

Stubbs Walk Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

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Contents

Section 1. Conservation Area Appraisal

1. Introduction
2. Summary of Significance
3. Location and setting
4. Historic development
5. Spatial and Character analysis
6. Quality and Character of Buildings
7. Summary of issues - Opportunities and Constraints

Appendix 1 – Townscape Appraisal Map

Section 2. Conservation Area Management Plan

1. Introduction
2. Implications of Conservation Area Designation
3. Management of the Historic Environment
 - Article 4 Directions
 - Enforcement Strategy
 - Role of Historic Environment Champions
 - Promotion and awareness
 - Control of Historic Buildings
 - Register of locally important buildings and structures
 - Control and management of the natural environment
 - Demolition
4. The Conservation Area Boundary review
5. The setting of the Conservation Area
6. Implementation

1. Introduction

Stubbs Walk Conservation Area was designated in February 1993. The area is located south-east of Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre in Staffordshire.

Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Local planning authorities are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The purpose of this Appraisal is to provide a good basis for planning decisions and for development proposals in the area in the future. The appraisal will inform the production of a management plan for the area. Once agreed by the Planning Committee of the Borough Council, the Draft Appraisal and Management Plan will be discussed with the wider community.

Planning Policy Context

These documents should be read in conjunction with the wider policy framework as set out in various policy documents. The Development Plan for the Borough currently consists of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy and saved Local and Structure Plan Policies. More information about the planning system can be found on the Borough Council's website: www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning

These documents will therefore provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Conservation Areas can be assessed. The government's online Planning Practice Guidance is a valuable and accessible resource <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/> and Historic England (formerly English Heritage) guidance sets out the importance of appraisals and management plans, www.historicengland.org.uk. Additional historic and archaeological information can be obtained from the Historic Environment Record (HER) which is held at Staffordshire County Council. The Council has a Register of Locally Important Building and Structures. Information about the Register and the current list is available to view online at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister.

It is important to note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive. If a building, feature or space is not mentioned this should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

2. Summary of Significance

Stubbs Walks Conservation Area is significant for the following reasons:

- It represents a well preserved street pattern of 19th Century development for the industrial expansion of the town.
- High quality environment marked by historic school buildings. Much of the land is now owned by Newcastle under Lyme School but the area still has the feel predominantly as a residential one.
- Distinctive high quality Victorian Villas and late Georgian town houses, creatively embellished with many original features retained, such as tile patterning, decorative banding, clay tiles and boundary walls with piers
- Interesting history named after a former open field and archaeologically significant with the area's industrial heritage and one of the earliest canals.
- Attractive setting with historic public walks with mature natural landscaping, open spaces and pathway networks.
- St Paul's Church, a Grade II Listed Building built from Hollington stone by R Scrivenor and Sons, Hanley

The Character Appraisal concludes that the key issues in the area are:

- Protection of the townscape and built features of the Conservation Area including the trees, landscape and front boundary walls.
- Use of modern materials on historic buildings, such as upvc windows and doors and inappropriate changes to historic buildings.
- Consideration of additions to the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.
- Insensitive signage on businesses

3. Location and Setting

Stubbs Walk Conservation Area is located beyond the ring road of Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre to its southeast, close to the Borough boundary with Stoke-on-Trent. The central area of the Conservation Area is dominated by buildings and land owned by Newcastle-under-Lyme School. The school grounds are far more extensive than the Conservation Area include playing fields to the south which incorporate cricket and rugby pitches.

Around the periphery of the area the Conservation Area are terraced streets built on a grid-iron plan and which are occupied by both residential occupiers and businesses in what used to be predominantly a residential area. This area is occupied by offices and other business uses which have become established over the years especially to the north of the area and along Marsh Parade.

On Lancaster Road is a bowling club, nursing home, office and two children's nurseries

Stubbs Walk is relatively built up on the periphery around the junction of West Street and North Street, Marsh Parade and Mount Pleasant but opens out to provide green walks and school playing fields in the centre, as well as green areas on both school sites. The landscape value of the trees and shrubs within Stubbs Walk is particularly high and provides a setting for the Conservation Area. The character of the Conservation Area to the north beyond the boundary deteriorates quickly where the historic pattern of development has been lost and replaced by modern flats.

4. Historic development

In the medieval period this area was marshland and strip fields. Stubbs Field along with Brampton field and four other fields were still surrounding the town under crop cultivation until the early 19th century. By the early 19th Century, with the decrease in reliance on agriculture and increasing populations, the land was enclosed.

The demand for housing grew and so did the expansion of the town with the earliest development in the area around Marsh Parade and Mount Pleasant where houses were built in high density on a grid iron pattern. So no longer common land, the fields were managed by trustees and part of their role was to support the making of public walks in Brampton and Stubbs. Two linear walks were created and they still exist today and are a key feature of the character of the respective Conservation Areas.

Silk throwing was a new industry and established itself in the area. The former silk mill built by Henshall and Lester on Marsh Parade brought important industry to the area. It was in use from 1822 until 1938/9 and is now converted to offices.

In the mid-19th Century, Lancaster Road was not yet laid out although there was a path network relating to plots and former fields. By the end of the 19th Century Lancaster Road and Lancaster Avenue had been planned and built on. The Church of St Paul built between 1905-8 is shown to be built on the site on a former church.

Spatially the wider history of the area is significant defined by former canals and roads that linked them to the southwest. The historic maps from the mid and late 19th Centuries show that the general spatial layout and character remains the same with the principal streets, two school sites and the central park and walks. The Borough Council erected a bandstand in the location of the current playground and to the south a Russian gun was also exhibited until about 1940.

Allotments were a key characteristic of the mid-19th Century with a large area designated for this use at the former Orme Girls School which is now used as the school playing field. Allotments were also to be found close to Stubbs Walks on either side of Palmer Way, again this is now occupied by school sports buildings.

Malabars map (1847) shows the walks running along the side of the former canal. The former canal was known as Junction Canal and plans were approved in 1797 and in 1798 the canal was cut. This was planned to join up with Sir Nigel Gresley's Canal (of Knypersley Hall) which was built to transport coal from their coalmines at Apedale to Newcastle.

The main secondary school was built on Mount Pleasant as an upper school for boys of to 19 years old in 1872 and was said to follow the main grammar school curriculum but with an emphasis on experimental chemistry due to the proximity and influence of the trade manufacturers of the surrounding area. The former Orme Girl's School on Victoria Road was founded 1871 and a new school built shortly after. This also includes the former headmistresses' house. The two schools are now amalgamated and known as the Newcastle-under-Lyme School, an independent day school that owns a considerable amount of land and other buildings within the Conservation Area and beyond, including the former church Hall on Victoria Road.

The Extensive Urban Survey for Newcastle-under-Lyme states that overall there is a low potential for the survival of below ground archaeology in the area. However further research will always help with the understanding of any unknown heritage assets.

5. Spatial and Character analysis

Topography

The topography of the Conservation Area rises steeply to the east and is a distinctive feature, creating some attractive views of the town centre from certain vantage points especially across the playing fields westwards towards the town centre. The land rises from the town centre then it plateaus at Victoria Road across Stubbs Walks then rises up in an easterly direction again plateauing again at Lancaster Road and rising to the edge of the Borough boundary with the City Council area..

Layout and street pattern

The area is fairly cohesive with the school buildings and playing fields at the heart of the Conservation Area. The predominant street pattern is a series of roads in a linear pattern, straight roads running north/south. Still evident, to the north are terraced streets based on a grid iron pattern, more compact on West Street, North Street and Victoria Road. Mount Pleasant (north side) has terraces facing the school site, closely compact of different styles and sizes but again forming an unbroken frontage ascending up the street. The size of plots varies significantly and relates directly to the principal use and class level of the building. Workers housing was terraced with small private spaces and housing for the more affluent was larger with more space around the houses. Lancaster Road has villas on the east side of the road which are set in formal relatively generous plots, slightly set back behind small front gardens bounded by walls, they present a feeling of spaciousness and openness.

Lancaster Road, Victoria Road and Mount Pleasant all have gentle curves which restrict long distance views. The terraced streets to the north have buildings on one side of the road which are set to the back of the pavement giving a feeling of higher density.

A large part of the Conservation Area is occupied by the two school sites. The presence of the school and its amalgamation of the two school sites and other adjacent areas of land have helped to retain the character of the area. The school have expanded and extended parts of the school over the years and this is generally outside the Conservation Area and there is an ambience of spaciousness around the main school grounds providing a collegiate atmosphere as students move by foot between the two main sites.

Open spaces, trees and landscape

The natural environment in the Conservation Area is an integral part of its significance. Despite being a suburban landscape, there is a large amount of open space within the Conservation Area thanks to the school grounds with three main playing fields and Stubbs Walks, a public park.

There is a tranquil feeling about the area and in general terms the mature landscape and trees play an important part in the character of the area. The public park was designed and laid out to be an area that residents could enjoy and get exercise within, including avenues of trees and planting and this is exactly what it is used for now. The Council manages the park and open space and there is also a children's playground in the centre.

The main school site and grounds are set back from the road behind metal railings with brick decorative piers flanking the main access point and entrances. There are a row of trees and planting with a grassed area in front of the railings providing an attractive mature setting.

There are Tree Preservation Orders on trees within Gladstone Villas on Victoria Road and one on a property in Lancaster Avenue which protects the trees by law. Other trees are afforded some protection by virtue of being in the Conservation Area.

Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas

Due to the topography and mature trees, the views are limited across the park but they provide vistas along the pathway networks. There are significant key buildings which are visible and make a positive contribution to the overall character of the area. Perhaps the most prominent building given its tall tower and spire is the Church of St Paul on Victoria Road. The Church is set within a relatively small plot with limited curtilage although its location adjacent to the edge of Stubbs Walk, the linear park, provides it with an attractive setting. The spire is framed in a number of views including along Stubbs Walks between the trees, from Garden Street at the bottom of the school playing field, across the school grounds from Lancaster Road, including more long distance views.

Other key buildings are the large school buildings, some elements of which are more prominent than others, depending on location. Buildings on corners, including the large villas which are designed to have presence and prominence and are in elevated positions, including decorative gables, embellished string courses with tiles, all contribute towards a high quality environment.

Boundary features

There are a variety of boundaries in the Conservation Area, generally man-made except the back lane, leading to Palmers Way which is an informal lane with soft edges. Boundaries vary between streets. Lancaster Road in general has stone boundary walls and piers with a hedge set behind. The main school is characterised by simple metal railings, painted black and brick stone piers with stone finials. The former Orme School also has simple railings, some set on a low brick wall along Vessey Terrace. There are generally no boundaries for the terraced properties along Marsh Parade which front directly onto the pavement. Victoria Road has brick boundary walls to the villas. The Church is set behind a low stone plinth with piers and simple metal railings.

Public Realm

There are few examples of historic public realm in the Conservation Area. The principal features in the public realm are the gate piers and walls marking the entrance into the public walks and park area. There is also a cast-iron post which used to have an ornamental lamp bracket. There are modern benches within the park and a playground and modern lampposts.

There are fairly extensive original blue brick paviers on the pavements along much of Mount Pleasant outside the periphery of the Newcastle-under-Lyme school. These have both a distinctive crisscross pattern and smooth finish. Stone kerbs are also still present within the area.

The character of the area is determined by more than just the appearance of the buildings. Due to the nature of the area as a residential area, there is little highway signage in the Conservation Area which can often cause unnecessary street clutter.

6. Quality and Character of Buildings

The historic buildings and structures in the area contribute greatly to making the area aesthetically special, and this is complemented by the presence of some nationally designated buildings as well. A Townscape appraisal building indicating positive and neutral features has been prepared and is attached as Appendix 1.

Positive features

The Conservation Area contains 5 Listed Buildings and Structures, all listed Grade II. There also 4 entries on the Council's Local Register Locally Important Buildings and Structures.

- Church of St Paul, an Edwardian Church, built in 1905 by R Scrivener & Son. It is built from red sandstone which is rusticated.
- Stone piers at the entrance to Stubbs Walks – the 4 piers are linked by stone walls and railings at the entrance are dated around 1800 so they were in existence earlier than the laying out of the walks. The cast iron post with an ornamental lamp bracket is also part of this listed building entry but this is missing.
- Former silk mill, at 21 Marsh Parade, built by 1822 and used as such until 1839. It is brick, now painted with plain tile roof. It is three-storeys, with sash windows although these were probably originally cast-iron and replaced in timber. It is now used as offices and a number of businesses occupy the building.
- No 23 and 25 and 27 Marsh Parade are early 19th Century houses but again are now in business uses. They are stuccoed, 3 storey, with fanlights, sash windows to No 23 and cross casements to no. 25.

The school buildings vary, but the main school built in 1872 is built in red brick with stone banding and window surrounds and a decorative fish scale clay tile roof. Later extensions are built in the same materials. The former Orme Girls school on Victoria Road was built around the same time in same materials but a little plainer. The school buildings have stone window surrounds, verges and quoins used to decorative effect. Other significant buildings include the Church and former Church hall.

There are a variety of building styles within the Conservation Area, but many are well-proportioned domestic villas. The majority of properties are Victorian or late Georgian, so there is a high survival of many historic buildings of a high quality which contributes to the interest of the area. They vary in terms of size and status from the most prestigious houses, like those on Lancaster Road grading down to mid-size terraces along Mount Pleasant and part of West Street (East of Victoria Road) which have bay windows and greater embellishments, to the smaller simpler terraces around the corner of Victoria Road and West Street. The villas have typical architectural detailing, such as steep gables, gable dormers, 3 storeys, well detailed chimney stacks, decorative timber barge boards and decorative banding which add to the special character of the area.

There is a unified palette of materials in the area which gives the area a great deal of character and the regular repetition of architectural detailing on some terraces that also contributes to the character. The predominant building materials are red brick but there are a few villas with slightly darker more typically Staffordshire brick with darker hues. The brick bonding in the area is almost exclusively Flemish bond. Only the main school buildings have English Garden Wall bond. Town houses on Marsh Parade are stuccoed in a classical regency style well-proportioned with balconies. Other houses on Mount Pleasant are currently rendered or have painted brickwork but were not originally

intended to be rendered or painted and this has resulted in the loss of historic architectural features. Roofs are generally plain clay tiles.

In terms of joinery, many of the timber windows and doors are still in situ. Some have been replaced with uPVC but generally window openings have not been altered and the window proportions have retained their traditional proportions.

Businesses

There are a number of businesses which have tended to cluster around Marsh Parade, Mount Pleasant and Lancaster Road. They all occupy former residential properties with the exception of the business which currently operate out of the former silk mill on Marsh Parade. Signage can be detrimental to the style and design of the residential properties and therefore detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

Neutral Buildings

There are very few modern buildings and extensions within the Conservation Area and they generally neither contribute to nor detract from the character of the area and these are considered to be neutral buildings. Such buildings are the modern sports buildings on the school site and some garages to the rear of some of the properties.

7. Summary of Issues

Since the Conservation Area was designated in 1993 there have been changes, but for the most part these have been changes of use to buildings from residential to businesses or vice versa with few external alterations and these have not harmed the overall character of the Conservation Area. Alterations to the school buildings have not materially altered the external appearance of the buildings from the main roads and vistas.

This desirable state must be continued, and improved when practicable, and this can only be achieved by continual vigilance by concerned local inhabitants, informed decisions by the local planning authority and positive action by enforcement where necessary, all acting in liaison for the common benefit.

Opportunities and Constraints

- Inappropriate signage on businesses occupying former residential sites and action needs to be taken to improve or remove the signage.
- A few properties have fairly substantial plots on Lancaster Road and the rear gardens are large. There has not been any significant pressure for development on this backland and in order to maintain the historic character of the road, this should be resisted to help preserve the open character of the area.
- Loss of historic features such as windows and doors. Where possible these should be retained or opportunities found to reinstate such features.
- The effect of permitted development can be harmful by incrementally removing significant historic features from buildings. An Article 4 Direction should be considered to tighten control over important buildings and frontages which are not protected from harmful change.
- Appropriate use of materials when altering or extending properties within the Conservation Area.
- Retain trees and landscape features.

Section 2: Conservation Area Management Plan

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Management Plan is to provide a framework for further actions which although primarily the responsibility of the Borough Council, will also depend on the cooperation and enthusiasm of local people and local organisations/institutions. This Plan is informed by Section 1 of this document which identified the special character and significance of the Conservation Area. The proposed actions contained in the Management Plan will be undertaken using existing Council resources unless otherwise stated.

The Conservation Area in Stubbs Walk has been existence for over 20 years and the effectiveness of the designation depends on the way it has been managed in the past by the Borough Council, local businesses, residents and Newcastle-under Lyme School.

Government policy guidance on Conservation Areas is contained in National Planning Policy Framework, where the government is still promoting informed and evidenced based conservation. It considers that parts of the environment which have significance due to their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets whether formally designated or not. These assets promote a sense of place and contribute towards the aims of sustainability.

Government policy has made it clear that Conservation Areas are not areas of preservation and that change is an inevitable fact of modern life. The challenge is therefore to manage that change in a manner which respects the special historic and architectural qualities of a place. The context for these policies is provided by the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Core Spatial Strategy.

Local authorities are required by law to review their Conservation Areas and the preparation of management plans and conservation area appraisals form part of this obligation.

Consultation

The involvement of the local community in the formulation and delivery of these documents helps to strengthen the status and impact of Appraisals and Management Plans. A full period of consultation will take place with the documents to provide opportunities from the local community to input further into the documents. Following this the final document will go back to Committee before going to the Council's Cabinet for final approval and adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Both documents will be of use to the Borough Council when determining planning applications for change within or on the edges of the Conservation Area, and for property owners and their agents when considering schemes for alteration or new development.

2. The implications of Conservation Area designation.

Designation as a Conservation Area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the “preservation and/or enhancement” of the area. The overriding policy is that new development should pay special regard to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Other effects are:-

- Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting Conservation Areas. This is done through a site notice and an advertisement in the local newspaper.
- Permission is required for the demolition of most unlisted buildings in a Conservation Area (except small structures) and the local authority may take enforcement action or consider criminal prosecution if permission is not obtained.
- Written notice must be given to the Borough Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area to give the Council the opportunity to include the tree within a Tree Preservation Order.
- The Borough Council may take steps to ensure that a building in a Conservation Area is kept in good repair through the use of Urgent Works Notices and Amenity Notices.
- The energy conservation expectations of the Building Regulations (Part L) do not necessarily apply to buildings within a Conservation Area.
- Powers exist for local authorities, Historic England or the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide financial grant schemes to help with the upkeep of buildings in Conservation Areas, if the area is economically deprived.
- The Council has a Historic Building Grant Fund for the repair and reinstatement of buildings and structures which are considered as heritage assets, namely Listed Buildings, buildings in Conservation Areas and on the Council’s Register of Locally Important Buildings.

It is always a good idea to check with the Planning Service before carrying out any work and if you need any advice on any planning issues.

Where a building is designated as a Listed Building separate legislation applies to all internal and external alterations which affect the special architectural or historic interest of the building and will probably require Listed Building Consent. Planning permission is also needed for all proposed buildings in the garden of a domestic Listed Building including gas/oil containers. Listed Building Consent is practically always required for the installation of `antennas` and if the Borough Council considers that the installation will have an adverse effect on the special interest of the building, consent will usually be refused.

3. The Management of the Historic Environment

The Borough Council has policies which are aimed at preserving the significance and character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

Each application has to be determined on its own merits but much can be achieved by having a clear interpretation of statutes, detailed policy and guidance and training to help elected Councillors and officers to work within these constraints. Development proposals can have an effect on a Conservation Area even when they are some distance outside it. In such cases, the duty to pay special attention to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area still applies. Alterations to the external appearance of a property often require planning permission.

Action 1 The Borough Council will adopt a consistent interpretation of what it considers to be a `material` change in the external appearance of a building.

Certain works to single dwelling houses within a Conservation Area are considered "permitted development" so that enables some alterations to be carried out without the need for planning permission. These can include changes to windows and doors, roofs materials or construction of minor extensions. Although they may be minimal in each case, such alterations can have a cumulative effect that is damaging to historic areas. In summary at the time of writing:

- Planning permission is needed for extensions to houses in Conservation Areas if it extends the side wall of the house or if it has more than one storey to the rear and if it exceeds certain length and height restrictions.
- Planning permission is needed for external cladding to houses using stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
- Planning permission is needed for any alteration to the roof of a house in a Conservation Area.
- Planning permission is needed for the erection of any structure within the curtilage of a house in a Conservation Area if the structure proposed would be on land to the side or front of the house. This is especially important for sheds, garages and other outbuildings in gardens.
- Planning permission is required for satellite dishes and antennas if they are mounted on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto and is visible from a highway or a building which exceeds 15 metres in height. In these cases, planning permission would not normally be approved. Conventional TV aerials and their mountings and poles are not considered to be `development` and therefore planning permission is not required.
- With commercial properties, such as shops and pubs, planning permission is generally required for alterations to these buildings.
- Solar PV or thermal equipment needs planning permission if it is to be located on a wall or roof slope of the main elevation of the main house or outbuilding or on a Listed Building or a building in its garden.
- Within Conservation Areas, lopping or felling a tree greater than 75 mm. diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground requires six weeks' notice to be given to the Borough Council before starting the work. This provides the Borough Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served.

Article 4 Directions

Where this kind of development is considered to be harming the character of an area, an 'Article 4 Direction' can be made by the Borough Council which removes permitted development rights. This does not mean that development will not be possible but it does mean that planning permission has to be sought for certain changes. This allows for the merits of the proposal to be considered against the conservation interests of the area.

In the case of Stubbs Walks Conservation Area, it is considered that the exercise of permitted development rights would undermine the general aims and objectives for the historic environment and its local distinctiveness.

For example under an Article 4 Direction planning permission would then be required for

- All extensions whatever the size including porches on the *front* of the building
- Changing roof materials and insertion of rooflights on *front-facing* roofslope
- Replacing windows or doors on the *front* elevation
- Painting a house, and the removal or partial demolition of a chimney.
- The erection, alteration or removal of a wall, gate or fence at the front of the house can also be controlled as well as demolition (front means facing a public highway or road).

Action 2 The Borough Council will propose an Article 4 Direction within Stubbs Walk Conservation Area for certain and relevant types of development on the majority of properties in residential use in the Conservation Area as shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map, in order to seek to retain historic and architectural features which combine to give the Conservation Area its special character and significance. Full consultation will be undertaken with those affected.

Enforcement Strategy.

Planning permission is not always sought or implemented correctly. Here it is important that enforcement action is considered and that action where needed is taken. This does reinforce that the development control process is fair and should be followed.

As well as following the best practice principles for enforcement like openness, consistency and proportionality, the Borough Council has its own local Planning Enforcement Policy and within this historic building and conservation matters are given a greater priority. Usually issues are resolved through effective communication but this is not always the case.

Action 3 Where appropriate the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised development within the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area.

Promotion and awareness

Some degree of change is inevitable in Conservation Areas and the issue is often not so much whether change should happen, but how it is undertaken. Owners and residents can minimise the negative effects of change by obtaining appropriate and qualified advice when preparing development proposals and by avoiding unrealistic aspirations.

It is important that the community should understand the significance of their surroundings if they are to play their part. There is a clear need to publish information on the history of each Conservation Area and its special qualities. This could be an effective outcome of the character appraisal process. There is also a significant role for amenity societies and other stakeholders to explain what matters, what is possible, what is expected and what has been achieved elsewhere.

Action 4 The Borough Council will encourage and work with the community and other organisations to help recognise and manage the heritage assets in the Conservation Area for future generations.

Action 5 The Borough Council will ensure that information is available to enable communities to understand the significance of their Conservation Areas and the consequences of living and working within them.

Community involvement is an integral part of the planning process. The Borough Council has a Conservation Advisory Working Party, which considers all relevant applications and acts as an important interface between local understanding and council decision making.

Action 6 The Council will continue supporting the Conservation Advisory Working Party and will continue to seek to ensure that the Working Party is given the opportunity of commenting on applications affecting the historic environment in the Borough.

Action 7 The Borough Council will consider increasing its offer of guidance and update its range of published guidance to include specific topics such as historic buildings and living in a Conservation Area.

Control of historic buildings

It is important that this historic environment continues to be recognised and that local policies are included in future policy documents for the future protection of Newcastle-under-Lyme's 20 Conservation Areas and Listed Building entries. Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition, alteration, or extension of statutorily listed buildings. There is current guidance for owners of listed building on the Borough Councils website.

Action 8 The Borough Council has placed information on its website on Listed Buildings and on the Conservation Areas in the Borough and this information should be updated and expanded upon.

Action 9 The Borough Council will continue to assess applications for Listed Building Consent in line with policy and guidance.

Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

There are buildings of local significance which, although not statutorily listed, are nonetheless important to the history and character and cultural value of the Borough.

The Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures is a list of buildings which are of good design quality, attractive appearance and historic interest which make a significant contribution to the character of the area. It is one way that the Council can help to identify buildings which are important to the character of the area and help to prevent harmful changes that would be detrimental to the character of the area. The current Register and information about the process by which buildings can be added to the Register can be seen at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister.

Buildings currently included on this Register within the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area are;

- Newcastle-under-Lyme School, Mount Pleasant, Newcastle
- Former Orme School for Girls, Victoria Road, Newcastle
- Former Headmistress's house, Orme School for Girls, Victoria Road, Newcastle
- Former Church Hall, Victoria Road, Newcastle

There are number of buildings which have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map as being positive buildings of townscape merit. Buildings here will vary in quality but will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings. Where their style, materials and detailing provides the Conservation Area with interest and variety they will be considered for inclusion of the local Register during the next review process. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded.

Action 10 The Borough Council will consider all buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the area for the local Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures and will encourage the local community to suggest other buildings that might be eligible for inclusion on the Register.

Action 11 The Borough Council will ensure that the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures is regularly updated.

Action 12 Positive buildings, buildings on the Council's local Register and Listed Buildings should be retained and their settings protected from unsympathetic development, where possible.

Control and management of the natural environment

Tree cover provides an important part of the Conservation Area especially within and around Stubbs Walks, the public park. These trees should be maintained retained and replaced when appropriate. All trees in Conservation Areas are already automatically protected by the requirement to notify the Council of any intention to carry out works to trees. The Council's Arboricultural Officer liaises with the Landscape section over tree works and has recently surveyed the trees in Stubbs Walks followed by a programme of maintenance works. In addition Newcastle-under-Lyme School have also had their trees recently surveyed and has a 3 year programme of works to the trees within their ownership. Tree Preservation Orders provide additional protection for significant trees or groups of trees and permission is required from the Council for any proposed works.

Action 13 The Borough Council will continue to maintain the trees within the public park and carry out any works which are necessary.

Action 14 The Borough Council will continue to work with landowners to manage the trees within the Conservation Area in a way which recognises the important contribution they make to the character of the Conservation Area.

4. The Conservation Area Boundary Review

Local authorities are required by law to review their boundaries of existing Conservation Areas from time to time. This is to ensure that they still retain special architectural or historic interest. As part of the Appraisal process the whole Conservation Area was inspected and the robustness of the present boundary assessed.

The Stubbs Walks Conservation Area contains buildings and features which are of principally Victorian and Georgian architectural styles and periods. It is fairly compact around the two school sites and includes the main streets, the historic church, and the majority of the better quality terraces and villas. The topography affects the experience one has as one enters into the Conservation Area. Trees and the natural landscape features also play a role in defining the area and its boundary.

The boundary to the north is less obvious in parts being along the centre of the road from North Street, West Street and around the grid iron section of smaller terraces to create a sensible inclusion of blocks of terraces. Whilst it would be possible to include all of these terraces, the quality for wholesale inclusion is not considered worthy of Conservation Status largely due to the high loss of features and fact that the smaller terraces are less embellished and are less integrated around the schools, church and Stubbs Walks.

The existing boundary is considered to be appropriate and no changes are proposed.

5. The setting of the Conservation Area

Stubbs Walk has a large number of trees, particularly within but also on the edges of the Conservation Area. The combined effect of the trees, shrubs, gardens contribute towards the character of the Conservation Area. These features are cherished by the local community and are well cared for including private gardens and the public open spaces.

Action 15 The Borough Council will continue to protect and enhance the qualities of the Conservation Area carefully considering applications for new development which would result in the removal or reduction of trees or established planting which enhances the Conservation Area.

The control of new development

New development should preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It must respect the historic and architectural context and should not necessarily copy existing styles but create sensitive, sympathetic and good quality modern architecture so that the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not downgraded or diluted, but reinforced, and enhanced whenever possible. The pattern and grain of the area is part of its special character and appearance and should be respected. It is important to have a good architect or advisor who understands the issues and context of Conservation Areas. New development should be sympathetic to surrounding historic buildings in terms of scale materials and details. It should also respect views both within and into and out of the Conservation Area.

The pressure for development in Stubbs Walk is mainly for changes of use, signage and extensions to existing buildings especially to the school buildings. There is potential for infill and backland development (usually in the gardens of existing buildings) some of

which sit in spacious plots which will intensify and may harm the character of the Conservation Area.

Action 16 The Borough Council will seek to ensure that new development conforms to policies within the LDF, saved Local Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework and does not have an adverse impact on the existing building or important landscape features of the Conservation Area.

Demolition

Permission is needed for demolition all buildings in the Conservation Area (over 115 cubic metres). Demolition of historically significant buildings within the Conservation Area will not be permitted unless the building to be demolished can be proven to have a harmful or negative effect. Partial demolition does not require permission, but some control will be exercised through an Article 4 Direction, particularly in relation to boundary walls and chimneys.

6. Implementation

It is important that the Stubbs Walk Conservation Area should be a self sustaining as possible if it is to remain in its present state. Achieving this requires management to control any necessary changes so that its special character and appearance is not adversely affected. Success will require commitment by all Borough Council departments and their partners such as building control and the Highways Authority to ensure the sensitive exercise of controls, in the best interests of the Conservation Area, and the sensitive deployment of any resources which may become available. Success depends on the part played by other stakeholders: property owners, residents, businesses and amenity groups.

Those who live and work in the Conservation Area are encouraged to recognise the collective benefits they enjoy. For this they must understand the need to take a contextual view of proposals rather than acting in isolation. Change is inevitable in Conservation Areas but it is how rather than if it is undertaken. Employing skilled advice minimizes the effects of these changes.

It is important that communities are well informed about the qualities of their Conservation Areas and of the opportunities for enhancing them in particular the School. There is also a role for the Borough Council and other recognised community groups such as the Civic Society.