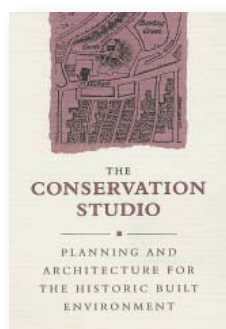


NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

August 2008





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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area

Newcastle is an historic market town which, with neighbouring Stoke City, forms part of the North Staffordshire Conurbation. The settlement developed from the 12th century onwards after the Normans established a castle on the east side of the Lyme Brook, damming it to create a vast defensive lake. Soon afterwards, a new town was laid out on the higher land above the castle, of which High Street and Ironmarket form the core. Boundaries to the early burgrave plots can still be traced in places. Subsequently Newcastle developed as an important centre for fairs and markets, and the market place is still used six days, including a street market for four days a week. Industrial development from the 17th century onwards took advantage of the local supplies of coal, clay and iron ore, and in the 18th century Newcastle also became famous for its hat making and other textiles.

Structural economic change in the 1980s and 1990s in North Staffordshire saw the closure of collieries, potteries and other heavy industrial activity. The impact of this decline was balanced with new industrial areas opening at Parkhouse and Lymedale. The housing market became increasingly fragile in the 1990s culminating in part of the Borough, including the Town Centre, being included in the North Staffordshire Market Renewal Area (Pathfinder). The close proximity of Keele University has provided an impetus to development, and in the last twenty years or so the town has become the second most important shopping area in the Conurbation (the other is Hanley). Meanwhile, in the 1960s, the construction of a Ring Road around the whole of the historic town helped speed up the flow of traffic, but resulted in the loss of much of value and the cutting off of the town from its residential suburbs.

The issues facing Newcastle today are similar to those of any historic town where the balance needs to be struck between encouraging a vibrant and forward thinking economy, and maintaining and enhancing the valuable and sometimes fragile buildings and other features which make the town special.

The Borough Council has already commissioned a number of specialist reports addressing urban design



The Guild Hall and Market Place, Newcastle

issues and the public realm, as well as a Town Centre Action Plan. All of these documents need to be read together to appreciate the various initiatives which may come forward in the next few years. Meanwhile, the purpose of this document is to identify and record the special character of the Town Centre Conservation Area, and provide a range of recommended actions (most of which will be the responsibility of the Borough Council) to ensure its future protection and enhancement.

1.2 Summary of key characteristics

This **Character Appraisal** concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area are:

- The conservation area encompasses the core of the historic market town with some 51 listed buildings including the medieval church of St Giles' (listed grade II*);
- Associated with, but not part of, Stoke City and Arnold's Bennett's five pottery towns;

- Hilly topography on south-west facing slope dropping down to the valley of the Lyme Brook;
- Some glimpses of tree-lined slopes beyond the brook;
- Wide variety of shops and other commercial premises provide vitality;
- Largely traffic-free Town Centre;
- High Street retains its wide open market place 'The Stones' which is still in almost daily use as a street market; another wide space with a variety of historic buildings;
- Medieval burgage plots can be plotted in the surviving boundaries to either side of the High Street and Ironmarket, with narrow alleys cutting through to the back lanes;
- The Guildhall, a 1861 remodelling of an early 18th century building, dominates views along High Street;
- No. 36 High Street retains an unusual timber-framed façade and dates to the late 16th century;
- Other buildings from the 17th to the 19th centuries, some of them listed, can be seen along the sides of the principal streets;
- Holy Trinity RC Church, built in 1834 from blue vitrified brick;
- Other good examples of 19th and 20th century educational, municipal and military buildings;
- Lancaster Buildings, an interesting building of the late 1930s containing shops with offices above, is located on the junction of High Street and Ironmarket;
- Some surviving historic shopfronts;
- Use of red brick with faience and terracotta details;
- Occasional red sandstone (St Giles' Church) and a few timber-framed buildings;
- Queen's Gardens, with its statue of Queen Victoria, is a well used and generally well cared for public park;
- A degree of uniformity in the public realm, such as street lighting, signage, and paving, has already been achieved;
- Impressive hanging baskets and other floral displays throughout the conservation area.

This **Character Appraisal** concludes that the main *Issues* in the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area are:

- The protection and enhancement of the setting to the conservation area;
- The control of new development;
- The improvement of the Town Centre, including the public realm;
- The establishment of a Local List;
- The serving of an Article 4 Direction;
- A number of site specific enhancements;
- One minor change is proposed to the existing conservation area boundary.



Holy Trinity R.C. Church



Floral displays in the town centre

1.3 The planning policy context

The Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in November 1973 and subsequently extended to include properties in The Midway, London Road and Barracks Road. Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in “*Guidance on conservation area appraisals*” (August 2005) and “*Guidance on the management of conservation areas*” (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “*Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*” (PPG15).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the “*Character Appraisal*”);
- Provide recommendations and guidance to prevent future harm to the conservation area, as well as setting out suggestions for specific local enhancements (in the form of the “*Management Proposals*”).

These documents will therefore provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area can be assessed. The omission of any particular feature in either the Character Appraisal or the Management Proposals does not imply that it is of no interest, and, because both will be subject to regular review, it will be possible to amend any future documents accordingly.

1.4 The local policy framework

This Character Appraisal, with its associated Management Proposals, should be read in conjunction with the wider Development Plan policy framework as set out in the following documents:

- The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy;
- The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (adopted March 2001);
- The Minerals Local Plan (adopted December 1999);
- The Local Waste Plan (adopted February 2002);
- The Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted October 2003).

The last four documents will shortly be replaced by the new *Local Development Framework* (LDF). This new planning system was established by the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, which abolishes Structure and Local Plans and replaces them with *Local Development Documents*. Policies in the Structure Plan and the Local Plan remained in force until September 2007, although some might be ‘saved’ into the new LDF. More information about this important change to the planning system can be found on the Borough Council’s website: www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk.

For the moment, In the Local Plan, most of the Town Centre Conservation Area is covered by the ‘Newcastle Town Centre Insert’ map. This confirms that for Local Plan policies, the boundary of the Town Centre is defined by the Inner Ring Road. The map confirms that the most relevant policies are:

- Policies B9 -18, and 20 apply to the whole Town Centre.

A summary of these policies is included at Appendix I. Another relevant document, *Security shutters for shops*

and business premises in conservation areas, was adopted as supplementary planning guidance in December 1992 and is in the process of being updated to reflect changes in legislation.

A substantial amount of work has been carried out in the Town Centre area over the past few years and a number of reports completed. The most relevant are:

- North Staffordshire Integrated Economic Development Strategy;
- RENEW South Staffordshire (the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder) – Assessment of Historical Significance;
- Newcastle Town Centre Area Action Plan Spring 2007;
- Newcastle Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (Taylor-Young) 2004;
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre: Eastern Approaches Urban Design Study (Latham Architects) June 2005;
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre: Western Edge Urban Design Contextual Study (Latham Architects/ARUP) January 2006.

1.5 Community involvement

Before writing this document, the views of local stakeholders on the particular issues facing the conservation area were sought via letter or email. These comments were integrated into the first draft of the Character Appraisal and Management Proposals which was discussed at a public meeting at the Civic Offices in Newcastle on 31st January 2008. Following this meeting, the documents were put on the Council's website for six weeks until the end of March 2008, after which a Statement of Public Consultations was prepared and the documents amended. The final draft of the document was approved by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 29th July 2008.

2 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

2.1 Location and activities

Newcastle forms part of the North Staffordshire Conurbation, lying between the Peak District to the north-east and the Cheshire Plain to the west. The City of Stoke is located just four kilometres to the east. Both settlements are served by the M6 Motorway, linking Birmingham to Manchester, which passes five kilometres to the west of the town, sweeping in a large curve around the campus of the University of Keele. The county town of Stafford lies some 24 kilometres to the south and the historic market town of Leek about 19 kilometres to the north-east. Some distance to the west of Newcastle lie the towns of Crewe and Nantwich, located on the edge of the Cheshire Plain.

The Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area is almost contained by the 1960s ring road which provides a complete circle around the historic core of the town. Within this boundary lies the retail and commercial centre of Newcastle, with a variety of shops, cafes, public houses, offices and other commercial premises. Newcastle is defined as one of the two (with Stoke) most important strategic centres in the region, providing a wide range of shopping and leisure facilities within and on the edge of the Town Centre. Most of the major national retailers such as Woolworths, Boots or WH Smith's are represented, although surprisingly there is no major store, such as Debenhams.

Residential uses appear to be limited to a few properties in the Church Street/Bridge Street area, and, outside the ring road, in Well Street and Queen Street/King Street. A bus station between Barracks Road and the Town Centre is another major feature. The parish churches of St Giles', St George's and the Methodist Church in Merrial Street, where the Borough Council offices and police headquarters are also located, provide spiritual support. There is one operational school, the Hassell County Primary School in Barracks Road, but the adjoining former school, facing Queens Gardens, awaits a possible conversion scheme into small workspace suites. The former barracks, just to the south of the Hassell School, has already been converted into workshops and starter units for small businesses. The Jubilee Baths pool still operates on the corner of Brunswick Street, providing swimming and other facilities (although this activity is proposed



The wooded setting to Newcastle to the south-east of the town centre



Newcastle town centre is well served with national shops



The Barracks Workshop, Barracks Road

to relocate to the western edge of the town), and a public library in Ironmarket provides another useful and convenient local facility.

2.2 Topography and geology

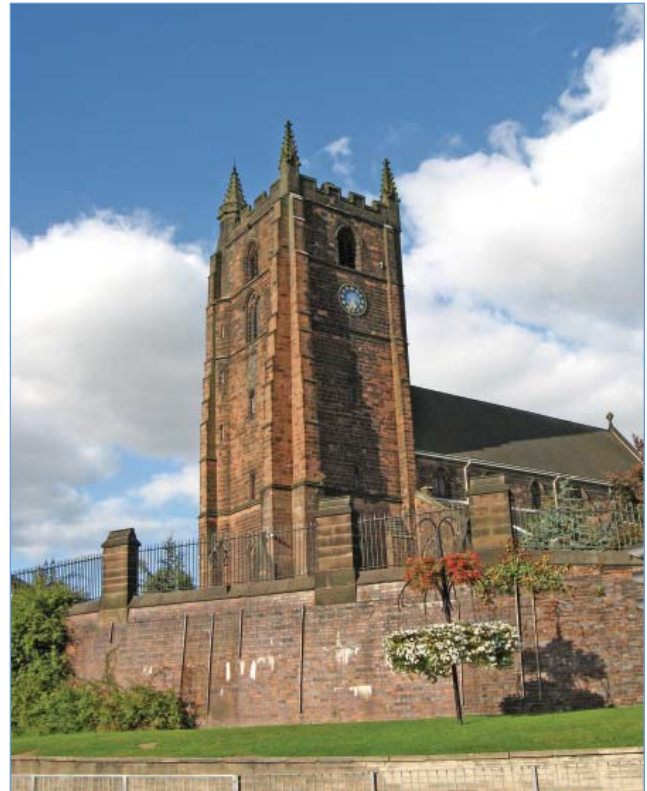
Newcastle lies within an undulating landscape of low hills and ridges on a west facing slope overlooking the valley of the Lyme Brook, which flows in a roughly north to south direction around the edge of the original historic settlement. The High Street rises slightly from its junction with the ring road in the south, providing long views down Friars Street to the ring road and over the valley bottom to an area of housing. This is characterised by mature trees, which provide a sylvan setting to the town when approaching from the west.

The underlying geology is Carboniferous Keele Beds of marl and new red sandstone, occasionally used as for buildings or walls. The best and most visible example is St Giles' Church. Between the sandstone lie varied deposits – coal, clay and ironstone. These have all provided the raw materials for the industrial development of Newcastle from the 18th century onwards. Of special note is the use of clay for the production of bricks, both red and blue/black, which were produced from the 17th century onwards.

2.3 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

Newcastle is dominated to the east by the closeness of the densely built-up conurbation of Stoke City and its attendant towns and suburbs of Burslem, Hanley, Stoke and Trent Vale. A number of roads radiate from Newcastle, connecting to the recently improved A500, a major dual-carriageway which follows the line of the Trent and Mersey Canal. Large suburbs of late 19th and early 20th century housing remain, a reminder of the period when this part of Staffordshire was called 'The Potteries' and was an important centre for the production of a variety of clay-based ceramics.

To the north and south of Newcastle are similar areas of densely built-up housing, relieved by the line of the Lyme Brook, which provides an almost continuous swath of green open space to the immediate west of the Town Centre. Close to the town, this space is incrementally being lost to development, although



Sandstone was used to build St Giles' Church



Terracotta and brick details on the Primary School in Hassell Street

further south the designation of the 'Lyme Valley Parkway' as Green Belt should prevent further losses. Also of note is the site of Newcastle Castle in Silverdale Road, next to Queen Elizabeth Park, although all that remains is an overgrown mound marking the location of the former castle motte, and some masonry of the former access causeway.

To the west of Newcastle is more open countryside, associated with Keele University, which is located within the historic parkland of Keele Hall. Some of this is protected by being within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, the Registered Park and Garden and the Keele Hall Conservation Area.

The StubbsWalk Conservation Area and the Brampton Conservation Area lie close to or butt up to the Town Centre Conservation Area, the latter continuing the protection of the Georgian suburb which commences at Nelson Place and continues up Queen Street. The area of landscaped public pathways, lying along the former railway line (Station Walks), provides an attractive green 'lung' through the urban centre of the town.

2.4 Biodiversity

There are no special designations for the natural environment in the conservation area, and indeed, no natural green space of any significance apart from the woodland around St George's Church, which provides some habitat opportunities for wildlife such as birds, hedgehogs and foxes. However, its northern boundary does connect to Station Walks.



Entrance to St George's Churchyard

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

3.1 Historic development

The Roman Watling Street traversed Staffordshire further south than Newcastle, but another route, the Via Dehana, linked Derby to the salt mines of Cheshire. This can still be traced along the current A50 through Longton and Stoke, and remnants can be found at Hoon Avenue in the Borough. There was a Roman garrison at Chesterton, to the north-west of Newcastle, where evidence of an early pottery industry has been identified. However, this was abandoned when the Romans retreated.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 mentions three manors in the area of modern-day Stoke: Penkhull, Wolstanton and Trentham, which included the land now associated with Newcastle. A settlement of sorts first appears in the 1140s, when the Normans took advantage of the defensive opportunities provided by the Lyme Brook and built a castle on a low hill to the east of the stream. To make the site more secure, the Lyme Brook was dammed to create an artificial lake. The name 'Newcastle' appears to have been chosen to differentiate between an older structure at Chesterton.

By 1172-73 the 'Borough of Newcastle' was paying more tax than any other royal estate, even more than Stafford. This appears to confirm that from the mid-12th century onwards a new town had been laid out in a grid pattern on rising ground to the east of the castle, with long thin plots ("burgage" plots) radiating from the High Street and the Ironmarket, sites of various animal markets and fairs from the early medieval period onwards. By 1212 a royal survey revealed that there were 160 burgages in the town, and at about this time the castle walls were rebuilt in stone, and part of St Giles' Church (the stone tower) remains from this period. By the late 13th century Stafford merchants came regularly to Newcastle to sell their wool and cloth at Newcastle's Saturday market, which was moved to a Monday in 1590 – later, Saturdays and Fridays were also added. On the outskirts of the settlement, two religious separate foundations were also built - a Dominican Friary (the Blackfriars), founded before 1277 on a site at the southern end of what is now Friars Street, and the Hospital of St John the Baptist (founded in 1266) but located some distance from the town on the way to Stoke. In 1267 the King handed over the Borough to his son Edmund, later the Duke of Lancaster, allowing the Borough to become increasingly controlled by a Merchant Guild (first established by a charter in 1235), administered by the local burgesses.



William Yates map of Staffordshire 1775

By the 16th century Newcastle had developed into a significant market town, and a new Market House was built between 1622 and 1626 on a site close to the present Guildhall in the High Street. Corn mills had also been built next to Pool Dam, controlled by the wealthy Sneyd family of Bradwell and Keele. Meanwhile, there was a growth in industrial production, using locally sourced iron and coal which was mined locally from the Middle Ages onwards. Limestone quarries at nearby Caudon provided the flux for iron making, and salt for pottery glazes was imported from Mobury near Nantwich, helping develop a ceramics industry. Tanning was another activity which was locally important. However these industries were somewhat constrained by the lack of good roads or a nearby navigable river. This was helped by the Turnpike Act of 1763 which by the 1800s had provided a network of much better maintained roads. The construction of a canal into Newcastle in 1775 had more limited impact as it was not linked to the national network and it was quickly replaced in significance by the railways, which arrived in the 1840s.

Meanwhile other industries developed. Changes to import duties in the 17th century meant that a flourishing hat-making industry developed based in

Newcastle, which by the early 18th century absorbed a large proportion of the local workforce. Felt hats were in particular demand, usually made in cottages and associated workshops, although by the mid-19th century demand had fallen as silk became more fashionable, for which larger factories were provided in the area. No. 21 Marsh Parade is an example of one such silk mill, used between 1822 and 1839 for this purpose. Textile manufacturing and clay pipe making were other activities which grew in importance from the 17th century onwards, and other 19th century industries included clock making and brewing. Much of the expansion of Newcastle and Stoke during the 19th century was carried out under the patronage of the various Dukes of Sutherland, who owned the Trentham Estates, and who succeeded in turning indifferent land into valuable assets through coal mining and iron production. This paved the way for the steel works which dominated the Stoke area until the end of the 20th century.

The coming of the railways in the 1840s also helped to revitalise the town - maps of the late-19th century record the presence of major industrial sites : Castlehill Foundry next to the former castle motte on land reclaimed from the Pool; Knutton Ironworks to the north-west of Newcastle, with four collieries close by; Brampton Mills (for silk) and Enderley Mills off Pool



Mid 19th century map of Newcastle

Ordnance Survey 1900



The Former Ebenezer Chapel

Road; Kingsfield Pottery and Harpfield Tileries on either side of George Street; and another Brick and Tile Works at Springfields to the south of Newcastle, with other smaller clay fields and tile works near to Silverdale. Of note are the two separate railway lines which served both the north and the south of the town, and the addition since the 1850s of large areas of factory workers' terraced houses.

Newcastle also benefited from a number of important religious buildings, all of them now listed. St Giles' Church was rebuilt in 1721 and rebuilt again, by Sir George Gilbert Scott, in 1876. The Old Meeting House was burnt down in 1715, rebuilt in 1717, and in 1926 an additional storey was added to it. This building has connections with the famous factory owner Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795), one of the leading industrialists of the 18th century, who lived locally and worshipped there. A Roman Catholic church, Holy Trinity, was built in London Road in 1834, made from a striking purple-coloured vitrified brick. In 1836 the Ebenezer Chapel, a Methodist place of worship, was built facing Merrial Street, and a minister's house built a few years later on the adjoining site. St George's Church was provided in 1826, to serve the more prestigious Georgian houses which were being

constructed in the King Street/Queen Street area. A Congregational Church was built in the same area in 1859.

In the 19th and 20th centuries there was a strong sense of competition between the various pottery towns, as indicated by the quality of the various municipal buildings which were erected at the time. Newcastle has for instance two very fine 19th century schools, both on Barracks Road. The listed former barracks, also in Barracks Road, and now used as workshops, is a good example of its type. The Guildhall was first built in 1713 but was extensively remodelled in 1861. Its location overlooking the market place in High Street provides it with a dominant position, although its current somewhat neglected condition is a cause for concern. In the 1920s the local council provided a new public park (Queen Victoria's Gardens) at the eastern end of Ironmarket, an important public open space for the Town Centre. Nearby, a new Police Station was built between Merrial Street and Ironmarket. At the opposite end of Ironmarket, where it meets High Street, the demolition of a row of 18th century buildings, and their replacement in 1936 with Lancaster Buildings, was controversial at the time but the replacement building has now become part of the established street scene.

During the last 100 years, Newcastle has lost most of its industries as the area has taken on a more residential character. The Town Centre is now one of the two principal shopping centres for the North Staffordshire area (Hanley is the other) and is increasingly being developed with offices and other commercial premises. The construction of the ring road in the 1960s destroyed medieval lanes and many older buildings, particularly along Lower Street, so the historic core of the settlement is now separated from its hinterland by a stream of fast moving traffic. Allied to the new road was further development which removed buildings along the south-west side of the High Street, replacing the 18th and 19th century buildings with large blocks which failed to reflect the more domestic scale of the surrounding area. A further loss was the demolition of the 1888 Municipal Hall in Ironmarket, again in the 1960s, and its replacement with the building which currently houses the Public Library. In the last few years Castle Walk has been provided, a relatively large shopping precinct with Victorian-style frontages which connects to the recently revamped Bus Station.

3.2 Archaeology

An Extensive Urban Survey has been carried out of Newcastle, detailing the archaeological remains and other relevant information. Maps confirm the location of the Norman castle, the dammed lake, medieval streets, burgage plots, and the friary. The HER (Historic Environment Record) for Newcastle, held by Staffordshire County Council, includes a detailed description of the castle and its site, and also provides details of many buildings in the Town Centre, most of which are listed. There does not appear to be any evidence for Pre-Norman settlement.



The Police Station in Merrial Street



The Ring Road now separates the historical core of Newcastle with its hinterland

4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Layout and street pattern

The conservation area is based around a historic market town so the plan form reflects its medieval origins, most importantly the establishment of markets and fairs to serve the nearby castle and the setting out of a 'new town' in the 12th century. This provided the two principal streets – High Street and Ironmarket, originally lined with long thin burgage plots, remnants of which remain in places. Despite later extensions, most notably the construction of a Georgian suburb to the east of Ironmarket, the layout of the Town Centre remained reasonably intact until the 1960s, when new development removed historic buildings in both main streets. Even more significantly, the construction of the Ring Road at the same time removed even more historic buildings and widened Lower Street so its medieval route was obliterated.

The principal spatial feature of the conservation area is therefore the L-shape created by the two principal streets – High Street and Ironmarket, each being very wide and lined with mainly historic buildings. High Street is narrow at its more southerly entrance, and widens considerably, reflecting its medieval (and modern) use as an open air market. This dramatic space is terminated by the Guildhall with its tall clock tower, but is bisected by Hassell Street. Traffic using Hassell Street sometimes causes a break in the sense of openness.

Ironmarket is on a slightly smaller scale, with more trees and again there is a slight change in level along its length. From both High Street and Ironmarket are examples of surviving medieval burgage plots, which often provide narrow alleys or lanes to the backland areas. These long, thin plots, where they remain, are an important constituent to the character of the conservation area. The Midway and Market Lane both mark the back lanes of burgage plots which once lay off the High Street.

To the west, High Street continuous into the Church Street/Bridge Street area, with much narrower, winding lanes which drop more steeply towards the Ring Road. Frontage buildings are mainly historic but there has been some modern infill and changes to plots to accommodate new service roads and the insertion of the Ring Road. St Giles' Church sits on a prominent



The Guildhall is a key building in the town centre



The subways on the Ring Road

corner site above the Ring Road with a church yard surrounded by a high wall. This is the only green 'open space' in this part of the conservation area apart from Queen's Gardens, located at the eastern end of Ironmarket.

The Ring Road encompasses most of the conservation area, creating a complete circuit of mainly dual-carriage roads with a number of major intersections marked by large roundabouts. Access across and around these is provided by underground subways, often decorated with hanging baskets, murals and other landscape features. Despite these, the subways create a feeling of remoteness and contribute to the feeling that the Town Centre is cut off from the rest of Newcastle. The Midway, a 1960s road which links into the 1960s development to the south-west of High Street, is surrounded by large, bulky 1960s buildings, completely out of character with the historic buildings in High Street and beyond.



Listed houses between King Street and Queen Street



Ironmarket

To the west of the conservation area, Barracks Road forms part of the Ring Road. Large blocks of modern development, allied to the widening of the street and the creation of the open Bus Station, has removed any sense of historic context.

Finally, to the north-east, beyond the roundabout which marks the end of Ironmarket, lies the Georgian residential suburb associated with the planned layouts of Queen Street and King Street, which radiate from the roundabout. Large, prestigious houses, mainly facing the street frontage, but with large gardens and mature trees, give this part of Newcastle a different character, reinforced by St George's Church and its churchyard.

4.2 Open spaces, trees and landscape

The principal open spaces in the conservation area are urban in character and associated with two main streets—High Street and Ironmarket. These two streets were partially pedestrianised in a comprehensive scheme which dates to the early 1990s. The market place in High Street, where the width of the road has allowed the continuation of a regular street market, is an essential part of Newcastle life. This space curves slightly and rises in height, providing vistas towards the Guildhall. The space is enhanced by street trees, and the use of a consistent range of street furniture and paving, although some of these details are now in need of replacement. Ironmarket is narrower but similar street trees, flowers, planters and other street furniture all add vitality. Where Ironmarket and High Street meet, the road width is constrained by Lancaster Buildings and a block of 19th century development, but High Street continues in a north-westerly direction to form a triangular-shaped 'square' (called Red Lion Square) which provides an appropriate setting for the entrance to St Giles' Church.



Queen Victoria's statue in Queen's Gardens

In addition, there are three landscaped open spaces – St Giles’ Churchyard, Queen’s Gardens, and St George’s Churchyard. St Giles’ Churchyard sits on a mound overlooking the Ring Road although, as mentioned above, the building also relates to Church Street and the western end of High Street. The churchyard is open towards the west, but more enclosed to the east where the boundary is marked by a number of mature trees. Queen’s Gardens lie at the eastern end of Ironmarket and provide the conservation area with a much loved and well used public space. The gardens and surrounding 1930s walls and railings are well tended and serve as a focus onto an impressive (listed) statue of Queen Victoria, currently awaiting restoration. Along the adjoining pavement in Ironmarket, mature trees in an almost formal line complement the gardens. Nearby, the former school, which overlooks the gardens, awaits a sensitive conversion scheme. On the edge of the conservation area, beyond the Ring Road, lies the churchyard to St George’s Church. This large open space, enclosed by impressive stone and bricks walls, is notable for its many mature trees and historic gravestones. However, public seating, planting and pathways all require urgent attention.



Lancaster Building



Entrance to former barracks, Barrack Road



The former Co-op, Queens Parade

4.3 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas

Focal points

The conservation area provides an urban townscape with a number of focal points, created by the intersecting medieval streets and the undulating topography. These are as follows:

- In the High Street, which naturally centres on the busiest area around the Guildhall;
- The eastern end of Ironmarket around Queen’s Gardens;
- Along Merrial Street, where the Police Station and the Borough Council offices all generate activity and focus.

Focal buildings:

There are a number of focal buildings in the conservation area, all marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. Some of them are the result of deliberate positioning, others more a matter of accidental location. Because the streets are mainly defined by continuous groups of buildings, few of these stand out in a noticeable way, but within the historic core there are individual buildings which provide an end-stop in views along or across the main streets. These buildings tend to have been built for non-domestic uses such as churches, offices, schools, banks, and shops, although a very few were constructed as prestigious town houses where their siting has meant that they have a significant impact on their surroundings. They are:

- St Giles’ Church;
- The Old Unitarian Meeting House;
- Nos. 26 and 28 High Street;
- Nos. 37 to 41 High Street;
- Lancaster Buildings;
- The Guildhall;
- The Public Library in Ironmarket;
- No. 32 (former Co-op) Ironmarket (usually called Queens Parade);
- No. 1 Nelson Place and no. 1 King Street;
- Ebenezer Church, Merrial Street;
- The Congregational Church, King Street;
- St George’s Church, Queen Street;
- Nos. 10 and 11 Queen Street;
- Hassell Street Primary School;
- The former barracks, Barracks Road;
- Holy Trinity R C Church London Road

On the edges of the conservation area:

- Civic Offices, Merrial Street.

Unfortunately, there are in addition a number of modern buildings which could be considered to be 'focal' but as their contribution is negative they are not individually identified although they are included as 'Negative Buildings' on the Townscape Appraisal map.

Views and vistas

Newcastle is surrounded by dense, urban development which provides no views out of the town, which is further constrained by its positioning on a south-west facing slope. However, this slight hill does allow a vista along Friars Street, over the Ring Road, and thence to wooded hillsides beyond. This gives the Town Centre its only visual contact with its setting, which is otherwise characterised by modern development or the 19th century buildings associated with the Stubbs Walk/Brampton Conservation Area.

Other views are urban vistas within the Town Centre and focus on the buildings identified above. They are all marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. The main views are along the High Street, towards the Guildhall, and along Ironmarket. In the Georgian suburb around Queen Street and King Street, long views along each of the main streets are enlivened by the cohesive, historic form of development and the many mature trees.



View down Queen Street towards Newcastle Town Centre

4.4 Boundaries

Because of the densely developed street frontages, boundary details are not easily visible from the public viewpoint. Where they are visible, most of the historic boundaries in Newcastle are built from locally made red, brown or blue/black brick and most of them date to the 18th or 19th centuries, although they may follow the lines of medieval plots. Sometimes the red brick is enlivened with blue/black headers, to create a chequer pattern, as can be seen at the back of St Giles' Churchyard. Many of them are capped with stone copings or alternatively semi-circular copings made from the same blue/black clay, a reference to the long tradition of ceramic manufacture in the locality. The best examples are in the Queen Street/King Street area. Local red sandstone is also used, most notably around the churchyard to St Giles' Church where a low wall is topped by cast iron railings, probably dating to the mid-19th century rebuilding of the church. The stone is quite soft and weathers badly. It does not appear to have been used much beyond the mid-19th century, possibly because quarrying ceased when the local brick-making industry began to gain prominence.



Boundary walls and railings to St Giles' Church



Public realm in the High Street



Staffordshire blue brick paving in Hanover Square

4.5 Public realm

There are few examples of historic features in the streets of Newcastle apart from those mentioned below as much of the Town Centre appears to have been subject to incremental improvement schemes over the last 20 or so years. However, the overall effect is not particularly discordant although some improvements are needed and are discussed in greater detail in the *Management Proposals*.

Street lighting

The street lighting in the Town Centre is usually provided by modern lamps fixed to the buildings which face the principal streets, or by simple white painted steel lamp standards, possibly dating to the 1970s. CCTV columns are another feature, reflecting the need for greater security at certain times of the day. Outside the Town Centre, smaller concrete light standards light the street, again probably dating to the 1960s or 1970s.

Paving

Several environmental improvement schemes appear to have been carried out in the Town Centre as part of the pedestrianisation scheme of the early 1990s. In High Street, the carriage way has disappeared and much of the street surface is covered in wall-to-wall concrete or clay block paviors, sometimes laid in contrasting colours. Other sections are defined by circular concrete planters or banks of brown brick planters, sometimes surrounded by granite setts. Concrete slabs are another feature, such as those in Hassell Street, where fortunately some of the original granite kerbing and setted gutters have also been retained. The use of street trees in both High Street and Ironmarket relieves the monotony of these features, but otherwise the quality of the historic environment is diminished by the use of materials and details which have no special 'sense of place'.

There only meaningful remnant of historic paving is in Hanover Street, which retains a whole pavement of 'Staffordshire blue' brick paviors, once ubiquitous in the area. Some of the paviors have a distinctive crisscross pattern. A few examples of similar paviors (though flat) can be glimpsed in the occasional back alley, such as between nos. 18 and 20 High Street.

Street furniture (seating, signage)

Most of the street furniture in the conservation area comes from a defined range of 'heritage' products, including black cast iron bollards, cast iron and wood public seats, finger posts, and posts for hanging baskets. Together they are fairly neutral in their impact and with the many colourful plants and trees, they create an attractive environment for the many shoppers and other users of the Town Centre. The removal of out of date signage would be advantageous.



Blue brick paving in alley between no. 18 & 20

5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

5.1 Building types

The Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area provides a variety of buildings, with a high proportion of modern buildings of little architectural merit, which largely but not exclusively date to the 1960s or 1970s. Historic buildings (both listed and those noted as making a 'positive' contribution) are concentrated along the north-east side of High Street; around and to the north-east of St Giles' Church; at either end of Ironmarket; and beyond Nelson Place. In these areas it is possible to appreciate the quality of the historic environment and to get a glimpse of how cohesive and attractive the townscape once was. The reinstatement of that sense of architectural worth must surely be a priority for the Borough Council in the years to come as sites, particularly those on the south-west side of High Street, come up for redevelopment.

Many of the surviving historic buildings were built as residential properties and although the ground floors have been converted into shops and other commercial uses, they retain a domestic scale. Good examples can be seen at the southern end of High Street where there is a row of 'positive' and listed buildings (nos. 83 to 115 High Street). Unusually there are also a number of late 18th or early 19th century properties which were originally built with ground floor shops, such as nos. 9 to 14 Ironmarket and nos. 22, 24 and 26 High Street, although of course these retain their residential character on the upper floors. Outside the Town Centre, there are examples of more prestigious family houses in the Queen Street/King Street area, many of which are now in use as offices. Very few buildings in the conservation area are obviously used for residential purposes, apart from properties in the Well Street/Garden Street area, and Bridge Street.

Otherwise, the Town Centre retains a variety of purpose-built buildings, designed for specific non-residential uses. There are five churches or chapels; the former barracks; two schools; and a number of well detailed but unlisted late 19th/early 20th century banks and other commercial buildings facing High Street or Ironmarket.



Listed and 'positive' buildings in the High Street



Listed houses in Queen Street now used as offices

5.2 Listed buildings

There are approximately 51 listed buildings or structures in the conservation area, of which two (St Giles' Church and St George's Church) are listed grade II*. The remainder are all listed grade II. The listed buildings divide into three groups:

- Ecclesiastical
- Residential/commercial
- Municipal/community

(i) Ecclesiastical uses

There are six listed churches in the conservation area. The oldest is St Giles' Church, listed grade II*. The parish church retains a medieval foundation, with a refaced 13th century tower and some fragments of original masonry, but what is visible today is largely the result of a rebuild by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1876. St George's Church, also listed grade II*, was built in brick in 1828 by Francis Bedford as a Commissioners' Church. Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church was built in 1834 using blue vitrified brick, arranged in tiers of arcading facing London Road.

There are also three Non-Conformist churches – the old Unitarian Meeting House in Lower Street, built in 1650, restored in 1717, and altered again in 1926 when an additional storey was added; Ebenezer House in Merrial Street, built in 1857-8 as a Methodist Chapel and now in commercial use; and the Congregational Church in King Street, built in 1859 in polychrome brick.

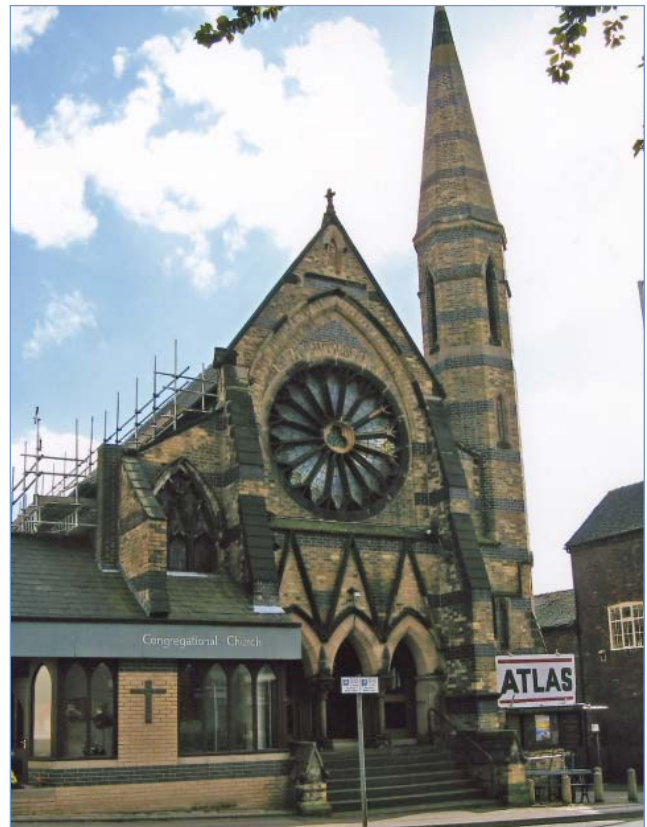
(ii) Residential/commercial.

There are many examples of good quality smaller scale listed buildings in the conservation area, the earliest examples being 16th century and built using timber framing. The best remaining examples are in the High Street close to St Giles' Church – nos. 14 and 16 (the former Golden Bell Inn), which has a real timber frame hidden by render painted to imitate timber framing) and no. 36 High Street, another former inn, dating to the late 16th century.

The conservation area also retains a number of 18th century buildings which appear to have been built



St Giles' Church and the old Unitarian Chapel



The Congregational Church, King Street



No. 36 High Street



High quality Georgian Houses in King Street



Houses in Well Street

with a shop to the ground floor, such as nos. 22 to 28 High Street. Some of these retain their historic shopfronts, although largely these date to the late 19th century. The highest quality 18th century house in the Town Centre is probably Fenton House, nos. 5, 7 and 9 High Street which dates to 1747, although the ground floor has a modern addition. Nos. 75 to 77 High Street, prominently located on the corner with Hassell Street, is another good example although somewhat altered more recently to accommodate an office use. Outside the central core, there are several very fine Georgian houses beyond Nelson Place, such as the buildings facing King Street and the east side of Queen Street. These provide evidence of the rising prosperity of the area from the 1700s onwards.

(iii) Municipal/community

The conservation area retains a number of listed buildings or structures with more mixed uses – the Guildhall, built in 1713 and remodelled in 1861; the Market Cross, a late 18th century stone column which was repaired in the late 20th century; Queen Victoria's statue in Queen's Gardens, a bronze statue of 1913 by C B Birch; and the former Militia Barracks in Barracks Road, built in 1855.

5.3 Locally Listed buildings

There are currently no 'Locally Listed' buildings in the conservation area. This is a major issue which is addressed in the *Management Proposals*.

5.4 Positive buildings

In addition to the listed buildings, a large number of unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map as being *positive* buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as being *positive* will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. Examples include:

- Houses in Well Street and Garden Street – well detailed late 19th century terraced properties with a variety of details typical of the Staffordshire area;
- Hassell Street Primary School and the former C of E school facing Queen's Gardens;
- 1930s building (the former Co-op) in Queens Parade, at the end of Ironmarket;
- 19th century shops, clubs and public houses in High Street (e.g. nos. 97 to 125).

Government guidance in PPG15 '*Planning and the historic environment*' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area (paragraph 4.27). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. Again, further information is provided in the *Management Proposals*.

5.5 Building styles, details, materials and colours

Building styles

Whilst there are many building styles, using a variety of materials, in the conservation the overall impression is of a brick-built 19th century market town, with closely packed buildings facing the streets and no visible private gardens. These buildings are generally built on the back of the pavement and are usually three storeys high, with lower heights away from the Town Centre. Roofs are similarly varied, with different eaves and ridge heights, or they can be concealed behind parapets, particularly in High Street. There are no 'set pieces' of town planning, such as a formal crescent, although in the Queen Street/King Street area the spacious plots and cohesive architectural details and materials reflect the fact that the more residential area was developed in a relatively short space of time. Post-War development along High Street and in other locations has not provided such interesting or lively facades – plots widths are too wide, buildings tend to be bulky and blandly detailed, and the use of a mid-brown brick is not in keeping with local precedents.



'Positive' unlisted buildings in the High Street



Postwar development in the High Street



No. 49 Ironmarket



Timber framed listed building in the High Street (no.42)



Brick built buildings in the High Street (no.18)

Details

The 16th and 17th century buildings of Newcastle were usually built as houses using timber frames so they tend to be domestic in scale with vernacular details, such as gables facing the street. A few survive, including nos. 14 and 16 High Street, no. 36 High Street and no. 49 Ironmarket. In the 18th and 19th century, buildings became larger and more formal in their design, with the classical details associated with the Georgian period such as fine doorcases and multi-paned sash windows. Some particularly fine examples can be seen in the Queen Street/King Street area, and although some do remain in the Town Centre, they tend to be heavily altered. Also in the 19th and the early 20th centuries, a number of buildings were constructed which were clearly intended for commercial uses and were designed to impress. These include a number of banks, such as nos. 37 to 41 High Street, on the corner with Ironmarket, and no. 75 High Street, a prestigious Georgian town house which was refaced in 1910 with Art Nouveau details to accommodate a commercial use. Similar details can be seen on no. 44 High Street (Timothy Guttridge), which is dated 1889 and has a fine red brick gabled frontage with a fully glazed arcaded first floor, which was clearly designed for use as a shop. The adjoining building, no. 40 and 42 High Street, is another quirky building, faced with smooth stucco and decorated with neo-Elizabethan details, gables and elaborate urns in bas relief.

Materials and colours

Newcastle is primarily a brick town, with very limited use of the local red sandstone (which weathers badly) or limestone (which comes from further away). Timber framing would have been the material of choice for more vernacular buildings until the 18th century and a few examples remain in the conservation area, often concealed behind later frontages. The development of the clay industry from the 18th century onwards provided an impetus to local production of bricks, tiles, and other features such as boundary walls copings and decorative terracotta tiles. From the early 19th century onwards the brick would often be covered in lime mortar or stucco, such as The Bulls Vaults in Hassell Street, and many of the buildings in the central core of Newcastle are therefore painted white or a light pastel colour. The bricks can be red or blue, sometimes in the 18th or early 19th centuries used together to form a chequer pattern. Some of the

institutional buildings of the 19th century were built from imported stone, such as Portland, and a good example of this is the HSBC bank in High Street (nos. 64 and 66), a large neo-Classical three storey building clearly built to impress. Holy Trinity R C Church in London Road is an impressive and unusual example of the use of a bluey/black vitrified brick, arranged in elaborate arcading with decorative brickwork. This displays a variety of techniques, including moulded bricks, bricks with embossed or incised patterns and bricks laid to a projecting diaper pattern. The whole building provides an eloquent example of the skills of the Staffordshire brick industry.

Roofs, where they are visible, are covered in grey slate, imported from Wales, or, more commonly, flat or occasionally fishscale clay tiles (such as the ones on nos. 12-14 High Street), varying from red to blue. Brick chimneys, often topped by a variety of decorative clay chimney pots, are another notable feature throughout the whole conservation area.

5.6 Shopfronts

There are a large number of historic shopfronts in the conservation, the best and most complete examples being marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. Built of timber, they tend to retain their original fascias, cornicing, or pilasters, and some have attractive Georgian columns. Most, but not all, are in listed buildings where rigorous controls already exist to protect and preserve them. However, many are in unlisted (though 'positive' buildings) where controls might be less stringent. A good example is the corner block made up of no. 2 Hickman Street and nos. 1 and 3 High Street, a purpose built late 19th century two storey building with a continuous well detailed shopfront which curves around the corner. More information can be found in the *Management Proposals*, which includes guidance on alterations.



Nos. 1 and 3 High Street

6 CHARACTER AREAS

6.1 Introduction to the Character Areas

The Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area divides neatly into seven Character Areas according to historical development; street pattern and layout; built form; and uses and activities. These are:

Positive Character Areas:

Character Area 1:

Town Centre – Ironmarket and High Street

Character Area 2:

St Giles' Church, Church Street, Bridge Street and part of High Street

Character Area 3:

Georgian suburbs – Queen Street and King Street

Character Area 4:

19th century expansion – Barracks Road and Well Street

Character Area 5:

20th century municipal growth – Merrial Street

Neutral Character Area:

Character Area 6:

Recent development – Castle Walk and the Bus Station

Negative Character Area:

Character Area 7:

1960s development – The Midway and Paradise Street

The purpose of this chapter is to assess each Character Area, to briefly summarise its principal *positive* and *negative* features, and from the later to develop a list of the principal 'Issues' which will provide the basis for the Management Proposals (see Appendix 2 for Character Area map)

6.2 Positive Character Areas

This Character Appraisal concludes that the key *positive* and *negative* characteristics of the following Character Areas are:

Character Area 1: Town Centre – Ironmarket and High Street

Key positives:

- Historic Town Centre with a variety of mainly commercial uses;
- 12th century street plan with some evidence of surviving burgage plots;
- Wide streets confirm the past (and present) use for street markets;
- Almost completely pedestrianised, providing a safe and pleasant environment for shoppers and visitors in general;
- Street trees and hanging baskets add to the visual attractions of the area;
- Queen's Gardens provides a much needed and well used public open green space;
- Built-up street frontages with a variety of buildings;



View along the High Street



Queen's Garden

- The occasional 16th or 17th century building remains but mainly the historic buildings are 18th and 19th century;
- North-east side of High Street retains the best preserved street frontage;
- A number of significant 18th and 19th century listed buildings, the most important of which are the Guildhall and the adjoining Market Cross;
- Lancaster Buildings, an interesting 1930s block built as shops and offices.

Key negatives:

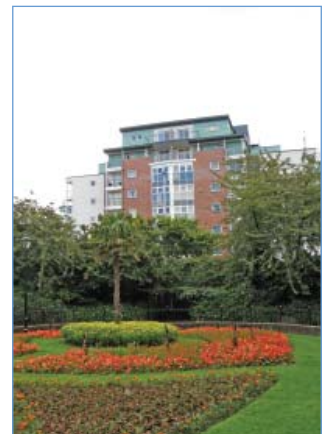
- 1960s and later development to the south-west has obliterated the historic street layout and led to the demolition of many historic buildings;
- Much of this development is poorly designed and detailed, and far too bulky in comparison to the more domestic scale of the historic buildings in the Town Centre;
- The public realm is in need of improvement, including the replacement or upgrading of the paving and planters;
- A certain amount of unnecessary street ‘clutter’ which creates a barrier to pedestrian movement;
- Street trees have grown relatively large and have become visually dominant in some locations, cutting off light and creating a less secure environment;
- Hassell Street cuts across High Street, bringing traffic through the pedestrianised area;
- Late night noise from the various clubs and bars can be a problem;
- Little or no residential uses;
- Some vacant shops and offices;
- The Guildhall is in poor condition;
- Lancaster Buildings is also in need of repair;
- Nos. 51 and 52 Ironmarket is in urgent need of restoration;
- There are many out of scale, dominant modern shopfronts;
- Use of modern materials and details, particularly uPVC windows;
- There are many well detailed buildings which are not listed but which could be Locally Listed to provide additional protection;
- A minor change to the conservation area boundary is proposed, to include the whole roundabout at the southern end of High Street.



Modern development in the High Street



The Guildhall is in need of repairs



Add the whole roundabout to the conservation Area

Character Area 2: St Giles' Church, Church Street, Bridge Street and part of High Street

Key positives:

- Medieval street plan, with small lanes and undulating topography;
- Views across the valley of the Lyme Brook;
- More village character than the more urban Town Centre;
- With the two churches, a mixture of shops, cafes, and residential properties;
- Examples of good quality 19th century shopfronts (e.g. nos. 26 and 28 High Street);
- Some surviving granite kerbs, setted gutters and blue brick paviers;

- Surviving street names – white letters on black e.g. 'Liverpool Road' sign on no. 3 Liverpool Road;
- A high concentration of listed and 'positive' buildings;
- St Giles' Church is the key focal building and retains a 13th century tower, the whole faced in the local red sandstone;
- Attractive stone wall around the churchyard, with its assorted gravestones and memorials;
- The church is set in a valuable 'green' space bounded by mature trees on one side;
- The Old Meeting House, dating to the 17th century, with associations with Josiah Wedgwood;
- No. 36 High Street is the best surviving timber framed building in the conservation area;
- A number of well detailed unlisted 'positive' buildings which could be considered for Local Listing.

Key negatives:

- Secondary shopping area with some properties in need of repair, especially along Church Lane;
- A number of empty commercial properties;
- Poor quality backland sites exposed by the Ring Road, which is the boundary to this Character Area on the west side;
- Wheelie bins and rubbish bins on corner of Church Lane (next to no. 30 High Street);
- Traffic infiltration poses risks to pedestrians;
- A number of inappropriate 20th century buildings;
- Poor quality pavements (concrete slabs) and concrete bollards;
- Inappropriate modern windows and doors, often using uPVC;
- Some discordant shop frontages.

Character Area 3: Georgian suburbs – Queen Street and King Street

Key positives:

- Georgian residential suburb with spacious plots and mature trees;
- St George's Church and its large churchyard is the most significant townscape feature;
- Mostly listed buildings, in good condition, and often with good doorcases and original sash windows;
- The Congregational Church in King Street is notable for its use of cream and black bricks, in contrasting stripes;



St Giles' Church



This unlisted building in the High Street could be considered for Local Listing



Enhancements are needed to these commercial properties in Church Lane



St George's Church

- Varied uses including shops, clubs, offices and residential;
- Use of red brick for the walls and dark brown clay tiles for the roofs;
- Surviving Staffordshire blue brick paviers in Hanover Street.

Key negatives:

- King Street is part of a one-way system (with Brunswick Street) and in both streets traffic travels far too fast;
- Dominant commercial signage on the listed buildings facing Nelson Place;
- Copthall House is a particularly obtrusive modern office block, made worse by the plethora of satellite dishes and aerials;
- Other modern development in and around

Brunswick Street is too bulky and out of keeping with the more domestic scale of the historic buildings;

- New development in the rear garden of no. 9 King Street has impinged on open green space;
- Various buildings in Hanover Street in a poor state of repair;
- A number of buildings vacant and to let;
- Churchyard to St George's Church requires enhancement;
- The severance of the area from the Town Centre due to the Inner Ring Road and subways.

Character Area 4: 19th century expansion – Barracks Road and Well Street

Key positives:

- Dispersed 19th century buildings in a variety of uses;
- Views across the Ring Road and roundabout to wooded hillside;
- Impressive flowers and other planting in the subway garden beneath the southernmost roundabout, pretty enough to encourage visitors to linger – seats are provided;
- Open green space rises above Garden Street, with views to St Paul's Church;
- The former Militia Barracks is grade II listed;
- Holy Trinity R C Church has an impressive façade built from blue vitrified brick;
- Two large schools, one of 1881, both well detailed and designated 'positive';
- Terraces of well detailed housing in Well Street (dated 1897) and Garden Street.

Key negatives:

- Location next to busy Ring Road;
- Traffic, walls and railings prevents pedestrians crossing, isolating the Town Centre;
- Despite the planting, the subways underneath the Ring Road are still intimidating;
- Some 'To let' signs on commercial property;
- Poor quality pavements and street furniture;
- 'Left-over' spaces where Barracks Road has been widened;
- Over sized advertising hoarding at junction with Hassell Street;



Busy traffic cuts off the Georgian suburb from the town centre



Views from the Ring Road towards the wooded hills which are to the south west of Newcastle



The Hassell Street Primary school



Advertising hoarding faces Barracks Road

- Views from Barracks Road into the service yard for Castle Walk, revealing blank walls and high bulky buildings;
- Unsympathetic alterations to houses, mainly in Garden Street, such as satellite dishes, uPVC windows, painted brickwork and fake stone facing;
- Wheelie bins left in the street;
- A number of large, bulky buildings face Barracks Road (only just outside CA boundary);
- The former C of E School is vacant and its setting needs improving.

Character Area 5: 20th century municipal growth – Merrial Street

Key positives:



Merrial Street looking east

- Mixed secondary shopping area with civic offices and the Police Station;
- Wide street with street trees, some of them mature;
- Varied buildings of different ages but with some sense of uniformity;
- The 1930s Police Station is neo-Georgian and well detailed;
- 19th century buildings on north side, interrupted by the 1960s Civic Offices;
- No. 46 (Timpson) is a particularly fine example of a late 19th century shop (dated 1895);
- South side has 1930s and later retail development, usually of two storeys;
- York Place is a shopping mall and connects through to Lad Lane and thence to Ironmarket;
- The only listed building is the Conservative Club, an early 19th century villa set back from the road with the only front garden in this part of the conservation area;
- Well detailed early 20th century public toilets.

Key negatives:



Adshel Bus stops in Merrial Street

- York Place along the south side of the road is heavily detailed without any fenestration to the first floor;
- Many shops vacant;
- Adshel Bus Stops with advertising hoardings;
- Views to bulky modern development past the Civic Offices.

6.3 Neutral Character Area

Character Area 6: Recent development – Castle Walk and the Bus Station

Key positives:

- Well used and carefully laid out Bus Station, providing a valuable local service and supporting the vitality of the town and sustainable travel;
- Some limited planting.

Key negatives:

- Exposed backs of buildings facing Stubb Street;
- Loss of sense of enclosure;
- A number of large modern buildings judged as negative face Barracks Road;
- Provides poor setting to the listed building (the former Barracks) on the east side of the Ring Road;
- Busy traffic along the Ring Road;
- Poor quality public realm;
- Castle Walk is a pastiche development with neo-Victorian facades;
- The large scale and bulk of these buildings is revealed from Market Lane and Barracks Road.

6.4 Negative Character Area

Character Area 7: 1960s development – The Midway and Paradise Street

Key positives:

- Pleasant views over the valley of the Lyme Brook to the wooded hillsides beyond;
- Some of the buildings do retain occasional features of interest, mainly above the ground floor shopfronts, which tend to be of poor quality.

Key negatives:

- Large bulky development of the 1960s and later, mainly associated with the construction of the Ring Road in the mid-1960s;
- Some vacant office space with 'To let' signs;
- Use of concrete framing, curtain walling and mid-brown brick provides a bland environment with no sense of place;



View across the Bus Station to Barracks Road



View from the Ring Road



1960s development facing the Ring Road

-
- Unpleasant and in places threatening environment for pedestrians, particularly in the subways;
 - Busy traffic cuts off the Town Centre from the residential streets to the south;
 - The Midway Car Park requires further improvements, compatible to those carried out in the Vue complex, immediately adjacent;
 - Planters in The Midway Car Park are empty;
 - Friars Street and Pepper Street are the only links between The Midway and High Street once the Roebuck Centre and Boots closes.

7 ISSUES

Based on the Key Negatives/Issues summarised in Chapter 6, the following are considered to be the most important Issues for the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area at this point in time:

Newcastle and its setting

- The protection of views across the Lyme Valley;
- New development on the edges of the conservation area should be appropriately scaled and detailed.

New development

- 1960s development has already had a severely adverse effect on the historic Town Centre;
- Pressure for new development, particularly housing or offices on backland sites;
- The protection of the existing historic plots and historic boundaries from new development;
- Scale and form of development needs to reflect historic precedent.

Town Centre

- The protection of the town's economic vitality and the encouragement of appropriate new businesses;
- Improvements to shopfronts and the protection of existing historic shopfronts;
- Instigate a Tree Management Programme;
- Consider closing off Hassell Street to through traffic;
- Continue the protection of the high quality townscape, and insist on new development which fits into the historic context;
- Detailed shopfront guidance required.

Public realm:

- Public realm improvements, including changes to paving, street furniture and planters;
- Protection of existing historic street surfaces;
- Removal of street clutter and improvements to signage, including removal of outdated signs;
- Improved pedestrian access into the Town Centre.

Buildings

- Consider a Local List to provide additional protection to unlisted 'positive' buildings;
- The control of unlisted positive buildings;
- Article 4 Directions – these might be appropriate in residential streets such as Well Street and Garden Street;
- Use planning enforcement powers to address derelict and potentially dangerous buildings in the Town Centre.

Site specific

- Ensure that the Guildhall and Lancaster Buildings are properly repaired and bought back into full beneficial use;
- Ensure the future of the former C of E School facing Queen's Gardens;
- Assist with the restoration of the Queen Victoria statue in Queen's Gardens;
- Consider a grant scheme, such as the HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in the Church Street/Bridge Street area;
- Take the opportunity of re-establishing Newcastle's distinctive character with the appropriate redevelopment/refurbishment of sites or buildings;
- Encourage the demolition and suitable redevelopment of any of the buildings marked as 'negative' on the Townscape Appraisal map.

Design Guidance:

- Introduce design guidance for shopfronts;
- Update design guidance for security shutters.

Conservation Area boundary review

- One minor change is proposed to the existing conservation area boundary.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Conservation Area - Relevant Local Plan policies as defined by the Proposals Map

Policies B9 -18, and 20 apply to the whole Town Centre.

The most important conservation area policies are Policies B9 and B10

Policy B9: Prevention of harm to conservation areas

The Council will resist applications that would harm the special architectural or historic character or appearance of the Conservation Areas.

Policy B10: The requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area

Permission will only be granted to construct, alter the external appearance or change the use of any buildings only if its proposed appearance or use will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area. This will be achieved by the following criteria being met:

- (i) The form, scale, bulk, height, materials, colour, vertical or horizontal emphasis and detailing respect the characteristics of the buildings in the area.
- (ii) The plot coverage characteristics respect those of the area.
- (iii) Historically significant boundaries contributing to the established pattern of development in the area are retained.
- (iv) Open spaces important to the character or historic value of the area are protected.
- (vi) Trees and other landscape features contributing to the character or appearance of the area are protected.

Other relevant policies relating to the historic environment are:

Policy B11
Policy B12
Policy B13
Policy B14
Policy B15
Policy B16
Policy B17
Policy B18
Policy B20

Appendix 2

TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL MAP CHARACTER AREA MAP

Appendix 3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Briggs, John *Newcastle under Lyme 1173-1973* North Staffordshire Polytechnic
Endicott, Delyth and Collingwood, Neil *Images of England Newcastle under Lyme*

Appendix 4

CONTACT DETAILS

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For information on scheduled monuments and the County-wide Historic Environment Record (HER), please contact:

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