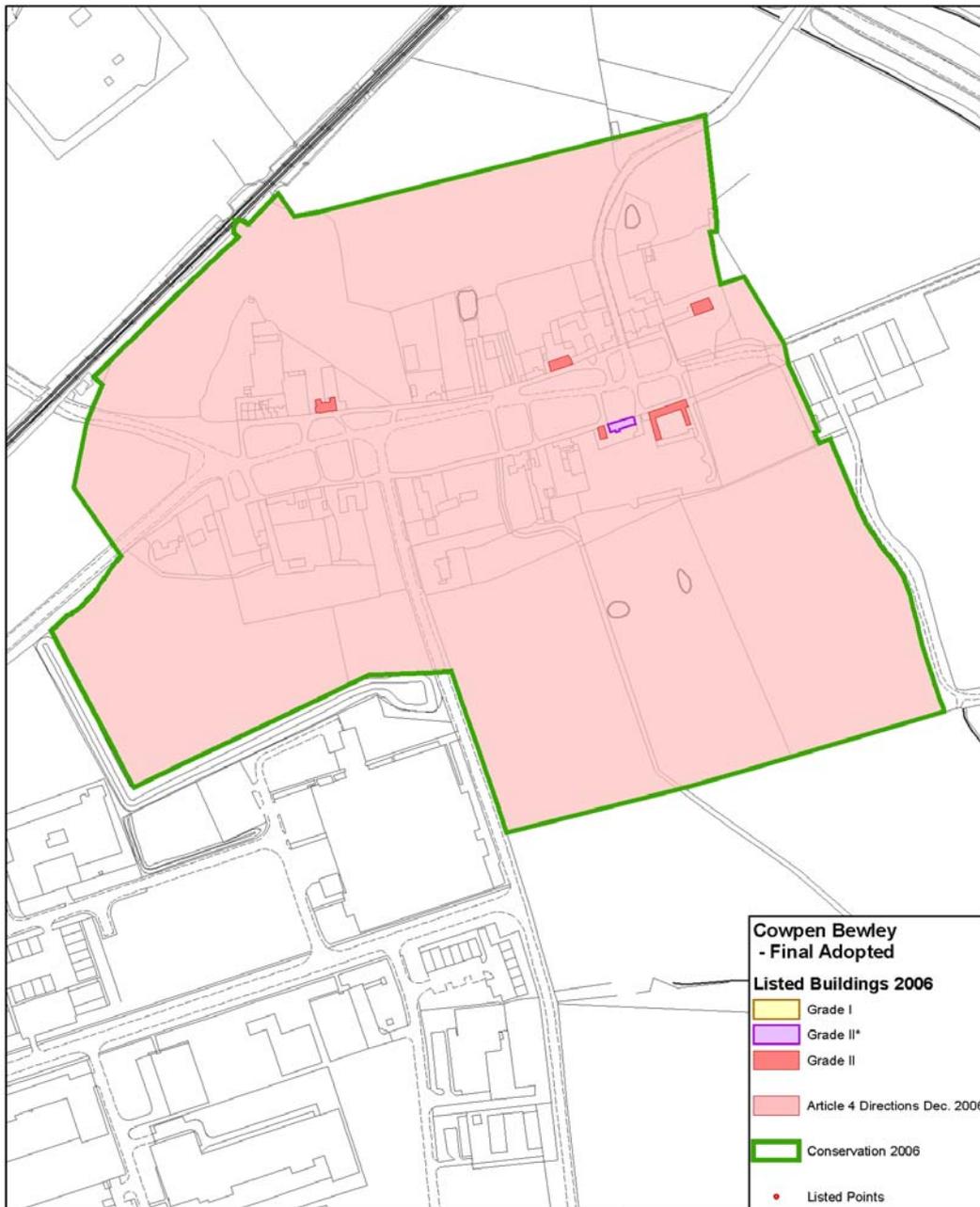


Chapter CO3:

Cowpen Bewley

**Conservation
Area Appraisal**

Plan of Cowpen Bewley Street Conservation Area showing listed buildings and areas covered by Article 4 Directions



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| <p>Title Conservation Areas</p> | <p>Date December 2006</p> | <p>Scale N.T.S.</p> |

The General Overview of Cowpen Bewley Conservation Area

The medieval village of Cowpen Bewley was one part of the large estate of Beaulieu, a moated house serving as an administrative centre for Durham Priory. The other part of the estate was Newton Bewley to the north. Both Cowpen and Newton take the second part of their names from this estate.

Salt has been excavated in the Billingham area since ancient times and was arguably the first chemical industry in the district. Cowpen - pronounced "coopen" - is thought to derive from a Viking word Kupa meaning a cup-like depression which may have been caused by some previous salt pans in the area.

The appearance of the village is very organised and deliberate, as the village was planned and laid out in the 12th century following the Norman Conquest. The plan, comprising two rows of properties either side of a village Green with tofts and fields behind the rows, was the usual way in which the Normans organised settlements and similar plans can be seen throughout north-east England. Although the layout has been preserved, the current buildings however are from the 17th Century onwards.



Cowpen Bewley

The village mainly consists of residential properties and some farm buildings still in use, and there is a pub towards the Western end, although there are no shops or other service provision within the village. The former schoolhouse remains, however this is now in use as a residential dwelling

The Cowpen Bewley Conservation Area was designated in June 1977 for its well-preserved medieval layout, historic significance and pleasant village character. The village Green is registered as common land under the provisions of the Commons Registration Act 1965.

Justification for Conservation Area Status

The village of Cowpen Bewley is representative of a once-common Durham rural settlement type whose basic plan consists simply of two rows of farms and cottages flanking a central green. The particular interest of Cowpen Bewley is that it offers an opportunity - unique in the Borough - to answer some of the questions surrounding the development of settlement in the medieval period.

Cowpen Bewley was just one part of the wider Billingham area that was granted to the Monks of St Cuthbert in the 9th Century. This was later confirmed by King William I in the 11th Century. The Prior of Durham was the Lord of Billingham for some 500 years from 1092. His court house was at Beaulieu, now known as Low Grange Farm.

Cowpen Bewley has changed little during 800 years: the houses stand on much the same sites as they did in Norman times and the long narrow fields behind them still retain the outline of the peasants tofts or personal holdings.



Cowpen Bewley has changed little over the years

However there are some noticeable gaps in the once-continuous frontages facing the central green. This is most likely due to a population migration in the 17th Century when the salt industry fell in to decline, and again in the 19th Century following an agricultural decline.

The present village layout is thought to have come into being in the 12th century. It shares with other Durham villages the planned form of a

long rectangular common grazing ground, or Green bordered on at least two sides by farmsteads and cottages, with narrow tofts or gardens behind and the strips of the open field farming system beyond. These fields would have been divided into narrow strips which would have been farmed by villagers; the strips can still be identified by the 'rigg and furrow' undulations in the land.

The buildings in Cowpen Bewley include several interesting and varied farm buildings with brick boundary walls, maintaining the sense of enclosure, which is so important to the character of the village. There are 6 buildings grade II listed for their local and historic interest within the village, and Ivy Cottage which is grade II * listed for its special interest.

Character Areas and Features of Interest

Village Farm

Is a typical 18th century farm building of the area. It is divided into unequal lengths by the chimneys. These represent the 'low' house and the 'high' house. The smaller 'low' house was used as accommodation for servants and storage while the 'high' house was the living area for the family. The door in the middle of the 'high' house is a later insertion but the door into the 'low' house would have been the original entrance.

Little Marsh Cottage

Little Marsh cottage is also a 18th century farmhouse with a low building making a link between the farm house and the barn. This is a replacement of an earlier part of the structure. There is a small square window still visible; this is known as a 'fire window' and would have provided light into an 'Inglenook' fireplace which would have extended four or five feet into the room.

Ivy House

Ivy House is a grade II * listed 17th century farmhouse which has an associated grade II listed hayloft. It is the oldest surviving building in Cowpen Bewley. Built of small local brick it has brick decoration at first floor and eaves level. The present main door into the building is a later insertion and the original entrance was, again into the 'low' house. This can be seen by the brick arches over the doors and windows which are not present above the main entrance. Both properties were original owned by ICI and were abandoned in the 1970's and fell into disrepair. In 1995 the building was sold to the Cleveland Buildings Preservation Trust and the building was extensively repaired and refurbished and was then sold as a private dwelling in 1998.

Field Patterns

Towards the South of the village remains of the Medieval Open Fields can be seen on both sides of the road. The characteristic corrugations of 'ridge and furrow' are clearly visible. Each of these ridges is one strip, which was held by a farmer. They were created by continually turning the soil to the centre as the strips were ploughed which improved drainage. The curved shape of each ridge was created by the farmer beginning to turn his team of oxen early before coming back down the strip.

Boundary Review

The existing boundary includes the settlement around the Green, the buildings enclosing the Green and the gardens and farmyards to the rear of the buildings, following existing field boundary definitions.

The boundary follows the original settlement pattern and includes the toft areas and field boundaries associated with the properties fronting the Green. Consequently the boundary is logical in terms of the historic settlement pattern of the area and is inclusive almost the entire village.

It is essential that the whole village remains within the Conservation Area to ensure this settlement pattern can be conserved, the use of article four directions has also help to protect the rural character of the associated buildings.

The boundary is quite identifiable on the ground and is considered to be a coherent boundary in terms of the primary justification for designation of the Conservation Area. It is therefore not considered necessary to amend the boundary at this time.

Important Views/Townscapes

Perhaps the most important views into the village are from the main approach from Wolviston Back Lane into the Western Edge, the Eastern approach from Marsh Lane and the Southern approach road. Good views can be obtained into the village from all the approach roads.

The entire village is significant in terms of its overall landscape and townscape value as a good example of a medieval village layout pattern.

Conservation Area Character Visual Study

The general built environment within the village is in good condition with no buildings in disrepair. Much of the Medieval settlement pattern of Cowpen Bewley has survived intact. There are however a number of conspicuous gaps in the originally continuous building frontages facing The Green. This is as a result of depopulation following the decline of the Salt industry in the seventeenth century and the agricultural decline of the nineteenth century. However these are no an integral part of the village form and modern infill development would not return the village to its original built form.

Development that deviates from the original medieval form of the village should be avoided in order to preserve the medieval settlement pattern.



Modest design and tight enclosure

Visually the character of Cowpen Bewley today is dominated by the layout of the settlement and the central Green, but is complimented by the single and two storey cottages and farm buildings in the vernacular style. The predominant use of locally manufactured

bricks together with clay pantile roofs also contributes to the village character. Welsh slate partly replaced pantile in the Victorian period and have weathered

well although more recent materials such as asbestos roof tiles have not matured well and should be discouraged as are not sympathetic to the historic environment and traditional building styles.

The attractive grass undulations of the village green, transversed by a number of farm tracks and footpaths is an essential and most attractive part of the character of Cowpen Bewley.

This character is further enhanced by a number of well spaced trees. A number of mature hedgerows, occasionally interspersed with young and mature trees form attractive boundaries to properties and help create a sense of enclosure and seclusion within the village.

There is a small terrace of 6 properties towards the Western end of the village, woodbine cottages. These are simple rendered cottages however their form is unique in terms of the character of the village.

“The Three Horseshoes” public house located towards Western edge of the village has an informal beer garden area to the front. As the only public building within the village this building obviously makes a major contribution to the use of the village. This is also the only example of commercial signage within the village, which has been sympathetically carried out to respect the historic and rural location.

Positive Aspects

Cowpen Bewley is considered to be an excellent example of a “Green” village and worthy of conservation. There is a need for sympathetic treatment of any new development as well as for works carried out to the existing fabric.

The character of Cowpen Bewley stems from its settlement pattern, the single and two storey cottages and farm buildings in the local building style. Of equal importance is the use of locally manufactured bricks, together with clay pantiles. Most of the buildings are in very good condition and repair and the village retains its rural charm.

The remaining buildings, including several interesting and varied farm buildings and brick boundary walls, maintain the sense of enclosure so important to the character of the village.

There are 6 listed buildings of local architectural or historic interest within the Conservation Area, and one grade II * listed building Ivy Cottage, which has been the subject to a renovation project. These add to the character of the space and form attractive building groups within the Conservation Area.

Negative Aspects

The use of UPVc for windows is prevalent at the Western Edge of the Village and this has somewhat detracted from the appearance of the Conservation Area. The use of modern materials such as UPVc for guttering should be avoided as minor modern alterations can have a cumulative negative impact on character.

Neutral Aspects

Where outbuildings have been retained careful consideration will be given to their future, they do form an integral part of the character of the area.

There is modern property to the Western edge of the village, although this does not detract from the village character it is not entirely in keeping with village style. It has large block paving to the front and shouldn't have a front garden at all to be in keeping with the tradition of buildings fronting directly on to the Green. It also has a large associated garage, which should be located to the rear of the house in line with the traditional development pattern of the village.

Development Opportunity Sites

The character of Cowpen Bewley Conservation Area lies within its surviving medieval village layout. In order to preserve this form development has been limited and there is little scope for development.

There are a number of outbuildings within the village that have been successfully converted to residential use however any intensification of development should be restricted to existing outbuildings of historic interest to protect the character of the Conservation Area.

There are a number of gap sites within the building line on to the Green which would likely have been occupied by a dwelling. However as part of the ongoing evolution of the village, these now form part of the character of the area and should be retained as gap sites.

Notwithstanding the provisions of PPG3, infilling and backland development would be inappropriate, as such development would alter the original medieval layout.

Conservation Area Character and Design Analysis

Urban Form and Land Use

The appearance of the Conservation Area is very organised with the village retaining its 12th Century plan form comprising two rows of properties either side of a central village Green. There is a very distinct building line which stems from its settlement pattern, and the single and two storey cottages and farm buildings in the local building style. Buildings tend to be of simple styling and detailing and rural in appearance. Of equal importance in terms of the characteristics of Cowpen Bewley is the use of locally-manufactured materials.

Although agricultural land has been lost to the extension of Billingham and Cowpen Lane industrial estate, farming continues as an activity within the village. The farms have been rationalised and there is now only one large farm unit. Recent substantial new agricultural buildings have been developed, principally to the east of the village. However much of the village is now a commuter residential village.

Where outbuildings have been retained careful consideration will be given to their future, as they form an integral part of the character of the area. Re-use and conversion of rural buildings should ensure that their appearance, size and detailing remain substantially unaltered and retain their rural characteristics. The use of simple detailing and traditional materials will be encouraged.

Roofs

The dominant roof style within the village is gable-ended pitched roofs in a mixture of Welsh slate and pantile, although there are some asbestos roofing materials. Pantile was introduced in the 18th Century to replace thatch, evidence of which can be seen by the roof pitches.

Double width chimneys with small decorative pots are present on the majority of buildings, and many original pots remain. This chimney pattern forms an attractive skyline in the village and should be retained even if no longer in use. The reduction in height and removal of chimney pots should be discouraged even when alternative methods of fuel are in use.

Walls

Most of the properties within the village are built from local handmade brick and some render is also present. As a general rule the longer, coarser and flatter bricks are older, and this unification of brickwork creates a strong vernacular. There was a bricks works in the vicinity of the village which would have supplied the prominent building material.

Windows

There are a variety of window styles within the village mainly four or 6 pane, Victorian style sashes and some modern casements. These windows feature thin frames and glazing bars for the maximum glass area within the aperture.

UPVc has been introduced into the village in certain properties, which has altered the original window styles and form. It is considered that with the cooperation of owners this could be avoided.

The original style of window would have been Yorkshire horizontal sliding sash, also an appropriate style for any future work.

Doors

There are various door styles within the Conservation Area Doors. However these are mainly solid wood panelled doors reasonably traditional in terms of colour and design.

Enclosure and Gardens

The agricultural properties of the village have retained their boundary walls keeping the distinct building line intact and this should be retained. Most of the properties within the village front on the Green itself and very few front gardens are present. There is a mixture of traditional and modern brick wall boundaries to properties, in varying heights, age and type of brick.

Entrances to properties in the walls are wide, featuring gates of varying styles and materials from wrought iron to timber, however all are constructed in some variation of post and rail, allowing views through them.

A number of mature hedgerows, occasionally interspersed with young and mature trees form attractive boundaries to properties and help create a sense of enclosure and seclusion within the village. It also helps serve to screen the longer-distance views of the industrial complex to the east and south.

Vegetation

There is limited planting on the green with only approximately eleven trees – at odds with the size of the Green. Some of these are mature which contributes to the aesthetics of the streetscape and add greatly to the character of the Conservation Area, but are not excessive as to mask the built form or damage archaeologically sensitive areas.

The green itself is grassed and undulating which is in reasonable order, this is quite surprising considering the close proximity to dwellings and the number of vehicles which frequent the village.

Roads and Footpaths

A road runs through the centre of the Green and there can be seen the remains of smaller roads in front of the properties. These are the original access tracks to the farms of the village. The road through the centre has been created for the convenience of motor vehicles. All of the roads are surfaced in tarmac with some of the side roads and access tracks requiring repair.

Signage and Street Furniture

Signage and street furniture is haphazard and adopts numerous styles and sizes as modernisation has occurred across different time. This does not detract from the character though, as the quantity of street furniture is low. There are numerous examples in need of repair.

Some telegraph poles have interesting decorative tops with incorporated street lighting which results in minimal polage.

The only commercial signage within the village can be found at “The Three Horseshoes pub” and this has been sympathetically designed to fit well in the rural location. However modern highway signs are



Variety in street furniture

obtrusive and over-sized for the type of road.

“Article 4 Directions”

In some of the most sensitive parts of Cowpen Bewley 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 Cowpen Bewley 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, Cowpen Bewley 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, Cowpen Bewley Conservation Area would also benefit from attention to some more localised issues, as set out below;

- **Medium term**
 - Work within the Council to secure the introduction of more coordinated street furniture, including the road signs.
 - Work within the Council and with residents to develop a landscape plan for the Green to improve it aesthetically, as well as to emphasise its importance.
 - Encourage owners to plant more trees and hedges in appropriate places.