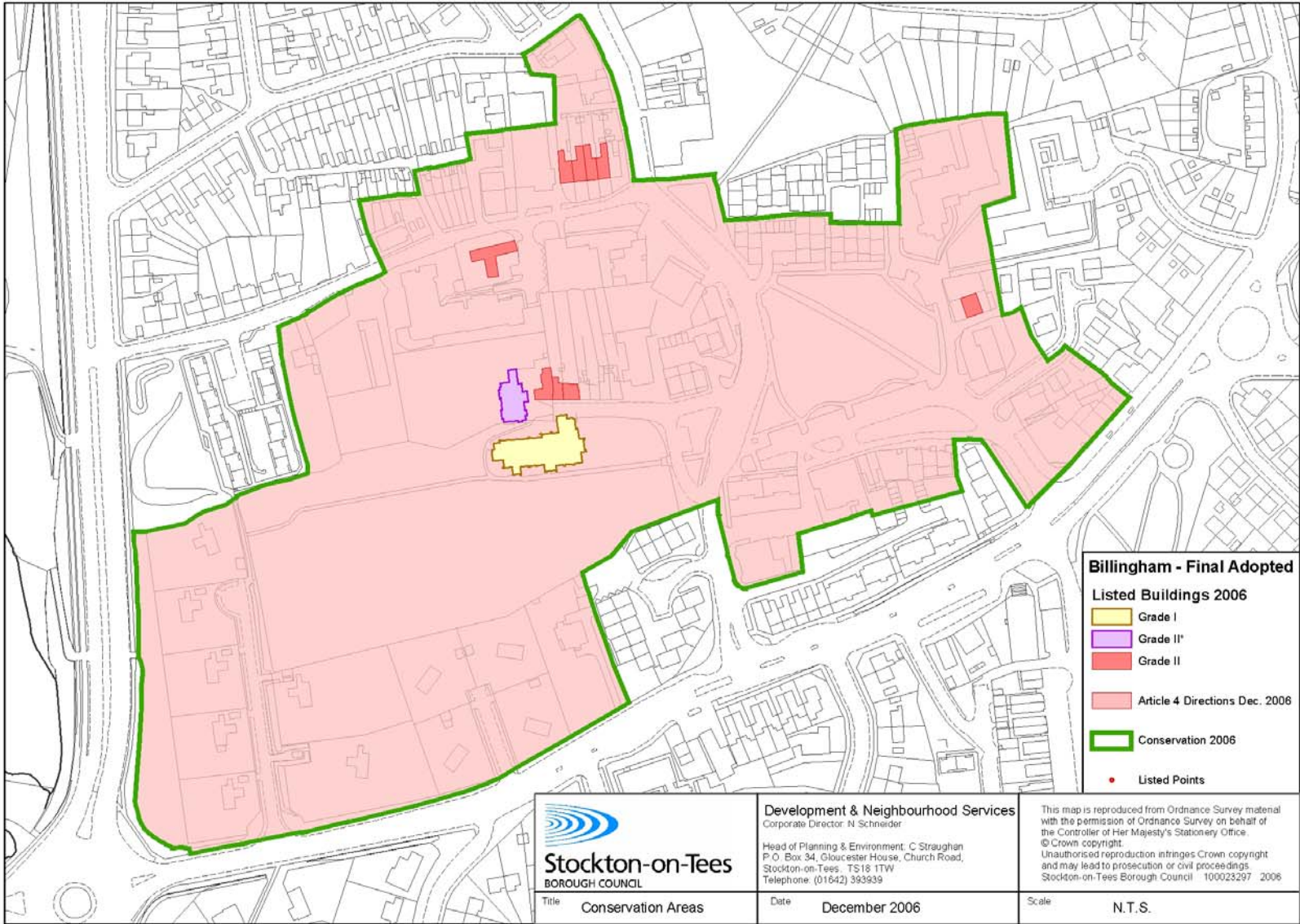


Chapter C01: Billingham Green

Conservation Area Appraisal

Plan of Billingham Green Conservation Area showing listed buildings and areas covered by Article 4 Directions



General Overview of Billingham Conservation Area

Billingham is said to be one of the oldest settlements in the Tees Valley, dating back at least 1000 years. Today it has been transformed into a bustling and thriving community, and is closely associated with the petrochemical industry. Its modern image belies its ancient origins, with the old village green and the nearby Church of St Cuthbert's Tower testifying to its long history.

Situated about 3 miles North of the River Tees away from the marshy floodplains, the settlement of Billingham dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period. Indeed, the name of Billingham is Anglo-Saxon in origin, and means "*the homestead of Billa's people*".

Billingham remained an agricultural community - even while neighbouring Norton and Stockton were growing – well in to the 20th Century. That is until the end of the First World War when the rich marshy flats on the Tees delta were exploited in the industrial exploitation of the salt. Although Billingham has always had some small scale salt production, this was on a vastly larger scale. This led to the start of the great chemical, and later petro-chemical, complex eventually known worldwide as Imperial Chemical Industries, or I.C.I.



The pleasant village green setting of Billingham village right on the doorstep of the new industry attracted the owners of the great industries, and encouraged them to develop a substantial new town to house the employees. The first of whom were the Newcastle Electricity Supply Company who in 1917 built houses in the Billingham bank area, thus expanding the village. More companies built houses for their workforce and eventually the original settlement was surrounded by new development changing Billingham from an agricultural village into a modern industrial town.

Notwithstanding all of this epic-scale growth, the humble village green was always considered the heart of the town.

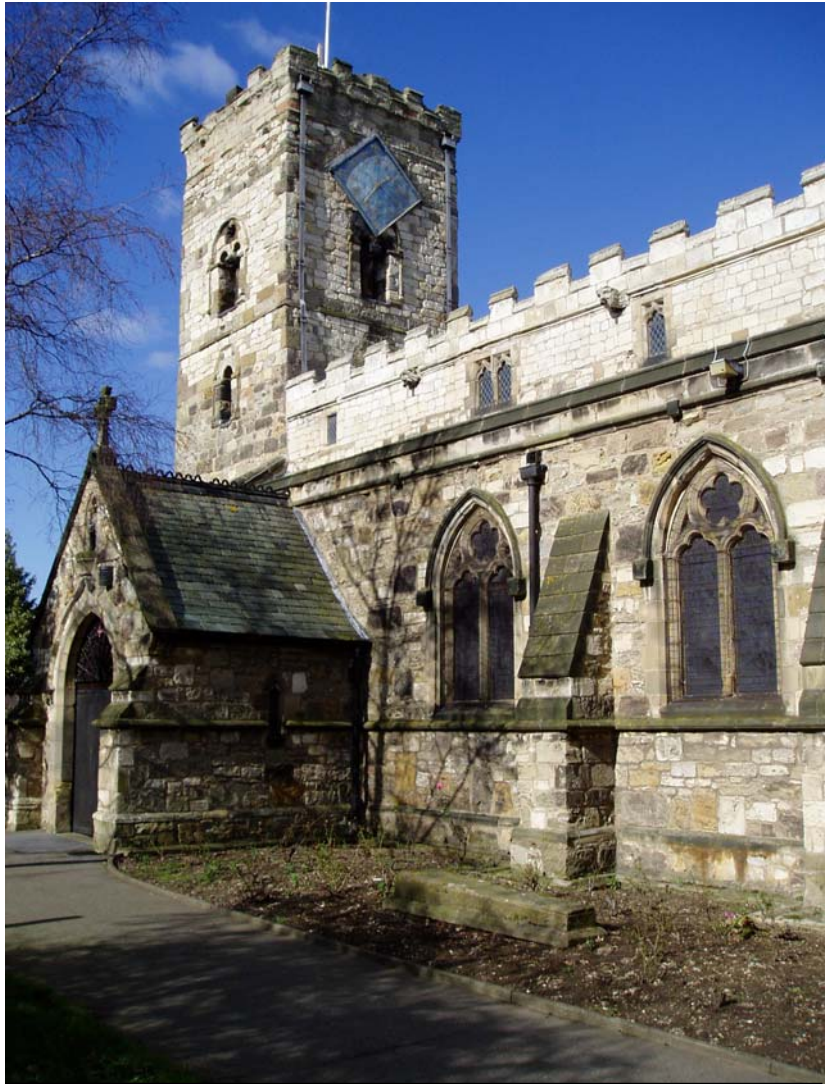
Justification For Conservation Area Status

The Conservation Area is centred on and characterised by St Cuthbert's Church which stands on the West of The Green, and is the most important building (and only grade I listed building) within the Conservation Area.

The form and character of the Green with open space and mature trees has remained largely unchanged for over two hundred years, although the buildings around the Green have changed severely over the past 100 years.

Unfortunately, some unsuitable and unsympathetic development has taken place in the post-war period, as it did with many places in the UK. However, the history and attractiveness of the central core set within the suburban environment make the Conservation Area attractive and worthy of protection.

Billingham Green has no particular architectural form or style and is a mix of architectural types of varying ages. This adds to its interest, and even though some modern buildings are inappropriate, their overall massing and siting is respectful of the original landform, even if the materials and detailing are not.



St Cuthbert's Church

Billingham Green Conservation Area was designated in 1971 for its historic significance and pleasant village character.

General Overview

The Conservation Area is a miss-match of unique buildings and character areas, which gives no sense of cohesion, but does reflect the core of the original village. In this regard, the Conservation Area is awkward and can appear to be unjustified. However, it is through a proper understanding of the area that one can see why it was designated.

Sadly, most of the listed buildings surrounding the Green have been demolished. Of the 13 grade II and 24 grade III listed buildings included in the 1948 Statutory List, only 7 grade III and 2 grade II remained in 1971 when the Conservation Area was originally designated (grade III listing has now been abandoned). These buildings were replaced with at-best mediocre 1960/70's buildings and the character of the Green has suffered considerably because of this.

Consequently there are limited historic buildings of note within the Conservation Area, and this has also created a wide variety and mix of housing types of various ages in the area. There are several buildings of some note, set in quite differing character areas.

The most significant modern development has been to the North of the Green where a group of two-storey flat roofed housing, built in the 1960's has attempted an architectural contrast.

To the North is the "Smiths Arms" a detached 1930's pub built in the pseudo-Elizabethan style which was in vogue at this time, with mock half timbering and herringbone pattern work, it stands within a tarmaced forecourt.

On the west side of church road is a terrace of 18th and 19th Century cottages, which form a pleasing building group within the Conservation Area. On the south side is the church and at the end of the road is the Vicarage, a 17th Century grade II* listed building. This is perhaps the most likely group generally considered worthy of Conservation Area designation because of their age and appearance.

Between numbers 5 and 7 Church Road is St Cuthbert Church Hall, a single storey "Nissen hut" type building which is out of character with the rest of the frontage, again this sits with a concrete forecourt area which is featureless. However there is no denying its 'presence'.



Unusual buildings add interest

Chapel Road forms a pleasant approach to the Green from the West and contains some groups of typical 19th century houses with long leafy front gardens. Billingham Social Club forms a visual intrusion in the street scene as it is out of character with the domestic scale of the area. It is however a reasonably attractive building despite its unsympathetic alterations noticeably the front extension and replacement windows.

Surroundings and Boundary Review

The boundary of the Billingham Green Conservation Area follows a distinct line to the West with the A1027 and SouthView/Billingham Bank to the South. Taking in Chapel Road, Bank Road, Station Road and parts of Walsingham Road and Belasis Avenue it centres on the distinct areas of the Village Green and Church.



Entering the Conservation Area and the Green

The main approach into the Conservation Area is from Southview in the South. This area has a distinct character with large detached 1930's properties situated in mature grounds. Although the buildings themselves are of no special historic merit, their detached nature and setting in mature grounds is unique for the Conservation Area.

St Cuthbert's Church situated on The Green is a grade 1 listed building and indeed, the only grade 1 listed building in Billingham. The church as it stands represents many building periods it is suspected that parts of the fabric can date to the 9th century and the earliest relics are fragments of Saxon cross shafts. The building is a wonderful focal point for the Conservation Area and is a fine example of its type.



St Cuthbert's Lych gate

The church has an attractive setting with leafy and mature grounds and an attractive Lych Gate entrance.

The Salutation Inn sits directly across from a cul-de-sac of modern bungalows, this cul de sac is rightly excluded from the Conservation Area as it bears no resemblance to surrounding development in terms of architectural style.

The Green then leads round past Church Road to the west and the main Green area to the East which is flanked by modern properties which are of low architectural quality, but do share some broad siting and mass characteristics with the more traditional properties. These properties do however envelope the Green and help put the landscaped area in context with the surrounding built environment, and are included within the boundary for that purpose.

Overall it is considered that the boundary is well placed to encompass the special historic environment, without cheapening it through inclusion of unworthy buildings or land. In the same regards areas that are not necessarily connected to the central core of the Conservation Area are included to ensure that any future proposals for these sites do not have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

Important Views/Townscapes

Views into and out of the Conservation Area are limited due to the form of the central area and much of the important landscape features lie in the internal



St Cuthbert's Churchyard

arrangement and general overall feel of the area. Although many streetscapes are let down by modern development, there are several attractive vistas and scenes that are some of the most attractive in the Borough.

The most important views of the Conservation Area are based around

the core of the Green and church areas. The church in its leafy and very characteristic setting bounded by established graveyard, creates a peaceful and pleasant ambience to the central area.

Positive Aspects

The form and character of the Green with open space and mature trees has remained largely unchanged for over two hundred years. Other mature planting and trees throughout the Conservation Area, and most especially in the larger detached properties in South View further highlight this.

Despite previous unsuitable and unsympathetic development there are still a number of attractive buildings and building groups within the Conservation Area. Both their condition and the general overall character of the Conservation Area are worthy of protection.

Negative Aspect

The buildings around the green have changed vastly over the past century, with unsuitable and unsympathetic development taking place. Most of this development was 1960's early 70's development where it was commonplace to build in contrasting architectural styles to the historic environment often with unsuccessful results. Piecemeal minor alterations have also had an overall cumulative negative impact such as the unauthorised introduction of UPVc windows.

Large areas of tarmac noticeably in front of St Cuthbert's Church Hall and the Smiths Arms although serving a functional purpose for car parking provision are unattractive and could be upgraded in more suitable and sympathetic surface treatments.

Development Opportunity Sites

Although there are no obvious gap sites within the Conservation Area there are a number of modern buildings around the Green which would benefit from redevelopment, which would undoubtedly improve the setting of the Conservation Area. Any new development would be required to enhance the existing setting and have regard to the historic landform and scale of the settlement.

Conservation Area Character and Design Analysis

Although Billingham Green has no one particular architectural form or style to follow in the implementation of new development must make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Overall, the Conservation Area has a domestic scale, mainly restricted to two storey building although the



Some unsympathetic building has taken place in and around the Conservation Area

Church and Spire obviously exceed this height and is the dominant building on the skyline. Much of the Conservation Area is low lying which further strengthens the character.

The main features to consider are as follows:-

1. The height and massing of neighbouring properties – where the height and massing are out of scale with neighbouring properties the proposal is unlikely to be acceptable. Massing is the effect created through the grouping of buildings.
2. Building lines – certain areas may have a distinct building line, for example Church Road. This is formed by a number of dwellings, which are all set back from the main road at the same distance. Where there is an established pattern it should be used in determining the position of any new development.
3. Architectural details – features such as roof pitch and window and door styles must be respected if development is to take place on a site situated in an area of similar architectural styles, or in a terrace.
4. Materials – the main building materials are brick and clay pantile. New development should therefore use materials common to the locality.

Land Use



Traditional cottages

There is a mix of land uses within the Conservation Area with the prominent use being residential, based around the Church and Green areas. Billingham Green Conservation Area also has a pocket of commercial activity in the form of a terrace of shops on Station Road, and again at the Southern edge of the Green, and 3 public houses within the boundary. This reflects the

traditional self-contained village character.

Walls

Due to the wide variety of building styles within the Conservation Area walling materials vary from handmade bricks to modern and traditional pale renders and pebbledash. This creates a wide variety of colour and texture within the Conservation Area and also reveals the patina of age in the village.

Roofs

The majority of roofs face towards the main streets with few exceptions. Although the properties to the Northern edge of the Green have flat roofs, roofing materials are mixed and mainly pitched. The dominant materials are slate, modern pantile and modern concrete tile.

Many properties retain their original chimneys and pots, which adds significantly to the character of the individual properties and the street scene.

Windows

There are a number of properties in good condition with original windows or sympathetic replacements. However the majority of residential properties within the Conservation Area are modern and there is evidence of increasingly levels of UPVC. This should be discouraged and



Large slender chimneys are attractive

enforced when possible to preserve the historic character of properties and the street scene. With the change in material has also come the introduction



Georgian windows and doors

of modern casement windows and varying window styles again this has spoilt the previous uniformity of certain terraces with the Conservation Area and has a negative impact on the street scene aesthetic.

Doors

Doors within the conservation on traditional properties are generally in keeping with the character of the

properties, wooden painted in dark colours. The modern properties on the Green have a variety of types and styles, plain wooden and evidence of UPVC can also be seen.

Enclosures and Gardens

There are a variety of properties within the Conservation Area the large detached properties to the Southwest are set in large, leafy grounds with mature trees and a mixture of boundary treatments mainly wooden fencing and hedging.

The properties on Church Road front directly on to Chapel Road with no front gardens and long narrow gardens to the rear. The modern properties on the



Variety in enclosure methods

Green have small front gardens with low white post and rail fences delineating the boundaries.

The properties in Chapel Road mainly have low boundary walls in a simple traditional style. However finishing materials vary from modern brick to render.

Hedging is not commonplace within the Conservation Area with many properties fronting on to the highway.

Vegetation

The Conservation Area although surrounded by the built environment retains a leafy green character with many mature trees and grassed areas. The extensive Church grounds of St Cuthbert's has notable specimens and a variety of planting, both old and new adds to the ambience.

The Green itself is in good condition with an avenue of mature trees diagonally crossing the Green following the axel path. There are a number of mature attractive trees within the Conservation Area most notably across from the Smiths Arms is a triangular section of Green with a magnificent mature Horse Chestnut tree.

A number of buildings feature ivy and other creepers growing up and over the elevations, which adds to the sense of place.

Roads and footpaths

Roads and footpaths throughout the Conservation Area are generally in good order however much of this is in more tarmac and concrete. The paths across the Green have been finished in block paving to try and recreate a cobbled effect, which is more sympathetic.



Original A19 sianpost

Shop Fronts and Signage

At the Northern exit to the Green is a parade of 19th century shops with various incongruous shop fronts and advertisements. This creates visual juxtaposition and, although valuable uses within the area creating vitality, these could be improved visually through unification of shop fronts and advertisements and general upgrading. There are also other examples of



Non-traditional shop fronts

inappropriate signage; noticeably the first building that greets you as you turn into the Conservation Area is the Salutation Inn, which has a large advertising hoarding on the gable end, detracting from the setting of the building and providing an unattractive focal point to the entrance of the Conservation Area. This could easily be removed to instantly improve the aesthetics of the property.

Street Furniture

There is minimal street furniture within the Conservation Area however examples of inappropriate telephone boxes, bus stops, litter bins, bollards etc do exist and removal or upgrading of these in a uniform style would improve the general aesthetics of the area.

Bollards are present on the Green however these are simple in design to fit with the environment and be unobtrusive.



Simple street furniture

Street lighting is predominantly provided by modern tall concrete lampposts which is at odds with the historic character. The Green retains its traditional red post box, which adds colour to the space.

“Article 4 Directions”

In some of the most sensitive parts of Billingham Green Conservation Area it is considered necessary to have tighter control over changes which may adversely affect the quality of the character and appearance. These restrictions are called “Article 4 Directions” and they are a legal tool that remove some of the normal rights a property owner would have. The following items would not normally need planning permission, but in Billingham Green Conservation Area, they will require planning permission from the Council:

Part 1 Development within the curtilage of a dwelling house

Class A: The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house.

Class C: Any other alteration to the roof of a dwellinghouse

Class D: The erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse

Class E: The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of any building or enclosure, swimming pool or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such or maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure

Class F: The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such

Class H: The installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwellinghouse or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse

Part 2 Minor operations

Class A: The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure

Class C: The painting of any exterior building or work

Part 31 Demolition of buildings

Class B: Any building operation consisting of the demolition of the whole or any part of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure

Management Plan

As with all other Conservation Areas in the Borough, Billingham Green Conservation Area could benefit from a programme of maintenance and repair work to ensure the aesthetic qualities of the area are maintained. There are also some more pressing issues that should be attended to, most notably the intensification of inappropriate uPVC windows, rainwater goods and doors.

As these relatively small matters apply across the Borough, a detailed Management Plan is included at the end of the Conservation Area chapter of the Conservation Areas and Historic Environment Folder.

Nevertheless, Billingham Green Conservation Area would also benefit from attention to some more localised issues, as set out below;

- **Short term**
 - Encourage more planting of larger vegetation, such as native trees and hedges.

- **Medium term**
 - Using “SPG 1 :Shop Front Design” (the Council’s Adopted Planning advice), encourage more appropriate shop fronts, signage and security.

This will be done through Development Control measures, and also proactively in encouraging existing poor schemes to be redeveloped.

- Work within the Council to develop more appropriate and coordinated street furniture.

- **Long term**
 - Working with owners, the resurfacing of the car parks identified in the appraisal will add value to the aesthetic quality of the street scene.
 - Work with developers in securing appropriate redevelopment of sites identified in the appraisal. Piecemeal redevelopment can be detrimental to the Conservation Area, while comprehensive schemes can add significant value.