with NCC to establish an Article 4 direction so that (within the designated areas) the following changes need planning permission.....

character is being recognised by designation as a Conservation Area. In Darras Hall many original hedgerows have been replaced by walls, railings and gates

At the time of writing the Natural Environment Topic Paper is proposing a Project to investigate the feasibility of imposing an Article 4(2) Direction on identified areas of Darras Hall to remove permitted development rights for removal of hedges and building of replacement walls along frontages. Some rationalisation of policies remains to be carried out but we propose extending this to include all the approach roads into Ponteland as well as within Darras Hall and to cover:

- Demolition of part or whole of the front boundary
- Building walls, fences or gates on front or boundaries, which face a road or footpath
- Laying out hard surfaced areas, e.g. for car parking within the front garden

3.3 Other Conservation Area management issues identified included:

- The library and green sward in front of it need protection. The present library building has no merit but the site it occupies is gold
- Large area of macadam and concrete paving in front of Blackbird
- Screening to rear of Blackbird Inn and car park
- The War Memorial and the Memorial Hall are almost 100 years old and likewise need including
- The mile posts at the start of Cheviot View, (due for repair!) next to Strettle's and just beyond the Waggon Inn should all be listed. These three are the only mileposts left that lined the Turnpike Road in the parish. The Town Council has restored the damaged mile post on Cheviot View
- Removal of all A boards along both sides of the A696 from the Badger to Strettle's and other clutter
- Appropriate design, number and size of shop and other commercial signs, limit size of sign, size as proportion of shopfront area and size of lettering

- An emphasis on greenery and soft landscaping in front of Bell Villas
- A full tree management programme to protect the future look and feel of Ponteland
- Concrete tile roof to the Smithy
- Unsympathetic extensions, alterations and replacement windows to Bell Villas
- Poor detail on extension to nursery with main roof line continuing over a small set back extension. In future any extensions should be clearly subservient to the original building Belville House frontage, replica portico protected along with the main house (may not be correctly re-built)
- Extend protection to Park and approaches?
- Enliven end of Waitrose
- Improve front of Merton Way and link to Park/Main Street

3.4 "A" Boards and other "clutter"

The Ponteland Civic Society have prepared a report on Street Clutter for the Town Council. They also intend to produce a shop front design guide

Project Proposal: "A" Boards and Street Clutter

Intention: To work with NCC and local businesses to reduce the proliferation of "A" boards, signage and street clutter within the Conservation Area

Case Study: *Extending control regime on letting boards*

Newcastle City Council' attempted to address the problem of excessive numbers of letting boards in parts of the city in 2008, when it introduced a voluntary code of practice to restrict them. Residents had complained that the number of boards and the length of time they stayed up were having a negative impact in certain neighbourhoods. Only 27 per cent of letting businesses in the area signed up to the voluntary code and a lack of resources for its enforcement in the city planning team meant the impact was limited. To solve the problem, the council applied for a direction under regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. This removes normal rights to display boards without express consent, enabling the council to implement a complete ban in areas covered by the voluntary code as the council could show that alternative measures had been attempted - a requirement for obtaining the direction

3.5 Other Conservation Area management issues

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan will identify "threats" which can be dealt with when Planning issues arise affecting relevant heritage assets

4.0 Strategic Policy Context and Evidence

The current strategic policies in place are contained in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan 2003 POLICY PC9 - IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY C26, WITHIN THE PONTELAND AND HIGH CALLERTON

CONSERVATION AREAS, CONSERVATION POLICIES C27, C28, C29, C30, C31, C32, AND C34 WILL BE APPLIED

Additionally POLICIES PH2 AND PH3 deal with design and development in Darras Hall

The Basic Conditions Statement will summarise those policies relevant to Ponteland contained in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan if the emerging Core Strategy has not been adopted.

The emerging Core Strategy, although not yet adopted, is the document against which the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan must align. Principles for the environment is covered in policy 28, Landscape is covered in policy 30 and Historic environment and heritage assets in Policy 33

In addition to the draft policies in the Core Strategy, there are large quantities of evidence and data that support the policy approaches taken forward in PNP. It is accepted that some of this evidence is not up to date, but nevertheless gives a clear context for the policy approach in Ponteland.

5.0 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF makes it clear that Local Planning Authorities must plan for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a

manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;
- and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Northumberland (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England 2nd New edition of Revised edition) Nikolaus Pevsner, John Grundy, I. A. Richmond 1992

Evidence Base Documents

Topic Report (PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, PONTELAND & HIGH CALLERTON CONSERVATION AREAS - COMMUNITY CHARACTER STATEMENT)

Castle Morpeth District Local Plan, Northumberland County Council 1991-2006

Key Land Use Impact Study, Northumberland County Council Land Use Consultants 2010

Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment, Northumberland County Council Land Use Consultants 2010

Northumberland Green Belt Review Methodology, Northumberland County Council 2013

Comprehensive guide to the county of Northumberland, William Tomlinson 1888