

# ALNWICK AND DENWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## Topic Chapter – ‘Heritage and Culture’

### HERITAGE

#### 1. Context:

##### 1.1 Heritage significance of Alnwick and Denwick

From any point of view, Alnwick with Denwick is undoubtedly a rising heritage hot spot. In fact, heritage is a major part of the area’s USP (Unique Selling Point). As the only Ducal town in the region and traditionally the County town of Northumberland, the area is of huge heritage importance in both the County and Region. A unique combination of heritage features still remain from the area’s Saxon, medieval, post-medieval, Victorian and 19<sup>th</sup> century past. Current single attractions are the Castle (medieval and 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries), the Alnwick Gardens (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), the Bailiffgate Museum (Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century), the Market Place (medieval and 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries), Town Gates (medieval/18<sup>th</sup> century), several historic places of worship (St Michael’s CofE, St Paul’s RC, St James’s URC and Alnwick Methodist and Baptist Churches) and the historic ambiance of the town itself (extended Saxon layout, medieval core, 18<sup>th</sup> century landscapes, exemplary early 19<sup>th</sup> century stone suburb and 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial areas). Other dynamic attractions include historic/cultural events (International Music Festival, Food Festival, Heritage Open Days and Northumbrian Gathering), a dedicated Town Crier and historic leisure transport (open-topped vintage tour buses).

##### 1.2 List of heritage assets

- Conservation Areas - Alnwick Conservation Area
- Protected Historic Buildings and Sites – 340 Listed Building entries, 14 Scheduled Monuments and a number of unlisted but Significant Buildings in the conservation area
- Historic Spaces – townscape spaces in the conservation area
- Historic views – from Lion Bridge and Denwick Bridge (parkland, river and castle); up Canongate (19<sup>th</sup> century townscape and St Michael’s Church; up Bailiffgate (urban trees, 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century townscape and castle); up Pottergate (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century townscape and Pottergate ‘Tower’): south along Bondgate Within (18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century townscape and Bondgate Tower); along Bondgate Without/South Street (urban park and Percy Tenantry Column); from top of Willoughby’s Bank (north-eastward view across Alnwick town and castle, towards Denwick village)
- ‘Green’ Heritage – 1 Historic Park and Garden (Grade I and very large), several landscapes of character, protected trees and trees in the conservation area

##### 1.3 Key Players

- Alnwick Town Council
- Denwick Parish Council
- Northumberland County Council (especially its conservation team)
- Alnwick Civic Society (locally) and Civic Voice (nationally)

- English Heritage – North East Region
- Northumberland Tourism
- North of England Civic Trust (heritage skills development)
- Northumberland Estates
- Freeman of Alnwick (Alnwick Town Hall and Pinfold)
- All other owners of historic assets

#### **1.4 Factors constraining the plan’s response**

- Current (2012) lack of availability of public finance and staff
- Fragmentation of responsibilities between public and private agencies
- Limitation of existing conservation controls
- Heritage skills shortage
- Undervaluing of heritage assets as economic assets too, leading all too often to ‘development v heritage’ polarisation
- Unresolved conflicts between regulation and historic quality

## **2. Objectives to be achieved;**

“To maximise the potential of heritage in Alnwick and Denwick to contribute to place shaping and support the visitor economy whilst encouraging local people to have a sense of pride, involvement and ownership.” (NCC Draft Cultural Strategy, 2010)

To improve how the historic town and village are set and develop in the local landscape, refining their historic and urban design qualities and making them more people friendly, whilst at the same time, supporting and sustaining their vital service and tourist economies.

To ensure that the area’s historic and architectural design quality is celebrated through stories, descriptions and features in guides, visitor publications, newspapers and the electronic media to proactively raise the unique heritage profile of Alnwick and Denwick.

## **3. Issues and Options:**

### **3.1 The lack of official planning recognition of the importance of urban areas.**

**3.1.1 Nature** – In the recent draft Northumberland Core Strategy the landscape value of the natural environment is recognised and extensively supported with studies and conservation/enhancement policies. However, the townscape value of the County’s urban environments receives nothing like the same recognition, study and policy support. The ADNP needs to recognise the importance of the unique and distinctive character of Alnwick and Denwick to the quality of life of the majority of the area’s residents, to the attractiveness of commercial and industrial development and to the development of the tourist economy.

**3.1.2 Scale** – The lack of recognition of the importance of the unique and distinctive Character of urban areas is not just of historic towns such as Alnwick, Berwick or Morpeth but also of other towns in Northumberland.

### **3.1.3 Options**

- A comprehensive townscape study of Alnwick and Denwick to identify distinctive townscape character areas, for which appropriate policies of urban regeneration, enhancement and development control can be developed.
- The scoping of potential funding and local delivery mechanisms and agencies (eg a local Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Team or Portas Town team or Development Trust) should also be included.

## **3.2 The visually coherent town and village in the landscape.**

**3.2.1 Nature** – Past economic land use growth has paid too little attention to composing the appearance of the town and village as visually cohesive entities in the landscape – blurred edges and lack of environmental assessment of growth direction and landscape capacity.

**3.2.2 Scale** – Affects all quadrants of views into the town from the outside landscape except the North/East quadrant where the views inside and outside Alnwick Castle historic park and garden are more coherent, being composed of a huge medieval castle dominating an unspoiled historic landscape.

### **3.2.3 Options**

- Statutory agencies, with the help of voluntary agencies, to jointly prepare a comprehensive visual appraisal and to develop a coherent framework for action.
- Make use of the 2010 Landscape Character Assessment (SPD).

## **3.3 Main roads as recognisable gateways into Alnwick and Denwick.**

**3.3.1 Nature** – The major road entrances into the town and village lack much sense of a ‘gateway entrance’, a desirable feature which could add further visual coherence to the town.

**3.3.2 Scale** – Although the visually un-coordinated growth noted above has meant that no major roads as they enter the edges of the built up area of the town have any particular feel of ‘entrance’, within the town the main approaches to the historic core provide just the opposite. There is a strong sense of arrival/gateway along the following streets; Clayport Bank/Street, Pottergate (pedestrian only), Canongate, The Peth and Bondgate Without which, with the Hotspur Gate, provides the ultimate in ‘gateway experiences’.

### **3.3.3 Options**

- Use the appraisal and framework from Issue 2 to explore the possibilities of creating/increasing the ‘gateway’ qualities of major roads as they enter the town.
- Review the same qualities of main roads as they enter the historic core for opportunities to enhance this quality.

## **3.4 Boundary of conservation areas.**

**3.4.1 Nature** – The present boundary of the Alnwick Conservation Area excludes areas of the town that should now be included and may include other areas no longer worthy of conservation.

**3.4.2 Scale** – Whilst most of the Alnwick Conservation Area is still worthy of designation, the boundary could be adjusted in places. None of the village of Denwick is protected by conservation area designation.

#### **3.4.3 Options**

- Review the boundaries of Alnwick Conservation Area for possible deletions and additions.
- Additions could be those at Canongate and Prudhoe Street proposed in the draft Appraisal Consultation of 2005, with the addition of Stott Street off Prudhoe Street

#### **3.4.4 Consultation Questions**

- Should the boundaries of Alnwick Conservation Area be reviewed with a view to its extension
- Should Denwick village be considered for designation as a conservation area.

### **3.5 Threatened historic assets and increased protection**

**3.5.1 Nature** – Listed Buildings (LBs) and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) are under threat from neglect, decay and under-use.

**3.5.2 Scale** – At present, 2 LBs (Bondgate Tower Grade I and General Lambert’s House, Narrowgate Grade II\*) and 1 SAM (Camp on Alnwick Moor) are on English Heritage’s official list of Heritage at Risk and thus require urgent attention. There are also a further 7 Grade II LBs known to be decaying or seriously underused, three other publicly used Grade I and II\* LBs (Northumberland Hall, Council Chambers and Town Hall) are threatened by under-use and decay and there are vacant upper floors throughout the town centre that may be threatening the fabric and future of other historic buildings too. See Appendix 1. for the full list of threatened protected structures. In addition, the general level of building care and maintenance throughout the conservation area can only be described as patchy and too often stone repairs and maintenance have been carried out in such unskilled ways that the repairs themselves may threaten the future wellbeing of the premises. Any general threats to other SAMs in the area are currently unknown.

#### **3.5.3 Options**

- a.** Photograph and assess the condition and vacancy of all LBs and SAMs in the area to provide a basis for prioritising action to remove threats – voluntary agencies could help with this and other such environmental assessments.
- b.** Photograph and assess the condition and vacancy of non-listed building in the conservation area and prepare a rescue strategy.
- c.** Consider other buildings for full Listing protection, including the police station and court building on Prudhoe Street.
- d.** Extend further protection by preparing a Local List of valued buildings which are considered worthy of some kind of statutory protection.
- e.** Give first priority to preparing plans to rescue the 3 official Heritage Assets at Risk on EH’s list, including serving Building Repairs Notices, seeking new uses and raising funding.

- f. Prepare a strategy to rescue the other 7 grade II LBs and the 2 Grade I LBs already identified by Alnwick Civic Society as at risk from decay and/or vacancy.
- g. Prepare an information campaign aimed at raising the understanding that private and public owners have of their own historic assets – make use of publications from Alnwick Civic Society (such as guides to stone repairs or shop-front design) and EH. Incentivise owners through heritage award schemes and grant aid.

#### **3.5.4 Consultation Questions**

- What currently unlisted buildings/structures should be proposed for Listing protection?
- Are there monuments/historic sites that should be protected by Scheduling?
- How do we deal with decaying and vacant heritage buildings and structures?
- Do we have any other decaying and vacant Listed Buildings that should be added to English Heritage’s Heritage at Risk record?
- Should the plan propose a locally determined list of lesser heritage buildings.

### **3.6 New Build in the historic town and village**

**3.6.1 Nature** – New development may be a threat to the character of a settlement, even outside its conservation area. Problems with inappropriate scale, materials, etc. may obviously damage established historic but may also be damaging to environments with a relatively attractive but fragile quality elsewhere too.

**3.6.2 Scale** – In general, Alnwick’s conservation area has not been significantly harmed by modern development but some of it could have been better designed and detailed. The character of any attractive areas outside the conservation area where it is likely a less demanding regime for new build quality prevails, is in many ways more vulnerable.

#### **3.6.3 Options**

- Prepare and adopt design guides, design codes and site development briefs like the Alnwick Civic Society’s Shop Front Guide to condition other likely new build operations in advance of developments.

#### **3.6.4 Consultation Questions**

- Should the plan include design policies and promote design guides to protect the character of our historic buildings and areas.

### **3.7 Erosion of townscape character by incremental changes to building fabric.**

**3.7.1 Nature** – Although it is obvious that major new buildings may alter the character and appearance of conservation areas, it is less recognised that such character can also be severely eroded by small incremental changes to buildings which insidiously and collectively reduce the quality of the historic detail of unlisted buildings and, consequently, the general townscape. These minor changes in conservation areas are usually considered in law as Permitted Development so do not require planning permission.

**3.7.2 Scale** – This erosion can be a problem throughout a conservation area but it has the most severe effects in areas of uniformity of period and features such as windows, doors, etc. and where most buildings are unprotected by Listing. In Alnwick, such incremental problems as modernised windows and the addition of solar roof panels are already affecting the historic character of the Green Batt suburbs and will be found damaging in other residential parts of Alnwick’s conservation area too.

### **3.7.3 Options**

- Adopt additional planning controls to protect important details and finishes in the conservation area, particularly doors, windows and solar panels, thus using the planning application process to prevent further erosion of character.
- Include the valuing of vulnerable features within the information campaign mentioned under Issue 5.

### **3.7.4 Consultation Questions**

- Should the plan explore the need for additional planning controls to prevent small scale damage to the character of our historic buildings and townscapes.

## **3.8 Townscape character threatened by street clutter and poor floorscape design and after-care.**

**3.8.1 Nature** – Clutter such as shabby or redundant street signs, eye-catching traffic markings, flyposting, illegal banners, and a clutter of all manner of fussy public realm schemes, street objects and advertising, are common in too many of our historic commercial areas in the UK. Floorscape design and condition plays a surprisingly significant role in the appreciation of historic townscapes too. However, where clutter has been removed and/or rationalised and floorscape repaired, improved or redesigned, it is startling how attractive historic character almost magically re-emerges.

**3.8.2 Scale** – Although Alnwick has a uniform scheme of traditionally designed black and gold street furniture, it is now looking in need of refurbishing or replacing. In addition, the commercial area has the usual rash of redundant objects and signage as well as frequent flyposting on lamp-posts and buildings. Although the flooring of the Market Place and the lanes linked to it have been well laid and maintained, many sections of the public footways in other areas damaged by vehicles and usage, require repair and possibly upgrading while the extensive areas of whinstone chips and cobbles in Market Street, Bondgate Within and Fenkle Street could benefit from a fresh assessment and re-laying. Denwick village has no such retail area so does not have this problem of commercial clutter and poor floorscape, but it has a visually damaging clutter of over-head wires along the main street through the village.

### **3.8.3 Options**

- Identify unnecessary clutter using guidance from Civic Voice publications and campaigns and prepare a programme for its removal and the prevention of its recurrence in the future.
- Review the condition and future of Alnwick’s current black and gold street furniture scheme and repair, replace or rethink accordingly.

- Assess the condition of the floorscape in the historic core with a view to repair and/or replacing and reducing the mix of different materials where appropriate by agreeing a limited palette.
- Retain and repair (and even extend if possible) areas where traditional floorscape materials survives – eg the sandstone flags in Baliffgate and at the entrance to the Castle and in the pedestrianised lanes off the Market Place.

#### **3.8.4 Consultation Questions**

- Should the plan encourage the better management and maintenance of Alnwick Conservation Area’s public spaces and floorscapes.
- Should the plan encourage the removal of unnecessary signs and other street furniture in the town centre.

### **3.9 Threatened trees inside and outside the conservation area.**

**3.9.1 Nature** – Trees in Alnwick’s conservation area contribute to the street scene so should be valued, protected and replaced when old. Trees are also a significant constituent of the landscape in which the town and village are set and, particularly in the unprotected landscapes in the southern part of the parishes, existing tree cover should also be retained, protected and possibly extended.

**3.9.2 Scale** – There are not many trees in the conservation area, especially in the well used commercial centre. The scale of tree decay or aging in the town, village or countryside needs to be better understood.

#### **3.9.3 Options**

- Assess the condition, protection, species and future life of trees in the conservation area and in Denwick village and prepare a programme for their care and replacement as required.
- Explore the aesthetic value and the practicalities of adding more street trees in the historic core of the town.
- Assess the quality of existing trees in the countryside to the south of the two parishes to prioritise treatment or addition, as a basis for composing a landscape regeneration and development plan for the area and as a suitably composed setting for the town and village.

### **3.10 Enforcement of planning and traffic decisions/regulations.**

**3.10.1 Nature** – Much effort goes into refining planning decisions to show sensitivity to the historic setting of new development. However, if the care of such decisions is not matched by equal and regular care in enforcing them on the ground, then a great deal of resource, expectation and good will is lost in the process, leaving mediocrity and quality avoidance to rule our townscapes and erode their economic and visitor value. The same goes for the enforcement of traffic regulations as our appreciation of historic value can be severely marred by random and possibly dangerous parking and moving traffic.

**3.10.2 Scale** – Alnwick has suffered no more than its fair share of planning enforcement difficulties but improved performance will help safeguard the townscape quality of the town and village. The most outstanding traffic enforcement



problem at present is the abuse of the Market Place by parking. Because the particular traffic order covering the Market Place requires more supervision and monitoring resources than can be made available, the abuse continues to escalate. There are other traffic regulation abuses in the outer central area and in the Green Batt suburb, particularly by drivers parking partly or fully on pavements. Although such abuses may not be dangerous in all cases, they do inconvenience pedestrians and damage the fabric of the public realm, adding to the general erosion of the townscape. Other planning enforcement such as serving Building Repairs Notices on owners who are neglecting their historic buildings, should also be taken much more seriously as the stock of such valuable assets is finite (see Issue 5.).

### **3.10.3 Options**

- Review the current parking control in the Market Place with a view to removing the current random use by vehicles.
- Reduce the number of vehicles illegally parked on the pavements of the conservation area by increasing the enforcement resources available, accompanied by an information campaign to increase the awareness of the dangers of such practices and the penalties thus incurred.
- Review the present statutory arrangements and the need to increase resources for future Planning Enforcement in the light of past performance of enforcement in Alnwick and Denwick.

## **3.11 Traffic/pedestrian imbalance.**

**3.11.1 Nature** – All town centres whether historic or not are required to accommodate both vehicles and pedestrians at the same time, resulting in competition for space and attention, leading at worst to a degrading of the public realm by traffic anxiety, noise, pollution and much non-pedestrian scale signage. There are areas of Alnwick that are hostile and potentially dangerous to both residents and visitors. Resolving the conflict between people and vehicles into a satisfactory balance between the two interests is a complex and tricky process, requiring creative thought and design rather than just the management of vehicular traffic. At the extremes of the balance spectrum is pedestrianisation/separation at one end and full vehicle dominance at the other with many choices of appropriate people/vehicle balance in between.

**3.11.2 Scale** – At present, the balance in Alnwick and Denwick is somewhat more in favour of the vehicle rather than the pedestrian. For the pedestrian, there is little fully pedestrianised space – the Market Place is the closest to it but the current parking arrangements makes this pedestrian dominant space less and less so. There are only two light-controlled crossings in the town centre – both in Market Street – meaning that many pedestrians cross the two way roads in the centre at random and frequently with increasing difficulty.

### **3.11.3 Options**

- Within the current road and footpath/pedestrian systems in the conservation area, explore in principle ways of moving the balance of the use of the available space more in the favour of pedestrians.



- Explore the implementation of mechanisms of road closure, pavement widening, pedestrianisation, road-signage reduction, yellow line reduction, pedestrian crossings, etc. in the interests of increasing the balance in favour of the pedestrian while at the same time minimising the impact on road use and parking.
- Review the dynamics of the vehicle/pedestrian conflicts in the current use of the Cobbles in Market Street, the parking area in Fenkle Street, the pavements on the Lion Bridge and parts of Narrowgate, with a view to mitigating conflict in favour of pedestrian use.
- A package of small operations can also help the balance eg improving the walking routes into the centre from the car parks and carparking durations timed to encourage visitors to stay in the town – ‘short-stay’ parking encourages just that!

#### **3.11.4 Consultation Questions**

- Could more pedestrian friendly space be good for Alnwick’s conservation area?

### **3.12 Vital historic spaces.**

**3.12.1 Nature** – One thing that particularly attracts people into towns is their feeling of vitality – their festival atmosphere which makes a visit to them special. When this buzz is missing, as is currently happening in a number of High Streets in England with the closure of retail outlets and other services, the place loses its special feel and thus its attraction. Maintaining this feeling of vitality is not just a matter of economic viability but also of how a town works to create and maintain its own special ethos.

**3.12.2 Scale** – Although most of Alnwick’s streets, when busy with vehicles and pedestrians, have an innate vitality, this vitality is missing in spaces off them such as the Market Place. On non-market days, the square lacks life and bustle during the day and in the evening it has few lighted shop fronts to add excitement and interest, and both day and night, the relentless bulk of the Northumberland Hall seems to cast a gloomy shadow across it. Sunday and Monday evenings – the start of the ‘tourist week’ – tend to be dead in the centre of Alnwick, giving a bad first impression.

#### **3.12.3 Options**

- Explore the principle of ‘dressing and lighting the town’ of Alnwick with a view to establishing an ongoing and welcoming festival atmosphere. This needs to be done with artistic and design flair and includes reductions and additions to reflect changing events, seasons and times of day, to reinforce the natural vitality and buzz of the town.
- Special attention in such a scheme needs to be paid to improving the day and night use and appearance of the Market Place, Alnwick’s principle historic space and meeting place. This could involve resolving the under-use and gloomy appearance of Northumberland Hall and the Old Town Hall and the use of public art or display to supply changing visual interest and excitement.
- We need to develop a better ‘night-time’ economy with more outdoor activities in summer – walks, concerts, music (like the Torch festival) – and more indoor and outdoor activities/events in autumn/winter to extend the

visitor season. An Alnwick Guild of Guides could devise and lead programmes of town walks for locals and visitors.

- We need to explore expanded or additional events eg make more of a festival of the annual Heritage Open Days with more places open, more activities and a festival atmosphere.

#### **3.12.4 Consultation Questions**

- What parts of Alnwick's conservation area need economic and environmental regeneration and enhancement?
- Where and what kinds of improvement schemes do we need?

### **3.13 Legibility of the town and townscape.**

**3.13.1 Nature** – Being able to use a town conveniently, comfortably and enjoyably is a function of not just its signage but also the way it is possible to 'read' the spaces and links between them. Improving the signage to be visitor and resident friendly requires clear thinking to rationalise and removing the ambiguity of the plethora of signs which has grown up over the years. Encouraging the 'reading' and understanding of spaces, corners, landmarks, expectations and links is more complex and demanding but doing it can bring great rewards in the enjoyment of the town for locals and visitors alike.

**3.13.2 Scale** – Alnwick has a relatively small town centre but spatially it is surprisingly complex and satisfyingly intricate for its size which, when combined with the variety of its rich building heritage, makes it attractive to both visitors and residents. The need to remove ambiguity and increase legibility is a problem across the whole of the town centre and the creation of such coherence should ideally begin at the edges of the town first if possible.

#### **3.13.3 Options**

- Photograph/record signage of every kind throughout the historic core of the town, be they street names, historic plaques, driver's direction signs, pedestrian pointers, shop fascias, signs painted on walls, etc. They should be divided into those of use and historic or design value to be retained and celebrated and those for removal or replacement through statutory control or by invitation and/or inducement.
- This will help the legibility of the town by removing redundant signs, by making more obvious interesting or quality signage and by pointing up a quality to be achieved in any new signage. All this could be celebrated through the established design and heritage award scheme run annually by Alnwick Civic Society.
- To increase the legibility and understanding of Alnwick, an identity and interpretation strategy would help to inspire, inform and promote the heritage and environmental qualities of our townscape to encourage both residents and visitors to take a delight in the essential 'Alnwickness' of Alnwick'. The strategy could include revising onsite information boards and plaques (EH has a scheme for plaques on historic buildings), preparing informative displays in the museum and/or TIC or other historic buildings accessible to the public, as well as published material such as selected trails, histories and guides and other educational material for use in schools.

### **3.14 Enhancement of historic townscape and landscape.**

**3.14.1 Nature** – Regular maintenance and upgrading of the fabric and appearance of historic spaces and landscapes in the conservation area and around Alnwick and Denwick is crucial to the economic future of our local and national heritage but also fundamental to the employment, health and well-being of local residents. To have a well cared-for, sustainable and enhanced urban and rural environment is essential to the local economy and hugely boosts the quality of local living.

**3.14.2 Scale** – Apart from the general upgrading needed in the environment within the commercial core of the conservation area, there are a few unattractive or rundown areas that require positive enhancement too. The extensive visitor parking area between Greenwell Road and the Castle is a regulated car dominated environment and consequently not a pedestrian friendly area; not really the visually attractive environment we should be offering our valued visitors as their first impression of the historic core. The somewhat modified area of medieval Burgage plots and lanes which used to run between Market Street/Bondgate Within and the southern section of Alnwick's former town walls, is now vacant and rundown in parts and in need of regeneration. Attention should also be given to enhancing the Bus Station/ supermarket area too, as this is also a 'first impression area' for bus-borne visitors. Other unattractive urban areas experienced from the main roads into the town and village also need identifying for possible attention in the interests of presenting well cared-for urban settlements to the visitor. The landscape in the south of the parishes is of inferior quality to that north of Alnwick and Denwick and would be worthy of survey and possibly upgrading.

#### **3.14.3 Options**

- Incentivise property owners to better maintain their properties through education, example by the statutory authorities, grant aid and collective recognition via publicity and awards.
- For those parts of the conservation area identified as requiring upgrading, comprehensive enhancement projects should be prepared and implemented in stages as resources become available, ensuring that some 'early win' projects are implemented to encourage an increased commitment to improvement.

#### **3.14.4 Consultation Questions**

- How can we raise the level of maintenance of our heritage assets?
- What incentives to private and public owners could be effective in increasing the understanding and considered care of historic properties?

### **3.15 An overall vision for a coherent, legible, sustainable and promoted townscape.**

**3.15.1 Nature** – The down-side of the issue-based approach required for this report is that it can lead to a fragmented view of our historic townscape, thus making it more difficult to get a balanced approach to the proper management of the various environmental positives and negatives that operate in our town and village. Branding and promotion of the area's townscape qualities, attractions and unique

identity must also be included as an essential element of the action package to achieve this overall vision. This will amplify the value of the goals of the vision as well as increase the motivation of all those involved. Such a balanced and comprehensive approach offers an opportunity for better management in the interests of maximising efficiency and convenience without sacrificing the historic quality and appearance we are so proud of. Although on the surface, taking a visionary overview of the conservation area in particular may seem totally inappropriate in times of austerity, in reality it is the best time to do this. It prepares 'bottom drawer' ideas and projects ready for better times as well as giving all involved something to work towards together.

**3.15.2 Scale** – Such creative visioning and overall composing of the townscape can be done at both whole town/village scale or just within the conservation area initially. As Alnwick's Conservation Area contains the historic and commercial core of the town which is used by all locals and visitors, it seems the best place to begin the preparation of such comprehensive visioning and action.

### **3.15.3 Options**

- Enhance and better compose the traffic and townscape of the conservation area via seeking permission to designate the centre of the town an Historic Core Zone, an official designation supported by government, English Heritage and the Historic Towns Forum, which enables a comprehensive approach to all the design, enhancement and regeneration issues identified above and enables all involved to deliver a coherent long term vision for Alnwick and Denwick. Revisiting Alnwick Civic Society's 2007 '*Study of the Streetscape in Central Alnwick*' would be a good place to begin this comprehensive approach.
- Such designations have been able to transform other English historic towns so the viability of this particular comprehensive approach for Alnwick can be helpfully explored in advance with representatives of these other towns.
- Branding should treat the area as a single resort town with a new image of quality and vitality, with castle, garden and town all promoted together on a level playing field of quality media material.
- Branding and promotion should play to the strengths of the area's townscape heritage: there are all kinds and sizes of heritage attractions from pants to churches to a new heritage railway to discover and promote through guides and trails; Alnwick town has distinctive quarters like the Castle Quarter – sometimes indicated by historic street names - also to be developed and discovered; more celebration of the area's glamorous history and famous and infamous historical people; Alnwick has the location and potential to become a hub of ancestry tourism for north Northumberland; the area could celebrate its heritage of traditional local food, drink and language; as well as developing its emerging tradition of medieval chivalry, warfare and pageant.

### **3.15.4 Consultation Question**

- Would the conservation area and its pedestrian/traffic balance benefit from the overall visioning and improvement possible through the declaration of it as an Historic Core Zone?

## 4. Beginning the Cross Cutting Process:

Having divided all that goes into the present life of Alnwick and Denwick into Topics for the purposes of research, now that this research has been done, it is necessary to 'put the bits back together again' into a viable plan for a better life in the Alnwick and Denwick of the future. The material below is offered as the first tentative steps in integrating the Heritage Topic back into the wider flow of future life in Alnwick and Denwick.

### 4.1 - Links with other ADNP Topics:

In the general nature of things, the Heritage Topic is inevitably linked with every other Topic. However, its strongest Links are with the following:

- Transport
- Retail and Tourism
- Economy and Employment
- Environment
- Community Facilities
- Housing

### 4.2 - Priority Heritage Proposals (within the Plan period):

**a** Carry out together a **Comprehensive Townscape Study** of Alnwick/Denwick and an **Intensive Study** of Alnwick's historic core (see Issue 1.)

This joint Study should include the following themes:

- a review of the 'gateway' qualities of roads as they enter the historic core (see Issue 3.)
- a review of the current boundaries of the Alnwick Conservation Area and a possible designation of a conservation area in Denwick (see Issue 4.)
- a review of the clutter and poor floorscape that threatens the character of the historic core (see Issue 8.)
- a review of urban trees in Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 9.)
- a review of enhancement opportunities throughout Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 14.)

**b** Carry out a **Comprehensive landscape Appraisal** of the landscapes around Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 2.)

This Appraisal should include the following themes:

- a review of the 'gateway' qualities of main roads entering the outskirts of Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 3.)
- a review of trees in the landscapes around Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 9.)
- a review of enhancement opportunities in the landscapes around the town and village (see Issue 14.)

**c** Carry out a package of actions on **Rescue and further Protection** of buildings throughout the urban areas (see Issue 5.)

This Package should include the following theme:

- adding a better understanding of vulnerable building features (see Issue 7.) to the the information campaign aimed at historic building owners (see Issue 5.)

**d** Carry out a **Study of traffic/pedestrian conflict and imbalance** in the historic core of

*Alnwick (see Issue 11.)*

**e Revitalise the *historic public spaces* of Alnwick (see Issue 12.)**

This treatment of public spaces to include the following theme:

- actions to improve the legibility of the whole townscapes of Alnwick and Denwick (see Issue 13.)

**f Scoping the development of an *Historic Core Zone* in the centre of Alnwick (see Issue 15.)**

### **4.3 - Land allocation (within the Plan period):**

Because heritage activity is primarily concerned with the protection, control and enhancement of existing historic structures and areas, it does not per se have a land allocation requirement for any new land. However, it is appropriate for the boundaries of conservation areas and the sites of protected structures or ancient monuments in 'development sensitive' locations, to be marked on a Land Allocation Map which may be part of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, because they are regarded as appropriate constraints on inappropriate development.

### **4.4 - Priority Heritage Policies (within the Plan period):**

- a Develop policies to guide *New Build and Alterations* in historic areas (see Issue 6.)**
- b Explore the need and value of *Additional Planning Controls* to prevent the erosion of townscape character (see Issue 7.)**
- c Properly resource and actively apply *existing Traffic and Planning enforcement policies* (see Issue 10.).**

## **5.HERITAGE APPENDICES**

### **5.1 - Threatened Heritage Assets (see Issue 5.)**

***Heritage at Risk identified by English Heritage:***

- 235619 Bondgate Tower, Bondgate Without (Listed Building Grade I)
- 235795 General Lambert's House, 31 and 32 Narrowgate (Listed Building Grade II\*)
- 1006474 Camp on Alnwick Moor (Scheduled Ancient Monument)

***Threatened Grade II Listed Buildings:***

- 235 698 No 20 and Mill at rear, Dispensary Lane
- 235699 Former Malthouse to north of No 20 Dispensary Lane
- 235731 Glebelands Lodge, Green Batt
- 235640 The Corn Exchange, 47 Bondgate Within
- 235687 High Pant, Clayport Bank
- 235861 Eye Catcher, Swansfield Park wall
- 235860 Camphill Column, Swansfield Park (?)

***Other High Grade Listed Buildings threatened by underuse or change of use:***

- 235675 Council Chambers/Old Post Office, Clayport Street (Grade II\*)
- 235773 Northumberland Hall/Assembly Rooms, Market Place (Grade I)
- 235768 Town Hall, Market Place (Grade I)

## **5.2 - Evidence Base**

- Heritage comments from ADNP Questionnaire (December 2011)
- Findings from three meetings of the Executive Committee of Alnwick Civic Society (January to April 2012)
- Lists of Heritage assets from NCC Conservation Team (11 April 2012)
- Meeting with NCC conservation team members (12 April 2012)
- Heritage report from ADNP Forum Discussion (24 July 2012)
- Presentation ('Writing the Plan') from a talk by David Chetwyn of Locality (30 July 2012)
- Alnwick Civic Society's response to draft Northumberland Core Strategy (9 August 2012)
- 'Design Guide for Shop Fronts', prepared for Alnwick District Council 1995
- 'Design Guide for Stonework Repairs', prepared for Alnwick District Council 1997
- 'Study of the Streetscape in Central Alnwick', 2007
- 'Guide to owning a Listed Building', Alnwick D C - Supplementary Planning Guidance January 2002
- 'Alnwick Conservation Area Character Appraisal', Alnwick D C 2006
- 'Design Guidance – Windows', Alnwick D C January 2007
- 'Design Guidance – Colour Scheme Guide', Alnwick D C January 2007
- 'Design Guidance – Conversion of Rural Barns', Alnwick D C January 2007
- 'Blyth Urban Design Guide and Public Realm Strategy', Blyth Valley B C June 2008

**Alnwick Civic Society  
(David Lovie 9 Sept. 2012)**