

Appendix 2 :

Comments Received to the Draft Northumberland Square Conservation Character Appraisal Consultation (November 2013) and Officer Response.

Company / Organisation	Nature of Comment	Comments	Officer Response
North of England Civic Trust	Support	I think the document is very good! It's good to see it updated, particularly the photos, and I hope the revised form proves valuable for development management and forward planning work, as well as considering new investment in the area. One minor suggestion in the Historical Development section would be to fill the white space left over by enlarging the maps or old images to make them as readable as possible.	The support is welcomed. The suggestion of enlarging the images for clarity is accepted and will be addressed accordingly.
English Heritage	Observation	Thank you for sending English Heritage a copy of the document for comment. Whilst we welcome the preparation, and updating, of character appraisals and management plans for the council's conservation areas, our priorities and our limited staff resources mean we are unable to provide substantive comments on each as and when they are produced. Instead I would ask you to have regard to the guidance produced by English Heritage on appraisals and management plans which you can download from our website if you do not already have copies.	To confirm, during the preparation of the Draft Appraisal the English Heritage guidance was taken into account. Observation noted.

<p>North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce</p>	<p>Support</p>	<p>The North Shields Chamber of Trade & Commerce broadly supports the suggestion of a more positive management of the Northumberland Square Conservation Area and is keen to support any initiatives which will increase the footfall in the town and which will make the town attractive for businesses, residents and visitors.</p>	<p>The support for the Character Appraisal is welcomed.</p>
	<p>Observation</p>	<p>We already have a number of well established residential properties and businesses in the area and it is critical that any developments take into account the essential requirements for these residents and businesses with regards to the use of the area for access, car parking and ambience in the area.</p>	<p>Conservation area status does not prevent change from happening in that area. It seeks to manage change in a way that preserves and enhances the historic environment as well as supporting functionality for everyday use. This message was a key aspect when updating the character appraisal.</p> <p>Observation noted.</p>
	<p>Observation</p>	<p>It is recognized that we should focus on the area and that any changes should protect the already significant historical importance of the area with regards to the architectural design of properties and street layout. It has to be recognized that there is a cost to maintaining and achieving this and that financial support will be required from Central Government, Local Government or other funding agencies for existing businesses and residents as existing tenants will be unable to fund the significant costs required. It also has to noted that significant private investment has already been made in the area although there still remains a number of properties in public hands in the area which have not had any investment and which would greatly improve the area through similar investment.</p>	<p>It is noted in the document that conservation status can be a means of securing funding. The issue of funding could be raised in more detail through the creation of a Management Strategy, which would take forward the observations raised in the Character Appraisal.</p> <p>The work already achieved by the North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce is appreciated and any further work taken would involve the group in the process where possible.</p> <p>Observation noted.</p>

	Observation	Considerable thought and consultation on access to the affected area needs to be given and the Chamber believes that full access to the area with regards to vehicle access for both private and public vehicles should be maintained.	Any comments relating to traffic in the Character Appraisal were purely observational. Access could be an issue to be raised in a Management Strategy, which would include a full public consultation. Observation noted.
	Support	The Chamber is keen that the proposed area does not become something which 'looks pretty' but which cannot be maintained because this we strongly believe is only possible with a vibrant business and residential community in the area for the full value of the conservation area to be achieved. We are very keen to be involved in any further consultation in all discussions and planning in relation to the Area and believe strongly that business involvement is essential.	Conservation area status does not prevent change from happening in that area. It seeks to manage change in a way that preserves and enhances the historic environment as well as supporting functionality for everyday use. This message was a key aspect when updating the character appraisal. A Management Strategy would take forward the observations and suggestions made in the Character Appraisal. It would look at more practical solutions to integrating conservation and functionality. Any further work would require public consultation. This would include working with the North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce and build on the support which they have given. Comment noted.
Business Owner	Support	I enjoyed reading the document, which clearly sets out the history of the area and raises many important issues relating to its future.	The time spent from all parties on looking at the document is appreciated.
	Observation	The key issue seems to me to be set out in the first paragraph on page 55: <i>"Change is an inevitable component of most conservation areas; the challenge is to manage change in ways which maintain and, if possible, strengthen an area's special qualities. The character</i>	Conservation area status does not prevent change from happening in that area. It seeks to manage change in a way that preserves and enhances the historic environment as well as supporting functionality for everyday use. This message was a key aspect when updating the Character Appraisal.

		<p><i>of conservation areas is rarely static and is susceptible to incremental, as well as dramatic change. Some areas are in a state of relative economic decline, and suffer from lack of investment. More often, the qualities that make conservation areas appealing also help to encourage over investment and pressure for development in them. Positive management is essential if such pressure for change, which tends to alter the very character that made the areas attractive in the first place, is to be limited."</i></p> <p>The balance that needs to be struck is that between preserving the area as a good and attractive example of Georgian architecture in an area which is not rich in such architecture, and moving forward in such a way that enables the enterprises and residents based there to conduct their businesses and lives in an untrammelled and prosperous manner.</p>	<p>Observation noted.</p>
	<p>Objection</p>	<p>Whilst originally, most of the buildings were probably residences, for very many years now, local business has taken over most of the occupancy of the area. It is undoubtedly the centre of North Shields, at least as far as the service industry is concerned; in other words, professional businesses, lawyers, accountants, estate agents etc, as against retail. Those businesses consider it to be a prestigious place from which to run their affairs; it is indeed an <i>"urban area with considerable status"</i> but I would not agree that it has slipped to <i>"jaded municipal"</i> but rather to <i>"grand municipal"</i> (all from page 46).</p> <p>However, the needs of those businesses must be properly taken into account in any reassessment of the area and its future management.</p>	<p>The word "jaded" was considered to be an appropriate description of the area, due to the issues raised in the Character Appraisal. Whilst the area has the potential to be "grand", for the reasons stated in the Character Appraisal, it is not considered to be so at present.</p> <p>Action proposed to remove the word "jaded" and describe as "municipal".</p>

	Observation	<p>I welcome, of course, any initiative to boost North Shields as a place to work and live. (A number of us, whether as part of the North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce or individually spend considerable time thinking about how prosperity can be brought back to the town.) A more focussed management plan would seem to be a forward step in this.</p>	<p>The observations and suggestions raised in the character appraisal could be developed further into a Management Strategy in the future. This would include public consultation with the North Shields Chamber of Commerce as well as business owners and residents.</p>
		<p>Management Topics</p> <p>1. On the positive side, under the heading of Regeneration (page 56), it is said that: <i>"..Central Zone and North Zone are ideal for a comprehensive, partnership-led, restoration initiative, based on capital grant aid and comprehensive public realm improvements.</i></p> <p>The north side of the Square is in the Central Zone. It is a beautiful line of buildings, which is also Grade 2 listed. We entirely endorse the desire to keep this line in as good a state as possible, reflecting, as far as one can, the original Georgian design. But the cost of repair and maintenance is very high. This is partly due to costs generally, partly due to the fact the LBC [listed building consent] is needed for most things and additional requirements are imposed. If this line and other parts of the Area are to be maintained in such a way as to leave the Area as an area of civic pride and an attraction to people to come and work in the town and bring prosperity, this cost needs to be shared between the owners and the State, whether in the form of local or state grants or perhaps as a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. I take the statement above to be agreeing with this sentiment. (On the HLF, if grants can be made to enhance the local parks, such</p>	<p>It is noted in the document that conservation status can be a means of securing funding. This could include bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The issue of funding could be raised in more detail through the creation of a Management Strategy, which would take forward the observations raised in the Character Appraisal.</p>

		as Northumberland, Wallsend and Churchill, it would seem that this Area should be just as worthy an object of HLF funds.)	
	Objection	<p>In this section, there is also a reference to transport: <i>"The issue of transport could also be addressed, especially around Northumberland Square, so that some tranquillity can be reinstated to the area."</i> I think that this is misconceived. The centre of the town needs bustle. The passing of public and private traffic, and people, is essential to the prosperity of the town. Remove the feeling of busyness, and the centre will fade away as a business centre.</p>	<p>The reference to traffic in the document was a suggestion based on the observation raised earlier in the document. It is considered that the traffic could also form part of the character of the area. The potential of traffic management could be an issue raised in a Management Strategy, which would include a full public consultation.</p> <p>Objection noted.</p>
	Support	2. I agree that there should be a review of the boundaries.	Comment of support noted.
	Support Observation	<p>3. A strategy to tackle at risk buildings is good. But this must be in consultation with the owners of the buildings - indeed, there should be continuing dialogue between the Council and the building owners, so as to address possible issues long before at risk issues arise. (Incidentally, I see that 17/17A are <i>"at risk"</i> (page 56). You should note that many tens of thousands of pounds have been spent in recent years on this property (and over £80,000 in the early '80s); further, more will soon be spent, for example, on making the damp basements fit for occupation. I should add here that I suspect that the atrocious state of 14-16, which were last occupied by the Council as the Town Clerk's and Borough Surveyor's offices, is a danger to the buildings on either side, in terms of damp, guttering etc.)</p>	<p>The buildings noted in the comment were considered to be "vulnerable" and "not yet at risk" in the buildings at risk survey. Buildings are often listed in groups, in (this case, 12-20 Northumberland Square) and they are assessed as one asset. It can be the case that some parts of the listed asset are more vulnerable/at risk than others. The Appraisal acknowledges that the most at risk part of this listed asset is 14-16 Northumberland Square.</p> <p>This section of the Appraisal acknowledges the fact that the condition of the buildings needs to be kept under review and to develop a strategy to tackle any issues that arise. It is also considered that this should be tied to a regeneration strategy for the area.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p>

	Observation	<p>4. The Guidance Notes are useful. But there is insufficient knowledge on the part of occupants of the Area of the obligations incumbent on them. It would be worth reminding occupiers and owners on a regular basis that the Guidance Notes exist and need to be consulted.</p>	<p>The Character Appraisal has several functions, including raising awareness of the conservation area. The production of the Appraisal and the associated consultation is seen as a good way to inform owners about the conservation area and what its management entails.</p> <p>The Character Appraisal sets out that the Council has produced several guidance documents about the management of heritage assets that we would urge property owners to consult. Similarly we would urge any property owner with queries about their property to contact the Planning team, who will be happy to provide guidance.</p> <p>The Appraisal also states "...more specific guidance for this conservation area could be beneficial as a proactive way of managing future change." A further way to be proactive, as suggested, could be to ensure that guidance is distributed to properties in the area. This suggestion could form part of a Management Strategy.</p> <p>Observation noted.</p>
	Observation	<p>5. Enhancement - in addition to the consultation mentioned, the owners of the relevant buildings should be part of the discussion.</p>	<p>It is hoped that further consultation, for future projects, would build on the support received for this Character Appraisal and take into account the various users of the area.</p>

	<p>Objection</p>	<p>6. Trees and green spaces. We have concerns here. As noted, many of the buildings are now used as commercial offices for service industries. For many decades, the area in front of almost all of the buildings has been used for parking by the owners or tenants of the offices; indeed, it was a recommendation of the Council to have parking there. It is essential for the continued occupation of these buildings that these parking areas remain as such. A conversion of these areas to green spaces would be going too far towards heritage - such a change would be very likely to result in the loss of tenants. Without tenants, the buildings would generate no income and we owners would have neither the cash nor the incentive to maintain them; this would have a major impact on both the desire to have a Georgian area as the important centrepiece of the town and on the business prosperity of the town.</p>	<p>The reference to reinstating front gardens was a suggestion based on historical and character observations raised earlier in the document. The point made under the “Management” section was a suggestion as to how this observation could be addressed in future development, and could form part of a Management Strategy.</p> <p>Objection noted.</p>
	<p>Observation</p>	<p>7. Listed Buildings. As noted, many of the buildings in the Area are Listed. Whereas I quite understand the need to have rules for such buildings, there needs to be a balance between heritage and current usage. The Council has some discretion as to the application of the rules; more understanding and a greater expedition in relation to LBC applications would be useful, so as to enable owners to keep the buildings in good order, yet also respond to current business needs.</p>	<p>Buildings are listed by central Government on advice from English Heritage, and are protected by law. Listed building consent must be applied for in order to make any changes to that building which might affect its special interest. Listing does not prevent change; buildings can be altered, extended and sometimes even demolished within government planning guidance. The local authority uses listed building consent to make decisions that balance the site's historic significance against other issues such as its function, condition or viability. The balance between functionality and conservation is appreciated. There is a process for the consideration of Listed Building applications, which takes into account information from specialist Consultees. All planning applications aim to be determined within 8 weeks,</p>

			<p>which allows for a consultation period of 21 days.</p> <p>The Council guide “Listed Buildings: A Guide for Owners and Occupiers” gives a full explanation of listing. The English Heritage website is also a useful resource. Both are mentioned in the Character Appraisal.</p> <p>Observation noted.</p>
	Support Observation	<p>In short, I welcome the initiative. But it is important that the desire to manage the Area as a Georgian centrepiece is balanced with the needs and wishes of the residents and business occupiers of the Area. Anything that has an adverse impact on the business community of North Shields will make it very difficult to maintain the town as the main trading and commercial town in North Tyneside and result in business leaving and the buildings falling into disuse disrepair. It is very important, moreover, that owners are not left on their own to maintain these buildings at great expense - grants from whatever source are essential.</p>	<p>Conservation area status does not prevent change from happening in that area. It seeks to manage change in a way that preserves and enhances the historic environment as well as supporting functionality for everyday use. This message was a key aspect when updating the Character Appraisal. A Management Strategy would take forward the observations and suggestions made in the character appraisal and would look at more practical solutions, which could include investigating funding.</p>
	Support	<p>Finally, I should very much like to be involved in further consultations and discussions on the Area and if, for example, you are putting together a group of residents/owners/businesses to work in partnership with the Council, I should like to be part of it.</p>	<p>The support given from the respondent is very much appreciated. It is hoped that further work will be able to build on this in further consultations.</p>