

Parkgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal

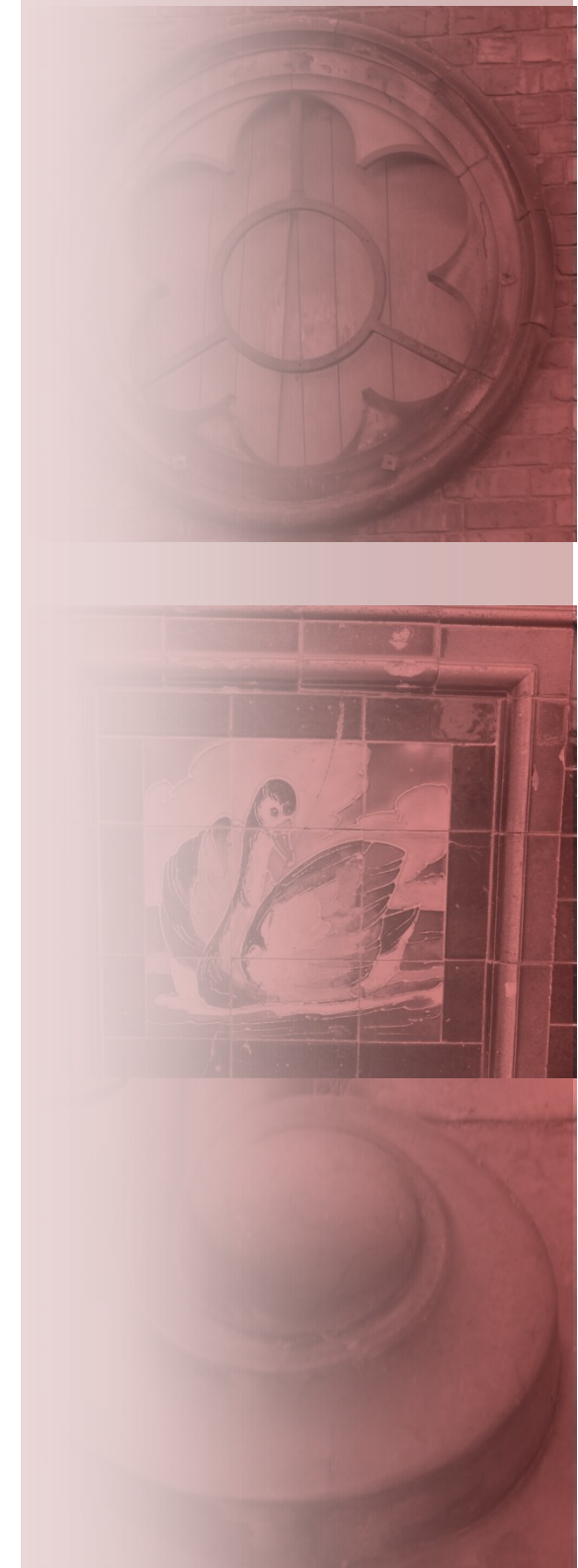
For Darlington Borough Council

April 2015



Archaeo-Environment Ltd
Marian Cottage
Lartington
Barnard Castle
County Durham
DL12 9BP

Tel/Fax: (01833) 650573
Email: info@aenvironment.co.uk
Web: www.aenvironment.co.uk



Summary of special interest

It is the intention of the Darlington Borough Council to designate the Parkgate area of Darlington as a conservation area. This report assesses those features and qualities, which give Parkgate its own special interest and which can contribute towards justifying its designation. This interest includes the following:

- Parkgate is historically significant in the early development of Darlington and represents an important gateway into the town. The public consultation exercise also flagged up that the local community were interested in the early industry of the area and its links with the early railway.*
- It has a high concentration of late Victorian and Edwardian buildings of historic and architectural merit which form its unique character and demonstrate its phases of development, including three Grade II listed buildings – the Civic Theatre, St Hilda’s Church and St. John’s Church. The two churches terminate the east and west ends of the conservation area.*
- Small details which lend character to the area include – glazed tiles, steps to bridge differing ground levels, railings, Edwardian shop fronts, elegant datestones in an Art Nouveau style, grand doorways, scoria blocks, a variety of gable shapes often ornamented with ball finials and a variety of window shapes including round windows, demi-lunettes, and Venetian windows.*
- The predominant building material is brick (sometimes glazed) with stone detailing and Welsh slate to roofs, although there is an occasional survival of pantile.*
- An altered historic street pattern overlaid with Victorian and Edwardian architecture, including original narrow tannery lanes and the route of trams and trolleybuses into Darlington town centre.*
- Landmark features and important views, including the striking St John’s Church above the double railway bridge which reflects the railway development and history of the area; views to St. Cuthbert’s in the town centre and views towards Bank Top Station’s clock tower.*
- Fragments of a former tannery on the land behind Borough Road and Parkgate which may hold new historically important information on the industry and almost certainly includes land of archaeological potential relating to this industry beneath the vacant plot next to the cricketers.*
- The vitality of the area resulting from the number of well used shops, pubs, cafés and restaurants, as well as the nursery, churches and theatre and adjacent residential community.*

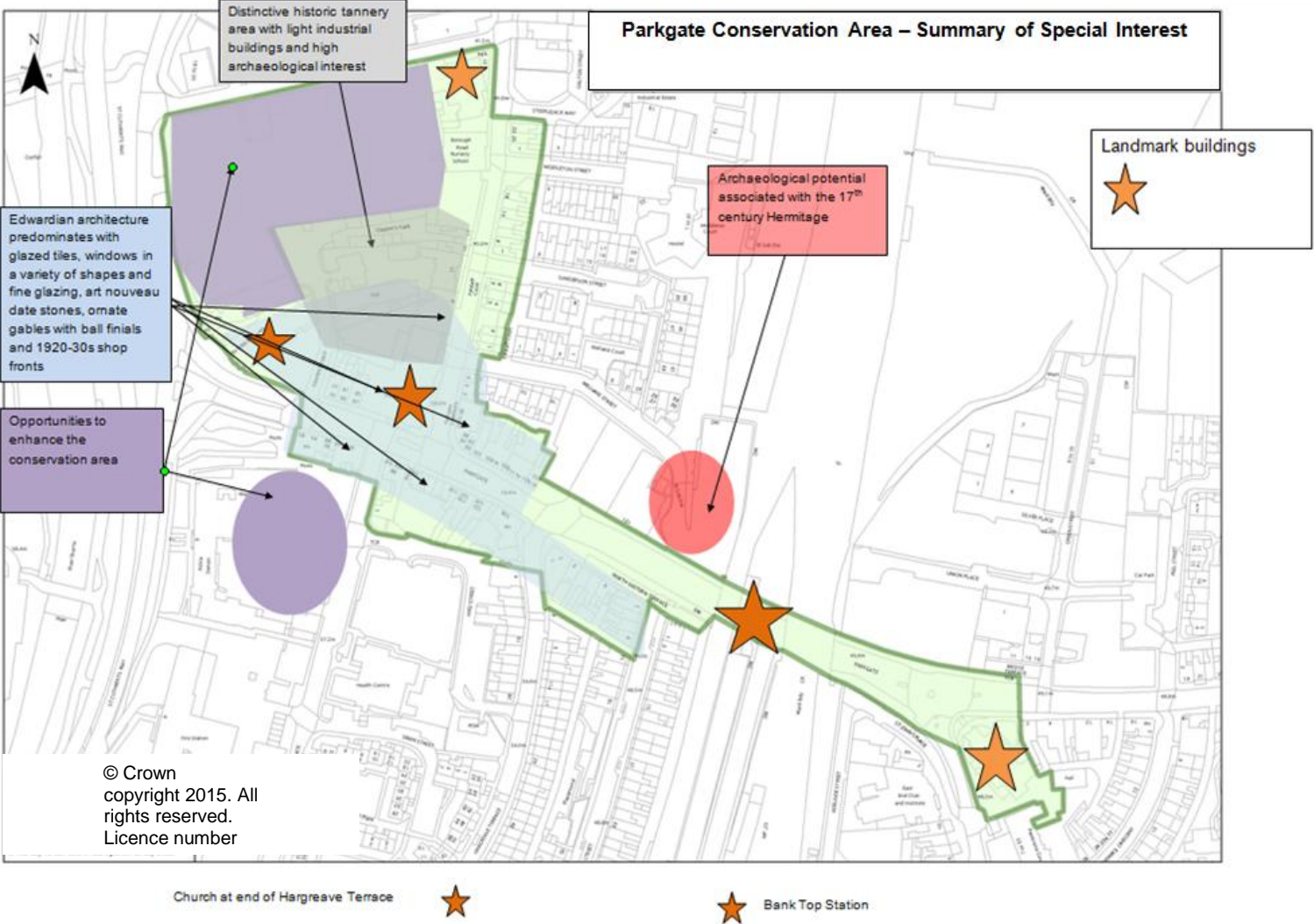


Figure 1. A summary of the essential character of Parkgate conservation area

Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks go to Tim Crawshaw and Heather Nelson for commissioning this work on behalf of Darlington Borough Council and to Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo for providing historic photographs. This report includes comments received after a consultation event and we acknowledge the constructive comments made by local residents and businesses.

Report author: Caroline Hardie, Archaeo-Environment Ltd. Draft for consultation produced in 2013. Final version produced in April 2015 after public consultation.

Conservation area status should “make the designated area and its environs a more desirable and interesting place for those who live there and for visitors to enjoy through cultural and recreational activities”. Response from the consultation event (24.2.15) on the creation of Parkgate conservation area.

CONTENTS

Summary of special interest	2
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction and planning policy context	7
Location and landscape context	9
Parkgate's historic development	11
The character of Parkgate:	15
Spatial analysis	15
Key views, vistas and landmarks	18
Architectural interest	23
Positive contributors:	27
Doors	27
Windows	28
Gables	28
Details	29
Public realm	29
Buildings of Local Interest	30

Archaeological interest	36
Assessment of condition	38
Management proposals	39
Opportunities for change	41
Bibliography	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	A summary of the essential character of the Parkgate conservation area
Figure 2	Parkgate conservation area
Figure 3	The location of listed buildings in the Parkgate conservation area and beyond
Figure 4	John Wood's map of c.1821
Figure 5	The Ordnance Survey 1 st edition map 1856-65
Figure 6	The Ordnance Survey 2 nd edition map 1894-99
Figure 7	Key views in and out of the conservation area
Figure 8	1 st ed OS map dating to 1856-65 showing the extent of tannery buildings and glue manufactory
Figure 9	Areas of potential archaeological interest
Figure 10	Open spaces where land use might alter or sites be redeveloped where the design should seek to sustain and enhance the significance of the conservation area even if outside the designated area

Introduction and planning policy context

It is the intention of the Darlington Borough Council to designate the Parkgate area of Darlington as a conservation area. Conservation areas are places where buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of special quality and interest. These places are protected under the provision of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which defines them as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. There are over 8000 conservation areas in England¹ of which 16 are in the Borough of Darlington including four in the town itself. Conservation areas give broader protection than listing individual buildings as all features whether listed or otherwise, within the area, are recognised as part of its character. Research by central and local government has noted the strong links between living and working in well managed historic places and a good quality of life and a strong economy.² Recent research by the London School of Economics³ has shown that people value living in conservation areas; it is therefore important to protect them and ensure that decisions about their future are based on sound information and an understanding of their origins and value.

Conservation area designation introduces controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties. However, owners of residential properties generally consider these controls are beneficial because they also sustain, and/or enhance, the value of property within it. These controls include:

- the requirement in legislation and national planning policies to preserve and enhance;
- local planning policies which pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of the area
- control over demolition of unlisted buildings through the planning process
- control over works to trees

¹ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/conservation-areas/> [accessed 12.11.13]

² Arup 2005, 49

³ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/social-and-economic-research/value-conservation-areas/> [accessed 12.11.13]

- fewer types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent
- restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights).

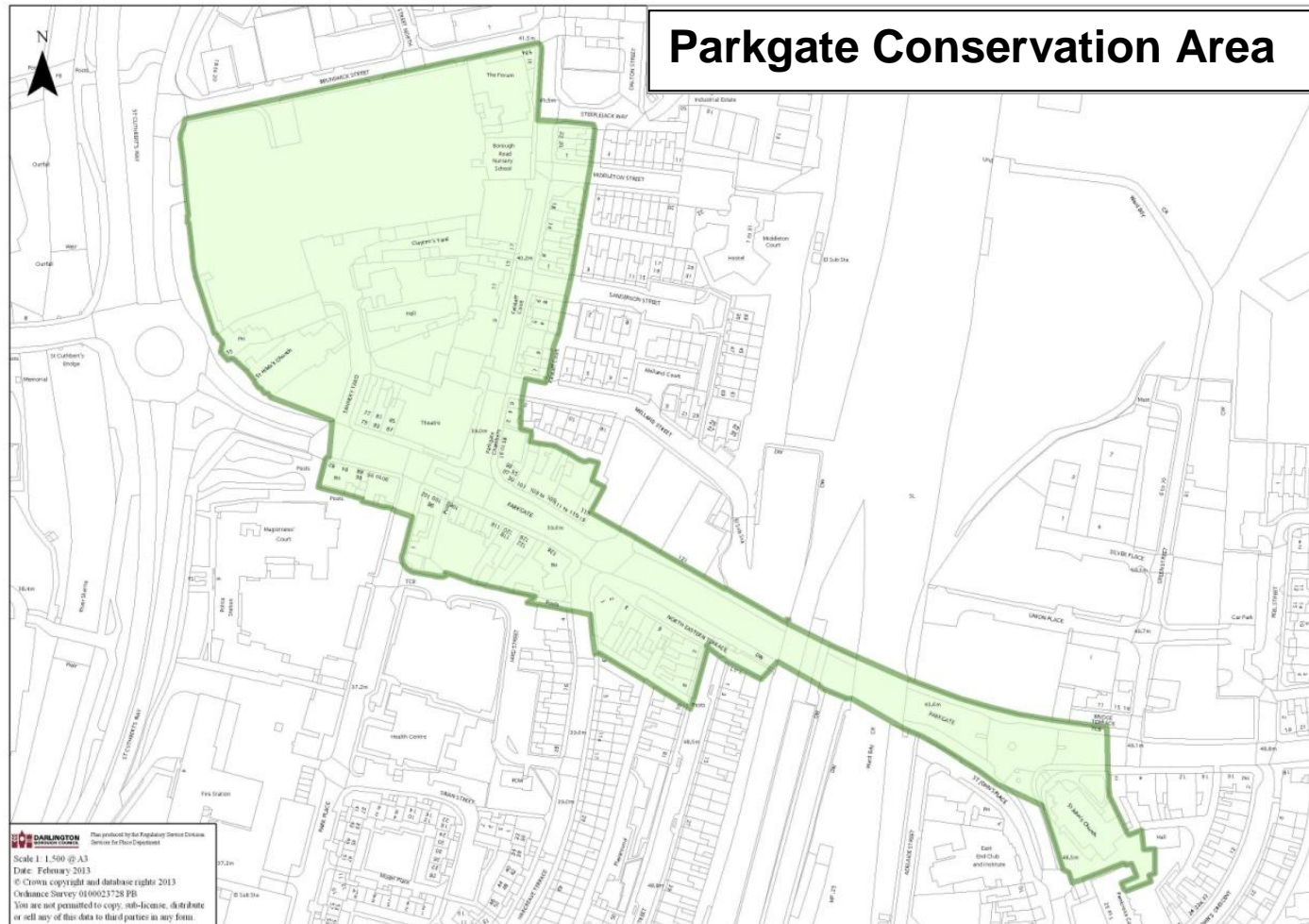
This report assesses those features and qualities, which give Parkgate its own special interest and which can contribute towards justifying its designation. This special interest does not come from the quality of its buildings alone. 'The historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries; characteristic building and paving materials; a particular 'mix' of building uses; public and private spaces, such as gardens, parks and greens; and trees and street furniture, which contribute to particular views - all these and more make up the familiar local scene'.⁴ It aims to give a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine planning applications and to raise awareness of its special character. However, no appraisal can ever be entirely comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space in Parkgate, should not imply that it is of no interest.



Plate 1. Parkgate from the back streets where the roofscapes can usually be best appreciated

⁴ What is a Conservation Area? On the English Heritage web site <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.00100200800g008>

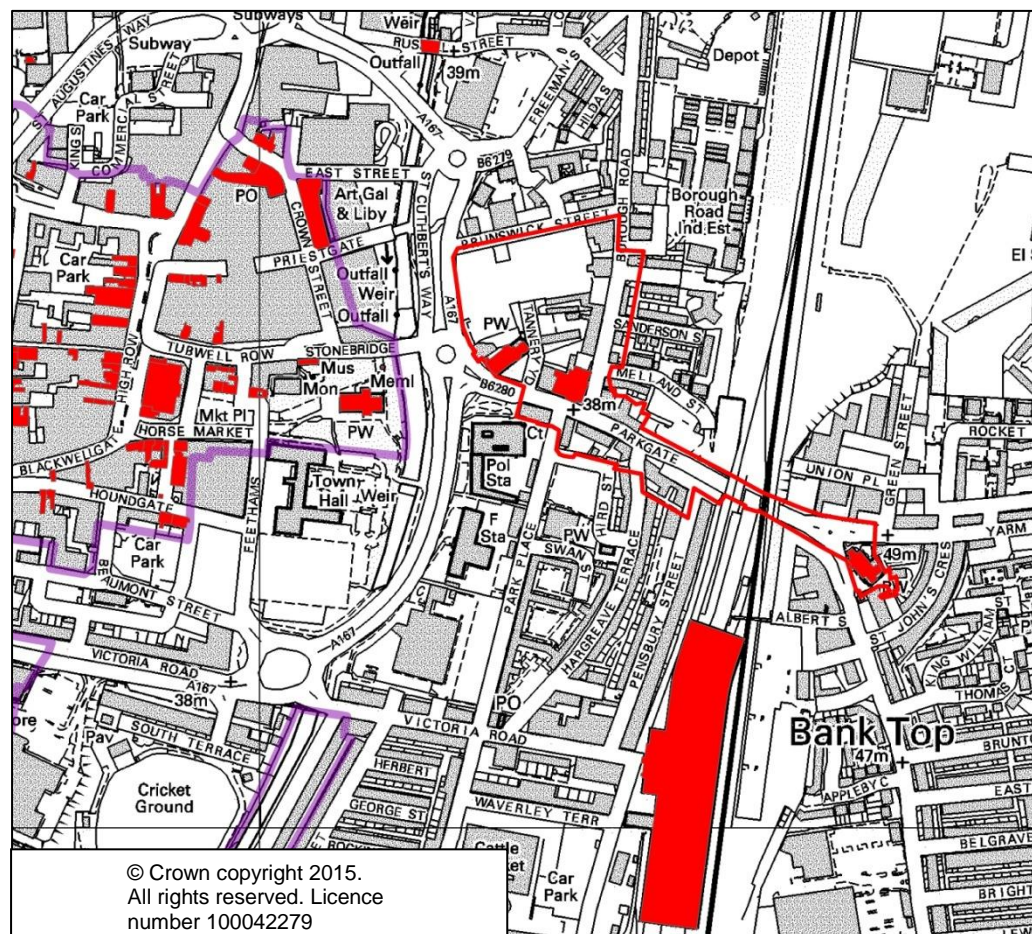
Location and landscape context



Darlington is located in the heart of the North East region, approximately mid-way between Newcastle and York. It is a market and industrial town dating from at least the eleventh century.

Figure 2. Parkgate conservation area

Parkgate conservation area is an important part of Darlington's Town Centre Fringe, located just a few hundred metres east of the town centre across the inner ring road and the River Skerne. It functions as a major route into Darlington and a secondary shopping area. Running from St Hilda's Church and the inner ring road



to St John’s Church and the railway line to the east, the conservation area encompasses Brunswick Street, Borough Road and Parkgate. It includes three listed buildings, all grade II, of which two (The Civic Theatre and St. John’s Church, occupy prominent positions in the streetscape. Beyond the conservation area, Bank Top Station, another listed building (grade II*) is a prominent skyline feature, but the bulk of listed buildings are located in the town centre which is the core of medieval and later Darlington.

Figure 3. The location of listed buildings within Parkgate conservation area and beyond

Parkgate's historic development

From an early date, Parkgate was an important arterial route heading towards Yarm and Stockton. Parkgate (and Park Lane to the south) takes its name from the Bishop's Park which once occupied the land south of Parkgate Road and extended between the Skerne and the site of Bank Top Station possibly as early as the 12th century. Such parkland would have been retained as open space suitable for hunting, but also let to tenants as meadow and pasture (Cookson 2003, 24). The park was later divided into the Low Park and the High Park and by the early 19th century consisted of hedge-lined enclosed fields (OS 1st ed 1860).



Plate 2. Darlington from the south east across the Bishop's Park in 1776 (Samuel Wilkinson). The Parkgate area was still predominantly rural with hedge-lined fields. This viewpoint now correlates with land between Pensbury Street and Hargreave Terrace and is no longer possible.

Outside the park, the medieval town was largely located on the east side of the Skerne, but the town pinfold was located on the east bank of the Skerne (Cookson 2003, 12). The land north of the Bishop's Park (within the proposed conservation area) was developed from the 16th century for the leather industry; a smelly polluting activity that merited keeping some distance from the rest of the town. The tanning industry managed to retain a foothold into the 20th

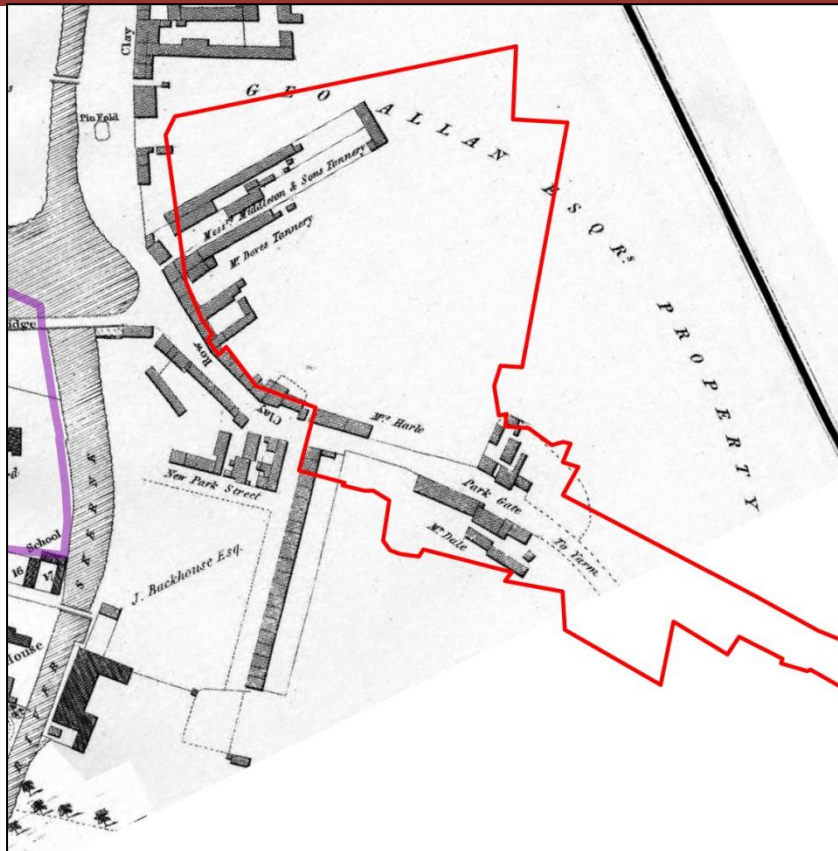
century and a small group of tannery buildings (now listed) can still be found at the appropriately named Tannery Yard.

Records show that in the 17th century, there were two other buildings located in the area; a house known as the Hermitage and an adjoining horse mill. The mill was converted into shops in the mid 18th century, but the road was still referred to as ‘the hermitage cawsey’ and the area referred to as the Hermitage in the 18th century was gradually renamed Bank Top (Cookson 2003, 50-1).

Then and now...



Plate 3. View across the Park towards St. Cuthbert's. Left: The backs of the houses representing the early expansion of Parkgate (1822-40 George Richardson). Right: the demolition in the 1960s and subsequent redevelopment has destroyed much historic character and so this area is immediately outside the proposed conservation area. However future developments here should enhance the conservation area.



The west end of Parkgate was known as Clay Row by the 15th century (Cookson 2003, 124) and it is easy to see why this name seemed appropriate from the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the 1860s (see fig 4) which shows that much of the land north of Parkgate consisted of clay pits and brick and tiles works. There are records of bricks being made in the 'Park' in 1763, (Cookson 2003, 127) but it is not clear how much further back in time brick making took place. The medieval buildings were almost certainly made of timber and stone or plaster, but there is evidence that some buildings were being constructed of brick in the 17th century (ibid). However by 1800 nearly all new buildings were constructed in brick with tile roofs apart from high status ones and so the 19th century must have been the peak of brick manufacturing around Clay Row. An efficient system of exploitation was underway in the area at this time, whereby the land was quarried for its clay to make bricks and once the ground was quarried out it was developed for worker's terraced housing.

Figure 4. John Wood's map of about 1821 or shortly later showing the gradual development of Parkgate and Clay Row along the street front with the tanneries occupying a much larger area. The Low Park however was under development with Park Street and what was then called New Park Street, but would be renamed Church Street. Park Street would be demolished in 1935 as it was considered unfit for human habitation.

The number of houses in Darlington doubled between 1821 and 1841 but at this time, most of that development was within the medieval boundaries of the town and Parkgate development was still restricted to the street front along Clay Row and sporadically along Parkgate. This soon changed as a result of the expansion of the railway. The area around Bank Top Station grew into a railway colony and St John's Church was built to cope with the increasing demand on St Cuthbert's Church in the Town Centre. New housing was built along Brunswick Street but much was let out as individual rooms and it became associated with poverty by the late 19th century (Cookson 2003, 74). In 1888, an extensive fire destroyed one of the tanneries nearby and the tanning industry began to decline soon after.

Then and now...

Plate 4. The construction of the ring road removed much of historic and architectural interest from the town and altered the density of building stock and the historic street pattern. The ring road has also served to divorce Parkgate from the town centre. Date of photographs 1961 (left) and 2015 (right).

This area must have been a hive of activity in the opening years of the 20th century with the road widening in 1899 (Cookson 2003, 86), the provision of street lighting and a power station in 1901 (ibid 97), the Fire Station and St. Hilda's Clergy House construction in 1904, St Hilda's Club in 1906, the opening of the theatre and the Greyhound Inn opposite in 1907 and the construction of no.s 118-122 Parkgate (as they are known today) in 1908. The most dramatic change however was the demolition of much of Clay Row, nearly all of Brunswick Street and most of the remaining tannery industry buildings in the 1960s to make way for the new inner ring road and clear slum condition housing.

THE CHARACTER OF PARKGATE

Spatial analysis

Parkgate was not developed fully until the late 19th century and many of the more notable buildings date to the late 19th/ early 20th centuries. The street pattern was not therefore dictated by medieval burgage plots, but was based around a number of fixed points; namely the Skerne, the outline of the Bishop's Park, the main road to Yarm (Parkgate), the existing tannery buildings and, latterly, the railway. The tannery buildings, being earlier, appeared to have adopted a familiar medieval type layout of long thin plots and this would dictate the plan form of the street pattern around it. In the 19th century, much of the land was sold off in one or two plots and this too dictated the plan form of new development.⁵

Then and now...



Plate 5. This group of buildings around the Civic Theatre is remarkably intact and not much altered since 1921 when the first photograph was taken

⁵ Copies of the plans for some of the plots behind Clay Row are available from Pictures in Print available at <http://lewis.dur.ac.uk/pip/index.html>

The large demolition events associated with the fire of the 1880s, the demolition of Clay Row and much of Brunswick Street in the 1960s and the widening of Parkgate have already altered much of this 19th century street pattern. Only Hargreave Street has retained its distinctive curved form; its line dictated by the hedgerow that formed the boundary between High Park Field and Low Park Field.

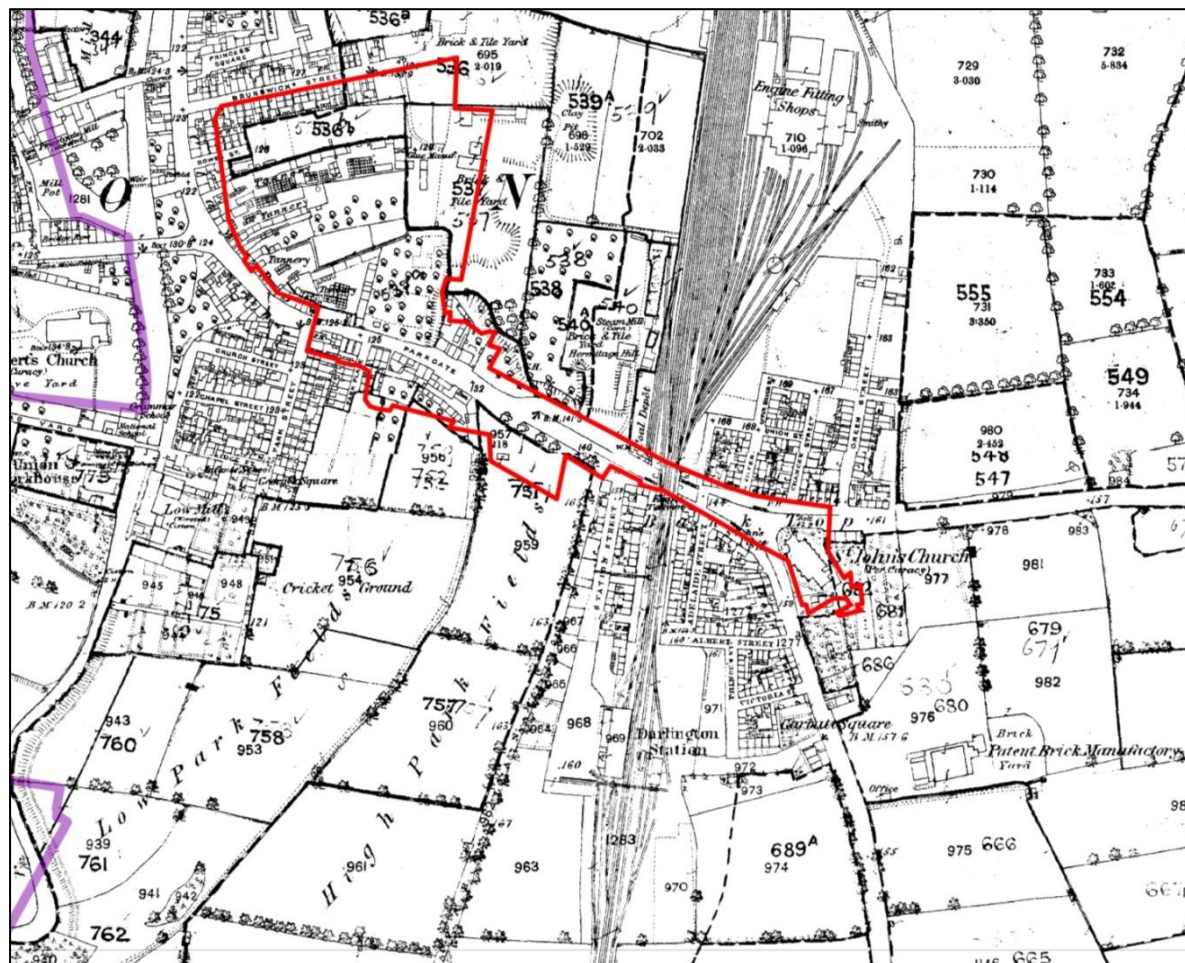


Figure 5. OS 1st edition map of the 1856-65 showing clusters of development around the railway, along Parkgate and around Park Place. The map also shows to what extent orchards were valued in back plots, but which would disappear in the next thirty years. (The red outline is the conservation area and the purple outline is the adjacent town centre conservation area).

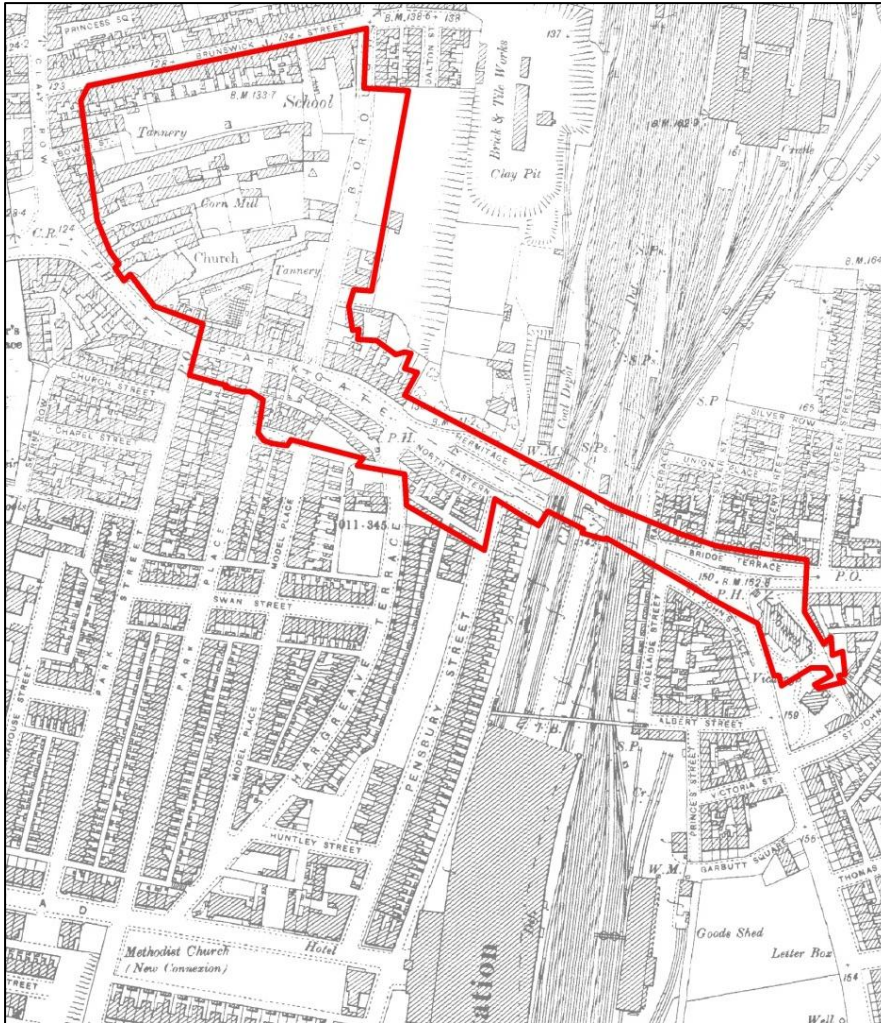


Figure 6. The 2nd ed OS map was published in the 1890s and shows the extent of development around Parkgate since the 1860s. The red outline is the conservation area).

Key views, vistas and landmarks

Landmark buildings which contribute to the historic skyline and provide high quality features at the edges of the character area are also significant and should be considered as part of the conservation area's setting where they are outside the boundary. St Hilda's Church was modestly funded, but still managed to achieve a 'grand effect' due to its scale and height (listed building description) providing a terminus to Parkgate and a welcome relief from the soulless ring road. It was designed by J.L. Pearson and built in 1887; its height and long narrow windows were dictated by the need for natural lighting despite being hemmed in by adjacent tall buildings (Flynn 1983, p1116). However today the church is surrounded by vacant plots which if developed, will have the potential to enhance or detract from the church's architecture and surviving fine railings. Dating to just six years earlier, Brunswick Board School, now the Forum, has a prominent position on the corner of Brunswick Road and Borough Road. It is also the only building of historic or architectural interest left on Brunswick Road. Its pitched roofs, chimneys and the school bell lantern on its later wing all add interest to a roofscape that has lost much in the last half century.



Plate 6. Landmark buildings in or near the conservation area which provide prominent architectural features and roofscapes worthy of conservation. (Left to right: St John's; St. Cuthbert's (outside the conservation area); St Hilda's, Bank Top Station (outside the conservation area) and the Civic Theatre

St Cuthbert's Church draws the eye down Parkgate and so the origins of this road as a main route into the historic town is apparent. However the proliferation of traffic lights and highway signage combined with streaming traffic all serve to distract from this view and create a physical barrier between the town centre and Parkgate. At the other end of Parkgate, the railway bridge with its brightly coloured crests once terminated views out of the conservation area to the east, but failed to exclude the views of St John's on its elevated position which overlooks the

character area. However the position of the railway bridge in a cutting means that it is still possible to stand east of the bridge on higher ground and look down towards St. Cuthbert's – the remnants of a popular viewpoint in the 18th and 19th centuries (see plate 7).

Then and now...

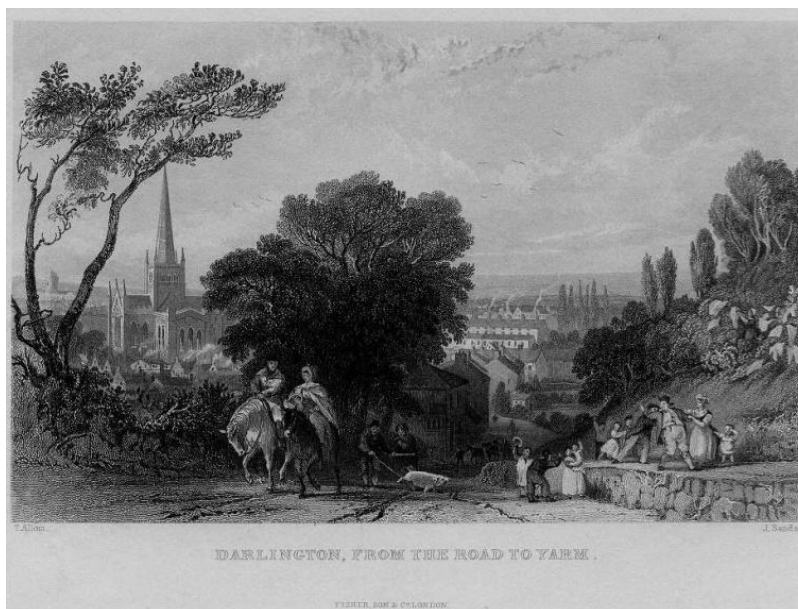


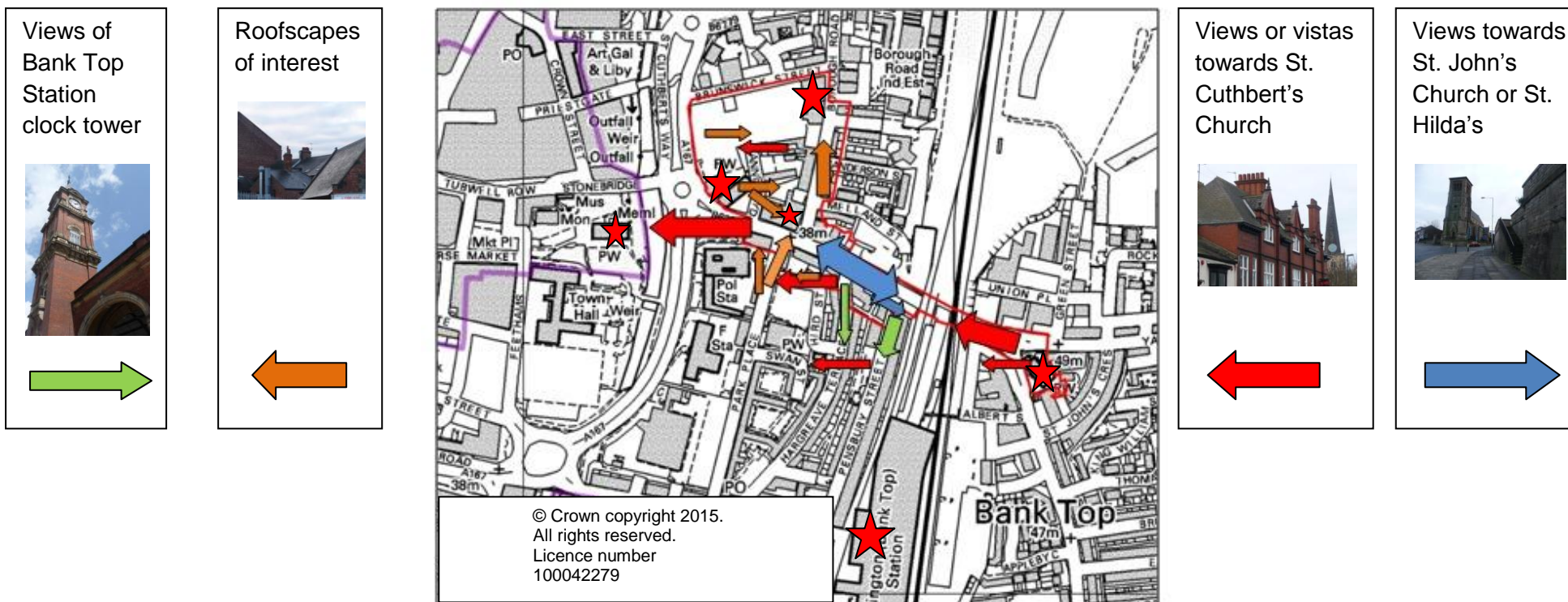
Plate 7. Left: Darlington from the Road to Yarm dating to 1835 by Thomas Alom. Right: Darlington from the road to Yarm 2013. The rise on ground levels on the right side of the road can be seen in both pictures and the different solutions to retaining the bank. The introduction of the railway and then of the motor car are the most significant changes to this landscape.

Sadly, the recent construction of the Business Central Building has now created a new terminus to the key view from the town centre to the west. This has adversely affected the appreciation of views of the rooftops including that of the Civic Theatre and its disproportionate scale on elevated ground dwarfs the entire conservation area when viewed from the town centre.



Plate 8. Negative features in the conservation area include the dwarfing of the view from the town centre by the new Business Centre building on elevated ground and the divorcing of Parkgate from the town centre by the ring road and its proliferation of traffic lights and highway signs.

Figure 7. Key views in and out of the conservation area



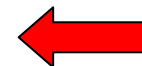
Views of
Bank Top
Station
clock tower



Roofscapes
of interest



Views or vistas
towards St.
Cuthbert's
Church



Views towards
St. John's
Church or St.
Hilda's



Landmark buildings

The views into Parkgate are also attractive from the vacant plot next to the Cricketers – all that is left of Clay Row. Here the jumble of roof lines and the tannery buildings create a view buzzing with historic character, topped off with the frilly confection of the Civic Theatre’s iron crested roofline. A similar jumble of rooflines can be seen from Park Lane looking back towards Parkgate, but the views along Park Lane from Parkgate are less attractive. Too much has been demolished here and the quality of the new build does little to enhance the area.



Plate 9. Jumbles of rooflines can currently be appreciated from the vacant development plot on Brunswick Street (left) and from the car park on Park Lane (centre), but the roofscape was interesting even in 1959 when viewed from Luck’s Terrace which was derelict and due to be demolished for the Town Hall. The distinctive lacy pyramidal top of the Civic Theatre can be seen in the distance (right picture courtesy of The Northern Echo).

The sloping bank which lends its name to Bank Top creates an elevated position for the railway line, but also for views from Pensbury Street which terminates in attractive Victorian railings and steps down to Parkgate. It is also this elevated bank that St. John’s church sits on creating its prominent position in the townscape.

Then and now...

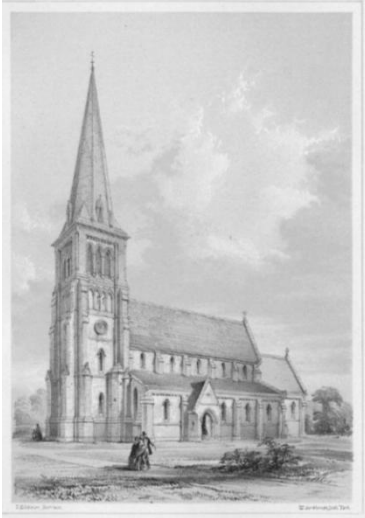


Plate 10. St. John's Church (also known as the Railwayman's Church) by John Middleton as published in 1854 showing the spire that was intended and, left, in 2013 – the spire was never built. The same view is no longer possible due to increased urbanisation.

Architectural interest

The majority of architecture in this area dates to the late 19th to early 20th centuries, but there are a few survivors of earlier times. A small red brick building sits on the back lane between Hargreave Terrace and Pensbury which was shown on the 1st ed OS map of 1860, prior to any development here at all. This tumbley brick building lurks

amongst the scoria blocks of the back lane and has an agricultural character; possibly it was a barn that served the fields of Low Park before being surrounded by urban development.

The tannery buildings are mid to late 19th century and hark back to when this part of Darlington was the preserve of industrial tanning activities. These particular buildings were later than most and may have been used for storage or stabling rather than the tanning process direct. They were also used by Clayton's bakery and more recently for motor vehicles (Lloyd 2009). The scoria blocks and sandstone paving are typical of back lanes. The layout of these buildings does however reflect the street pattern set out by the earlier tanning industries which were located in this area.

Another little building on Parkgate, now a cobblers, must have once been infill, but its neighbours have clearly been replaced and so the later infill that was, has become the earliest building in the row, reflecting a cottagery character more reminiscent of late 18th, early 19th century Darlington than the Edwardian architecture of its surroundings. No sandstone is used on these most basic of buildings and all have lost their traditional roofing materials except the last roof on the tannery with its ramshackle wooden louvres and pantile roof.



Plate 11. The buildings that Parkgate forgot.....early architectural survivals in an Edwardian character area

This character area is most significant for its early 20th century building stock, but much of it references the earlier architectural interest of St. Hilda's, built in 1887. The circular windows of the church picked out in dressed sandstone against a red brick background are also to be found at the Civic Theatre, built in 1907, but updated to reflect the lighter Edwardian tastes. Built as the New Hippodrome, or the Palace Theatre (it had two names) on the site of mid 19th century street fronted housing which in turn had been developed in a former orchard, it reflected much of the design of the earlier fire station, and set the tone for the rest of Parkgate with its prominent corner position and iron canopy, now replaced. Like most of the buildings in this quarter, the materials are dominated by glazed terracotta brickwork and sandstone detailing and a combination of demi-lunettes, tall round headed windows and a sunburst pattern above the doorway created from exaggerated voussoirs of dressed sandstone against a brick backdrop. Many of these features are referenced in nearby buildings.



Plate 12. The details from the Civic Theatre are to be found in other properties on Parkgate. Most buildings are of brick with sandstone detailing, but many also make use of glazed brickwork, interesting gable features, circular and semi circular windows , starburst and starburst derivatives and art nouveau date stones.

However a number of buildings dating to around 1906-8 still hark back to the classical pediments, swags and pilasters which survived in popular tastes from the 18th century and retained favour throughout the 19th century despite the predominance of neo-Gothic architecture. For example, St. Hilda's Clergy House of 1907 with its pedimented doorway and the fire station house with swags, pediments and pilasters. The area has a wealth of glazed tiles and stained glass, from the rich red terracottas of the theatre and the Greyhound Inn, the former Fire Station and St Hilda's clergy house to the deep greens of the Black Swan and the Cricketers. Shop fronts from the 1920s-30s predominate with simple wooden consoles and fascias, delicate glazing bars and gently curved glazing, however few are being well maintained.

The Borough Road area is significant for its terraced housing which dates to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However much of it is suffering from a loss of historic character with most having replacement plastic windows and doors, a few with pebble dashing which masks the brick features below the eaves and around the window openings which once had nicely turned mullions between sash windows. Roofing materials have also been replaced, but this has little impact on the streetscape. However the road has a scattering of fine buildings which merit its status as a conservation area. The Civic Theatre extends around the corner on to Borough Road with its replacement canopies, lanterns and celebratory torches dating to 2007. The 1980s extension references the earlier building in materials and in choice of window shape, but is of less architectural and historic interest. The former fire station is an architectural gem with glazed brickwork, demi-lunette windows and ball finials, which were reference in the later theatre and terracotta glazed window labelling terminated with little swirls on the adjacent house. St.

Hilda's Clergy House next door is more geometrically stark, perhaps conveying less ostentation in its design and today has a more modern appearance that its 1907 date suggests because of the wholesale window replacement in plastic.

There are a few other quality civic buildings such as the former Brunswick School of 1871; again in red brick and sandstone detailing but finding more in common with the architecture of St. Hilda's Church than the later Edwardian styles which predominate. Too much demolition has left Brunswick Street devoid of architectural interest (with the exception of the school) and the predominance of poor quality buildings and security fencing with open views to the ring road and some singularly unattractive modern buildings opposite has left this area looking neglected.

Then and now...



Plate 13. The fire station on Borough Road has survived remarkably well with only the loss of its central lantern and the replacement of traditional windows with plastic ones in the house next door since 1905 when the first photograph was taken (left). The colour tint added to the post card misleadingly suggests that the building was of green glazed tiles and stone rather than brick.

Positive contributors

The essential character of the civic buildings in the Parkgate area is of Edwardian architecture often decorated with glazed (sometimes terracotta) tiles and large partially stained glass windows, interesting gable shapes and ball finials and a good number of art nouveau dates in gables and above doors. Shop fronts have simply ornamented consoles and light glazing bars with a strong emphasis on light and space.

The architectural form of the terraced housing references Victorian fashions and are in a simple robust style, but most have lost their traditional windows and doors.

Doors



Plate 14. Door styles mark the transition from classical pediments to the simple clean lines and glazing details of art nouveau and the 1930s

Windows



Plate 15. Few traditional windows have survived in this area, but those that do are predominantly 1904-8. Windows are in a variety of shapes, although the circular and lunette are especially popular amongst the red brick Edwardian buildings. Shop front windows have retained their small scale and where they survive, are mostly 1920s-30s; most are in urgent need of conservation.

Gables



Plate 16. Distinctive gable features in Parkgate using (glazed) red brick and including tall chimneys, using window detailing, string courses, ball finials, swags, crests and pilasters to add interest

The details



Plate 17. It is the small decorative details that combine to make Parkgate of architectural and artistic interest. The palette is rich in glazed terracotta and green glazed tiles

The Public Realm



Plate 18. Although private domestic houses have lost their original railings (apart from nearby Hargreave Terrace), Parkgate has a number of original railings on public buildings, although some of those at St John's have been replaced. The difference in ground levels between Parkgate and Bank Top has necessitated two flights of stairs complete with railings that add interest to the street scene. The railway bridge is a reminder of Darlington's railway heritage and is visually linked to St. John's, known as the Railwayman's Church and the arches of Bank Top Station. Scoria blocks are now largely limited to the back lanes, but merit retention for their historic interest, as an example of Victorian recycling and for their marble-like qualities when exposed to rain.

Buildings of local interest

The Parkgate area only has three listed buildings considered to be nationally important (The Civic Theatre, St. Hilda's Church and St John's Church – all grade II), however it is rich in buildings of local importance. These buildings support the architectural interest of the area and it is important that they are adequately maintained and their contribution to the streetscape conserved and enhanced, if Parkgate is to continue to merit conservation area status.



The Former Fire Station and house adjacent. Borough Road. This building has retained its architectural features and use of space despite going through alternative uses as an ambulance station and carpet shop. Its architectural details are typical of the area in its choice of matching ornate gables with ball finials, its use of a demi-lunette window and balustrading to the roof. Its materials of glazed red brick in contrasting colours are also typical and the house benefits from the addition of small decorative details such as pilasters, swags, a pedimented doorway and window labelling terminated with terracotta swirls. The town crest is located above the doorway gable and can also be found on other civic buildings such as the railway bridge. The early 20th century was the Golden Age of fire station design in London (English Heritage 2011, 11) and this ornate example (along with other similarly designed buildings) would suggest a similar Golden Age in Darlington. It also coincides with the introduction of motorised fire engines nationally, although historic images show that horses were still in use at this site when the building was new. The house and fire station may merit listing grade II because of their group value with the Civic Theatre both reflecting grand Edwardian designs and because it represents a relative unaltered fire station and associated house from a transitional period in fire fighting from horse to motorised engine.



Early 20th century shop fronts on Parkgate. These are important as they have retained their decorative detailing to the windows with iron spandrels, although some of the stained glass windows have been painted over. The gently curving glass is attractive and the simple shop window consoles and pilasters are typical of this row of shops in Parkgate. The narrow 1920/30s shop doors with a sunburst derived glazing pattern is also of note



The Black Swan Inn on Parkgate combines the two main materials and colour palettes of the character area; namely red brick and green glazed tiles. The rounded arched windows are also distinctive and are repeated on other nearby buildings. The shapely chimneys reference the shapely gables of adjacent properties and the colourful scenes of the black swan around its base have been a source of delight for nearly a hundred years. The delicately etched glass and decorative pilasters divide the building at ground floor level. Its street corner position means that it makes a particularly strong contribution to the streetscape.



The Cricketers, Parkgate is the only building remaining on what was Clay Row and presumably takes its name after the cricket ground which was located in the Park in the mid 19th century 225m south. It has been extended in modern times and recent interventions have done much to harm its historic character; the replacement of its traditional windows with sham sashes is perhaps the most harmful intervention of all. However it is in a prominent position and does retain some traditional architectural features including the decorative green glazed cameo of cricket bat and ball, broadly classical proportions, decorative pilasters to ground floor level, string coursing to break up the facade and below eaves detailing. Its side gables cry out for neighbours – this should be set within a row of high density buildings. Photographs from the 1960s suggest that it was not originally rendered either.



Parkgate Chambers, Borough Road occupies a prominent position on the corner of Parkgate and Borough Road. The mixed materials at first floor level and the variety of colours at ground floor level, break up the facade with a loss of harmony. However the central pedimented doorway on the corner and the round headed overlight has some street presence and so the condition of this buildings has the potential to impact on the overall character of the area. When it becomes run down, so too does the appearance of Parkgate. The shop fronts are still small in scale and retain early 20th century consoles and pilasters, original glazing bars and fascias and glazed tile plinths, but some are in poor condition.



Potts the Cobblers on Parkgate represents an early building phase. It is only one bay wide and appears originally to have been infill, but its earlier neighbours were replaced in the early 20th century, leaving this 19th century brick building behind. Its single first floor window is an 8/8 pane sliding sash which must predate 1860 at least, although the shop front is probably 1920-30s, but still intact. Such multi pane sashes are a relative rarity in Darlington now, as are historically intact shop fronts; indeed this shop has stayed in the same family since at least 1966 (see historic photo). It has pretty below eaves detailing, cast iron rainwater goods and scarring on its side elevation where its neighbours once stood.



The Tannery buildings off Borough Road. This linear group of buildings are laid out along the continuation of a street pattern that predates most of the buildings in Parkgate. They sit on the area that was developed first for tanning so that the foul smelling, toxic activities could be carried out away from the town, although this particular plot was a later development dating to the mid to late 19th century. The significance of the remaining buildings is not yet clearly understood, but it is clear that they had a variety of uses reflected in their varying designs, and retain early paving in the form of scoria blocks from the 19th century and sandstone paving. The wider area was extensively developed for tanning and the remains of tanning pits may survive below ground.



A quiet courtyard behind St Hilda's Clergy House on Borough Road consists of a low range of red brick buildings with neo Gothic and round windows which reflect the architecture of St. Helen's Church. The steeply pitched roof lines retain Welsh slate, but the windows have not fared so well. These buildings add group value to St Hilda's Club (1906) and St. Hilda's Church and also offer a back view towards the former fire station.



The Greyhound Inn, Parkgate. This building has been included for its prominent position in the streetscape highlighted by the use of brick and stone detailing especially at ground floor level. The choice of varied window openings: Venetian windows to the top floor, sashes to the first floor and rounded arched window and door openings, shapely gables with ball finials and tall chimneys are also characteristic of the area.



Former barn? This small group of red brick buildings sit on the back lane between Hargreave Terrace and Pensbury Street. They have an agricultural character and do not seem to belong to the surrounding terraced housing. An isolated building, possibly a barn is shown at this location before the Low Park was developed and suggests that this building is at least mid 19th century and predates the surrounding housing. It is in poor condition and has lost its original roofing, but is nevertheless of historic and archaeological interest.



Former Brunswick Street Board School buildings, Brunswick Street/ Borough Road. This red brick former school building dating to 1871 with later additions is of local importance because it occupies a prominent position in the townscape and represents the only building left of historic character in Brunswick Street. Architecturally it has much in common with St Hilda's Church with tall lancet windows and with much of the wider area in its choice of brick with stone detailing. Also of architectural interest are the stone wall boundary features with gateposts – it is the sense of enclosure that this building brings which is now so lacking in Brunswick Street. Its other positive contribution is the pitched roofs and chimney which add to the interest of the street scene. The building has added group value because of its proximity to the red brick school/ nursery buildings next door on Borough Road with its lantern – another interesting addition to the roofscape.

Archaeological interest

The earliest development of the Parkgate area was in tanning, possibly from the 17th century and the 1st edition OS map dating to the 1860s shows a high concentration of tanning pits where the present day car park is adjacent to St. Hilda's and the vacant plot next to the Cricketers. (The plot east of St Hilda's has also been the site of a petrol station which would suggest the loss of archaeology where the fuel tanks were located.) Excavations from similar sites elsewhere suggest that tanning pits can still contain waterlogged deposits and organic materials and therefore much of Parkgate is of archaeological interest because of this early industry. Not entirely unrelated and just as smelly, the Parkgate area also housed a glue manufactory, also located to the rear of the later school and within the vacant plot at the Cricketers. The area known as the Hermitage in the 17th century and which contained a mill and a house correlates to the land west of the railway line and north of Parkgate road. By 1860 the plot still had a brick and tile yard and a steam powered corn mill. This plot is now outside the conservation area, but consists of some open space which if it was to be developed, would require archaeological evaluation and could impact on the special interest of the conservation area. Any other archaeological remains are likely to relate to 19th century buildings since demolished.



Figure 8. 1st ed OS map dating to 1856-65 showing the extent of tannery pits and buildings (and glue manufactory) in the area (shaded brown). Most of these are now located on the vacant plot next to the Cricketers. The red outline marks the extent of the conservation area.

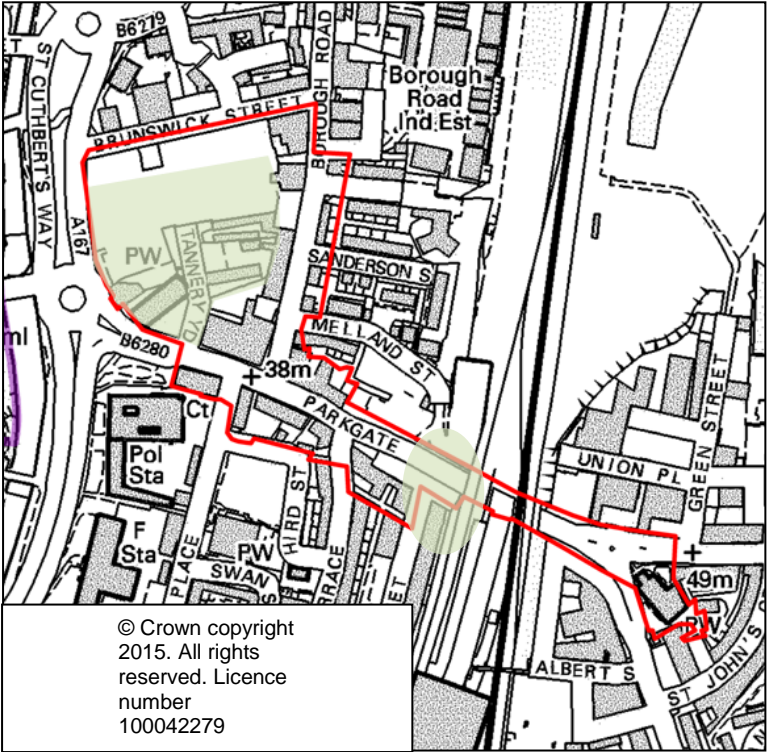


Figure 9. Areas of potential archaeological interest for their associations with post medieval industry and development

‘The Bishop’s Park was on the east side of the Skerne; it is now divided into fields, chiefly held by lease under the see. Depressions have been filled up with bark and rubbish, and on this decaying substructure streets have been built, the perpetual abode of fever and disease.’

Longstaffe 1909, 339, but originally published in 1854

Then and now...



Plate 19. The most significant changes to Parkgate have arisen as a result of poor maintenance of shop fronts, inappropriate replacement windows and heavy traffic, however some of this is reversible and historic character can be restored through the provision of renovated shop fronts and traditional windows and doors. Left photo dates to 1951.

Assessment of condition

The conservation area is in poor condition. This results from a lack of maintenance, evidenced by vegetation growing from guttering and repairs to rainwater goods with insulating tape. The railings at St. John's Church Parkgate side have been repaired recently, but still lack regular maintenance. A number of early 20th century shop fronts require urgent maintenance to their woodwork, in particular their consoles and pilasters. The loss of traditional features with inappropriate substitutes and poorly designed shop front fascias are also damaging the street scene with poorly chosen cladding, inappropriate windows and garish overly large fascias. The area has become dominated by traffic and this has resulted in a proliferation of street signs; exacerbated by the recent works to the ring road which have increased traffic lights and highway signs. An accumulation of large bill board advertising on Parkgate is also a negative feature. Large scale buildings immediately outside the conservation area opposite St. John's Church detract from the conservation area and reduce the ability to appreciate the rooftops and key views.

Domestic terraced housing has suffered most from plastic replacement windows and doors and the coating of brickwork with pebble dash or cement render which obscures brick detailing and traps moisture leading to potential damp problems.



Plate 20. This building displays a number of management issues. Grass is growing from the gutters, a shop front has been reclad in inappropriate materials which along with garish and overly large fascias breaks up the unity of design at ground floor level

Management proposals

- Any proposals to develop the police, fire and royal mail buildings to the west of the conservation area could be an opportunity to enhance the setting of the conservation area.
- Any development on the vacant plot adjacent to the Cricketers should seek to enhance the conservation area with high density buildings which contribute to the varied roofscape. Other features which could be referenced are the predominance of red brick with smaller amounts of stone to pick out decorative details, interesting gable shapes, a variety of window shapes and some discrete artwork, possibly using glazed tiles.

- Development of the above plot should be preceded by a heritage assessment and archaeological evaluation to test the archaeological interest of the site and in particular the extent to which organic deposits associated with the tanning or glue industries survive.
- Any new development should seek to avoid further diminishing the special interest of the conservation area by avoiding the use of large scale buildings which dominate the existing landmarks and key views.
- Any development of the tannery buildings should be preceded by a heritage assessment that looks at the significance of the buildings and the archaeological potential of the ground below. Future uses should ideally seek to preserve the street pattern here.
- Better maintenance of properties needs to be carried out to prevent more expensive remedial works at a later date.
- Shop owners may require some advice to help conserve or restore their traditional shop fronts and to reverse some of the damage caused by inappropriate cladding and large fascias.
- Home owners need advice on the potential damage caused by concrete cladding and pebble dash. Advice on improving thermal efficiency without damaging the historic character may be beneficial.
- Street furniture and highway signs should be rationalised and reduced to create less clutter.
- The predominance of traffic has required safety railings in front of the Civic Theatre, but these crowd people in to a narrow space and prevent full appreciation of the theatre frontage.
- There should be a limit to the numbers and size of large bill board advertisements within the conservation area.
- The area has strong visual links with Bank Top Station and has significant railway heritage features such as the bridge and the 'Railwaymen's Church'. Its links with the railway heritage should be reflected in the lead up to the 2025 celebrations.
- There is sufficient heritage interest to merit a discovery trail or other form of interpretation.
- There are a sufficient number of threats to the conservation area from a lack of maintenance and inappropriate development in the vicinity to merit treating it as Heritage at Risk.

Then and now...



Plate 21. Surprisingly little has changed here since the late 1960s except the growth of street signs. However such open spaces have the potential to be redeveloped in the future with high quality high density development which makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

Opportunities for Change

There are a number of potential development plots, such as vacant land, open spaces, car parks and areas of high turnover around the proposed conservation area. These include St. Cuthbert's Way South, Bank Top Station West and Borough Road which have been identified for office space, green infrastructure, leisure and cultural developments, parking and workshops in the draft Development Plan Document (Darlington Borough Council 2013, 30-32) Despite a number of these sites being outside the conservation area, if these sites come up for development in the future, they have the capacity to impact on its special interest and so should set out to make a 'positive contribution to local

character and distinctiveness' (NPPF 2012, para 131). Possible development sites (based on current land use only and not all necessarily identified for development in the Development Plan) are shown in figure 10.

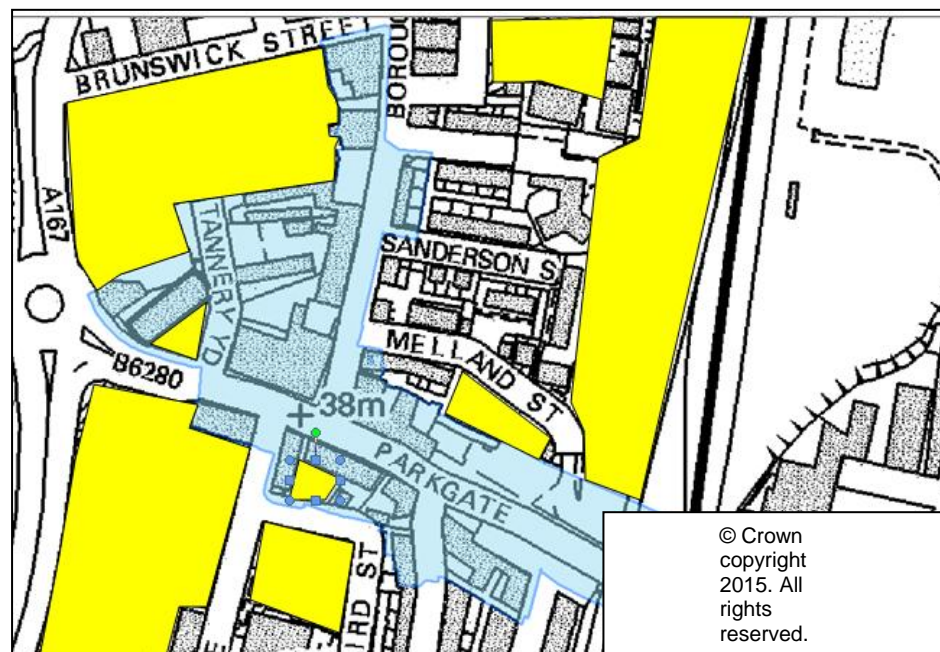


Figure 10. Open spaces where land use might alter or sites which might be redeveloped (in yellow) where the design should seek to sustain and enhance the significance of the conservation area and make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness (NPPF 2012, para 126). Note: This does not mean that the Borough Council accept the principle of development here, but should proposals arise, they will be expected to preserve and enhance the conservation area despite being outside it.

In addition to the management proposals set out above, new development proposals in and around the conservation area should contribute to the variety of roofscapes, but not introduce any large massing which will obscure views of the existing rich roofscape and should also respect or enhance views to and from landmark buildings. Developments should also seek to reintroduce high density small to medium scale development, close up open spaces and seek to reconnect Parkgate with the town centre through high quality design and greater amenity use of the River Skerne on the opposite side of St Cuthbert's Way.

Then and Now...



Plate 22. Left: This busy street scene of Parkgate in its Edwardian heyday shows how the loss of buildings at the south end of Parkgate have since been replaced with a busy corridor of traffic which has divorced it from the town. Future development should seek to make better connections with the town centre by taking development up to the ring road and avoiding barren open spaces (image courtesy of Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo). Plate 23. Right: Although some attempt has been made to break up the roofline of the Cornmill centre, its scale, massing and large flat area obstructs views of any roofscape beyond and adds a visual barrier between Parkgate and the town centre. Future development should make a positive contribution to the roofscape, but not obstruct views of the existing varied rooflines.

Then and now....



Plate 24. Left: This image dating to 1968 shows the works to create the ring road and the new police station, with existing street frontage housing due to be demolished where the fire station is now (image courtesy of Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo). Right: Unfortunately, the open spaces and modern buildings which replaced the terraced housing are devoid of character and further emphasise the separation of Parkgate from the town centre

Then and Now...



Plate 21. Brunswick Street: the loss of the cooling towers is not regrettable, but the loss of the terraced houses has also resulted in a loss of community. The redevelopment of this land offers an opportunity to enhance the conservation area.

Bibliography

- Cookson, G 2003 *The Townscape of Darlington*
- Darlington Borough Council 2013 *Darlington Local Plan: Making and Growing Places Preferred Options*
- English Heritage 2011 *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*
- English Heritage 2011 b* *Designation Listing Selection Guide. Law and Government Buildings.*
- English Heritage 2013 *What is a Conservation Area?* Available from <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/conservation-areas/> [accessed 12.11.13]
- Flynn 1983 *Darlington in Old Picture Postcards*
- Ove Arup & Partners 2005 *Economic, Social and Cultural Impact Assessment of Heritage in the North East* for the North East Historic Environment Forum
- Lloyd, C 2009 'The story of Patrick Cotter O'Brien' in *The Northern Echo* 12.8.2009 available from http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/4541861.A_tall_story/ [accessed 25.11.13]
- London School of Economics 2012 *An Assessment of the Effects of Conservation Areas on Value.* Available from <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/social-and-economic-research/value-conservation-areas/> [accessed 12.11.13]