

LOW CONISCLIFFE & MERRYBENT PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Heritage Assets Background Paper



Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide background on the important heritage assets that lie within the Low Coniscliffe and Merrybent Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 1.2 Feedback on the background paper was sought as part of the consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan. The background paper has been updated following the consultation and to reflect the revised National Planning Policy Framework that was published in July 2018.

2. Background

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Development Plans to set a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. This should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance.
- 2.2 Heritage assets can either be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status and include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape of lesser significance. The NPPF defines a heritage asset as:
'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'

The Development Plan

- 2.3 The current Development Plan for the Plan area comprises the: Darlington Core Strategy (2011) and the saved policies of the Darlington Local Plan (1997). Both documents pre-date the NPPF therefore the weight that may be given to the policies within them depends on the level of compliance with the NPPF.
- 2.4 Darlington Core Strategy policy CS14 identifies the need to protect, enhance and promote the quality and integrity of Darlington's distinctive designated national or nationally significant built heritage. In addition, the policy makes reference to: Conservation Areas and their settings; assets on the Local List; building and features that reflect Darlington's railway, industrial and Quaker heritage; and buildings on the local 'at risk' register.
- 2.5 A number of policies included within the Darlington Local Plan were either superseded following the adoption of the Core Strategy or were not saved beyond 2007. No relevant policies remain within the Local Plan regarding heritage assets.

3. The Historic Assets of the Parish

Our History

- 3.1 Low Coniscliffe, which means King's Cliff, is a small village with a history spanning many hundreds of years.
- 3.2 The earliest evidence of occupation in Low Coniscliffe is a burial mound, the remains of which, perhaps 4000 years old, has recently been found on the field to the East of Gate Lane at the entrance to the village of Low Coniscliffe. The mound dates from between 2400 BC and 1500 BC and shows that pastoral people of the time had developed an attachment to the Low Coniscliffe area. There are two concentric circular ditches, the widest being 45 metres in diameter and in the centre, there was once a stone cairn containing the remains of a locally important person. He could have been an elder or even a chief, and probably buried in a kist, which is a stone coffin, or his body could have been cremated and the ashes swept into a funerary urn before being placed in the cairn. Some of his descendants may have followed him into the cairn but there were no human remains found during excavation.
- 3.3 It is recorded that Bishop Anthony Bek (Bishop of Durham), medieval knight, 1245 -1311, ordered that a tower be built in Coniscliffe. It was built between 1283 and 1310 and was probably on the site of the manor house. The precise site is believed to be at the south west end of the village, close to the River Tees and the A1 (M) to the west, where the earthwork enclosures of the medieval manor are still visible in the fields. It is recorded that in addition to the Manor House there were a further 12 houses and outbuildings on the site with 480 acres of arable land and 20 acres of meadow.

- 3.4 Low Coniscliffe also had gallows, most probably on the site of the Manor House. It is recorded that in 1292 Lord John of Graystone had gallows in Coniscliffe where he administered his own peculiar jurisdiction by executing any felon he caught within the Manor of Coniscliffe which presided over both Low Coniscliffe and High Coniscliffe.



Medieval Barn

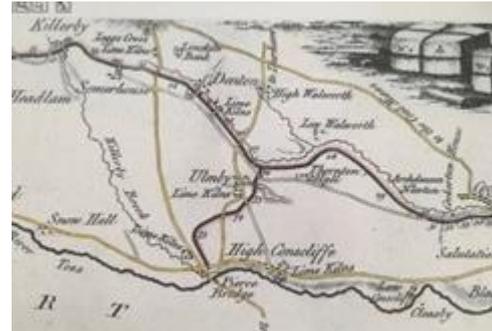
- 3.5 Low Coniscliffe had a medieval tythe barn where villagers presented 10 per cent of their harvest to the church. This dated from at least the 17th century until it was demolished in the early 1960's.

- 3.6 The name Gate Lane comes from the turnpike gate that in 1762 stood on the A67 near the entrance to the village. In 1747, the Government granted permission for a turnpike trust to be established comprising of local wealthy people who took ownership of the road from Stockton to Barnard Castle. The trustees spent money on repairing the road and were then able to charge people for using it; a very early form of privatisation. The trustees collected their tolls at the turnpike gates. They also marked out their road with milestones which, after 1880, were replaced by metal mileposts. Consequently, the name Gate Lane was associated with the main access road through Low Coniscliffe and has remained such for over 250 years.



1711 - 1743

3.7 In the early 1800's Low Coniscliffe was a farming community with six farms, of which four were located within the compact area of the village: Coniscliffe Grange, Low Coniscliffe East, Low Coniscliffe West and the Homestead. A large area of the village was covered with orchards, some of which were removed when the school and school house were built. Then in 1888 the Homestead farm was split into several lots and sold.



1734 - 1799

3.8 The Baydale Beck Inn is an important landmark within the Parish. There has been an inn on the site for over 250 years, the original being called the Badle Beck Inn, built of river cobbles from the Tees. It was part of the ancient manor of Coniscliffe built on the boundary of the Parish. During 1770, it was the haunt of Catton's Gang of thieves in addition to the famous Dick Turpin whose bedroom curiously had five access doors – presumably for a quick getaway. Another notorious regular was Sir William Browne, last of the Mosstroopers who was sentenced to death at Newcastle in 1743 for returning from transportation. Indeed, the Inn had such a bad name that the landlord let it with 20 acres of land for £8 per annum



Baydale Beck Inn

1888 - 1913

3.9 The site of the Manor House is indicated on the oldest historic map dating from 1856-1865 and was located to the south west end of the present village in a field once known from 1066 to 1540 as Hallgarth in Low Coniscliffe. Earthworks 50 years ago revealed the Manor House and associated structures including a dovecote from the 15th-16th century. There is reputed to be another dovecote here, but the location is unknown.



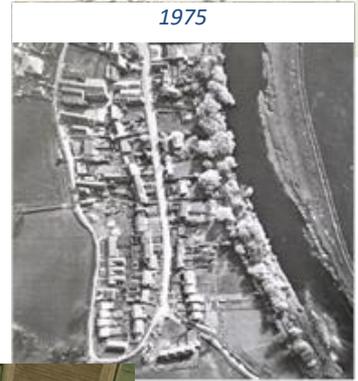
1856 - 1865



1940



1948



1975



1993



Current image from Google Maps

3.10 The village of Merrybent is a linear village situated on the A67 road three miles to the west of Darlington, a short distance from the River Tees and the Teesdale Way. It is separated from Darlington by green fields, motorway and the Baydale Beck which contribute to its contained rural individuality.

3.11 The earliest occupation in Merrybent appears to be in the 1800's when Lark House farm was built. The farm which is located some distance from the A67 on the north western end of Merrybent, was purchased by the grandfather of the current owner in 1912 and ownership has passed on to his descendants. The farmhouse has not been occupied for several years and has fallen into disrepair. Since 1989 the current farmer has lived behind the farmhouse in the original farmhand's cottage which has been extended and modernised.



3.12 Originally the farm extended to 157 acres but when the farmer died in 1929 the property was worth a lot less than when purchased due to the worldwide slump. At that time his wife had to sell off parcels of land totalling 27 acres to cover the death duties. Following this sale in the early 1930's plans were made to build the first six houses on the South Eastern end of Merrybent.

3.13 The main feature in Merrybent was the Nurseries, which comprised 56 glasshouses, owned by the Co-operative. During World War II there were land girls from the Women's Land Army working at Merrybent Nurseries. These girls grew tomatoes, controlled the rats and were billeted in Darlington.

3.14 Merrybent gradually developed over the following years, the majority of the western end being built on the land sold by the owner of Lark House farm, several further properties being built in the 1940's. Further development continued in a linear style in the 1950's. More recently in 2008-9 a large new housing development took place on the greenfield site of Merrybent Nurseries which effectively doubled the number of properties in Merrybent. The land belonging to Lark House stretches to Prospect Farm in the East which appears to have been built in the early 1900's.



3.15 The only other farm within the parish is Coniscliffe Grange which is sited on the far northern boundary on the eastern side of the A1M. It was built in 1750 and the father of the current owner purchased it in 1922. At this time the old toll house was still standing at the farm entrance and the purchase included one cottage built in the 1800's for occupation by the farmhand.

The Railway

3.16 In 1856 the Darlington and Barnard Castle Railway was opened operated by the S & D.R. (Stockton and Darlington Railway) which joined the N.E.R. (North Eastern Railway) in 1863 but effectively remained independent for years after. In 1870 the Merrybent and Darlington Railway was built as a branch line which left the Darlington and Barnard Castle Railway at Merrybent to carry stone from various quarries; it ran from Archdeacon Newton to Barton quarry in North Yorkshire. It was closed in 1878 when the company went bankrupt, but the line and quarries were re-opened by North Eastern Railway in 1890.

North Eastern Railway Company, Hull & Barnsley Railway Company, and Hull Joint Dock Committee, were dissolved and united into one company by the name, North Eastern Railway Company as from 1st April 1922. North Eastern Railway Company became part of London & North Eastern Railway Company as from 1st January 1923 under North Eastern, Eastern, and East Scottish Group Amalgamation Scheme 1922. The railway was abandoned in 1938, and later dismantled.



Original railway bridge

- 3.17 The image at the top of the page, shows the railway bridge, which was destroyed by fire in 1952, and people skating on the frozen river. The second image is of a temporary bridge which was built adjacent to the site in the early 1960's to enable construction traffic, which were undertaking the building of the new A1(M), to traverse the river. The bridge was only strong enough to support the weight of one lorry and was demolished, when the concrete structure which followed the site of the old railway bridge was completed, shortly before the A1(M) opened on 14th May 1965.



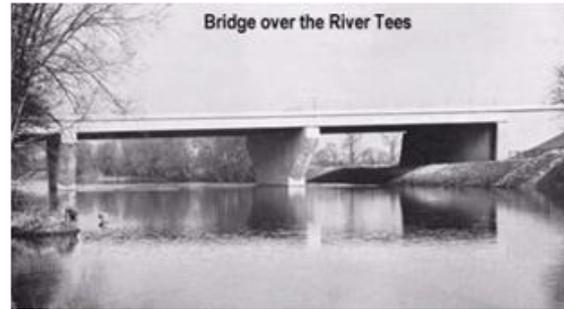
Temporary railway bridge

The A1(M)

- 3.18 A by-pass of Darlington was first considered in September 1929, when a proposal to widen and utilise Carmel Road met with strong opposition. Three other options were therefore considered, one to the east and two to the west of Darlington, and eventually a route was located west of the cemetery and coinciding for some of its length with Nickstream Lane. The overall highway width was then to be 60 ft, the total length 5½ miles and the estimated cost £240,000. New bridge crossings over the River Tees for all three schemes were in the vicinity of Blackwell Bridge, one being to the east and the other two to the west, in the bend of the river known as "The Holmes". This scheme was shelved during the economic depression in July, 1930.
- 3.19 In 1935 the overall highway width for the by-pass was amended to 120 ft but no further action was taken. Following the passing of the Trunk Road Act in 1936, a draft Order to protect the line of the by-pass agreed in 1930 was made in December 1938. Planning work on the project was shelved during the war and when it resumed in 1945, three much longer lines for the by-pass came under consideration as part of a national road plan. Of these the Ministry of Transport local line located west of Darlington and also west of the Merrybent mineral railway line was adopted and a Trunk Road Order was made in August 1948, to protect this line and to rescind the previous Order made in 1938.
- 3.20 About this time the old Merrybent mineral railway line was abandoned over the whole of its length from Archdeacon Newton in County Durham to Barton Quarry in the North Riding of Yorkshire, so the opportunity was taken in June 1950 to move the line of the by-pass slightly eastward to coincide generally with the abandoned railway line as far south as its crossing of Barton Beck. Severance would thereby be minimised and the area of agricultural land required for construction purposes would be much reduced. Survey and design work started in earnest in September 1957 and had reached an advanced stage when, in 1959, due to a sustained objection to the line of the Barton Trunk Road By-pass, the Ministry of Transport decided to amend the alignment of the motorway at its southern end. The line of the Barton Trunk Road By-pass was abandoned and the main motorway alignment was swung westwards and extended further south along the line of the disused mineral railway line through Barton Quarry to join

the existing Trunk Road A1 near Kneeton Corner. The scheme was confirmed in December, 1961, to become operative in January, 1962.

- 3.21 Numerous bridges were constructed comprised of a mixture of steel, pre-stressed concrete and composite construction. Three of these bridges were constructed over the River Tees, prior to the motorway construction commencing, to facilitate the traversing of the river by the heavy construction plant.



- 3.22 On Monday 6th May 1963 the Rt. Hon. Earnest Marples MP Minister of Transport 'cut the first sod' at the inauguration of the A1 work. The A1, built from 1963–1965, now follows the old rail trackbed as far as Barton quarries. After various planning adjustments, construction of this stretch of the A1 started officially by Dowsett Engineering Ltd. of Gateshead for the construction of 10.5 miles of motorway to by-pass Darlington and Barton. This formed the first stage of the 31mile Durham motorway and is an important part in the Ministry of Transport modernisation of the Great North Road. It gave relief to the important Borough of Darlington, which is an early industrial town based on the former N.E.R. locomotive works, iron and brass foundries and worsted mills, by removal of a substantial volume of heavy lorries and other fast traffic. Peak production occurred in 1964, involving up to 800 men, and the road was opened on 14 May 1965 at a final cost of £6.5 million.
- 3.23 The by-pass runs from just north of Kneeton Corner, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, to Crumbley Corner in County Durham and cost £6.5 million. It passes through country entirely rural in character and follows closely the line of the old disused Merrybent Railway thus minimising severance. The only property affected being the old Station House at Barton and the Merrybent Nurseries glasshouses.
- 3.24 The Darlington By-pass A1(M) together with the two miles Motorway Spur to Blackwell Bridge and Darlington A66(M) was opened on the 14th May 1965 by the Rt Hon. Tom Fraser, Minister of Transport who cut the tape across the Southbound carriageway.

Locally important buildings

- 3.25 Today there are 92 properties in Low Coniscliffe of which 26 are old, some dating back to the 16th century, many of these can easily be identified by their structure of river stone. The following section provides some background to the older properties in the village which are important heritage assets.

Squirrel Oaks, 1 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.26 A property which was added to number 1A to create a much larger home but has now been converted into two.



1A Low Coniscliffe

- 3.27 Built on the gable end of number 3 in the 1800's. This is interesting, as even at that time, this method was used to minimise the cost and use of building materials. The construction of this property is random rubble stone with lime render.



Sunnyside, 3 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.28 Sits on the corner of Gate Lane and Back Lane. It was built in 1810 and would have formed the first property on entering Low Coniscliffe until the adjacent property was built in 1820. Again, it is evident that the construction is random rubble beneath the lime render.



7 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.29 This property was built in 1779 and was a very traditional design for rural properties of the period. Again, the construction was of random river stone with lime render transported from the lime kilns at High Coniscliffe and prominent stone lintels. An extension was added to the property in the late 1900's and has been sympathetically built of natural cobble stone to blend with the adjoining river stone boundary wall.



8 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.30 This is a relatively modern property but there was a well located immediately outside, adjacent to Gate Lane where the road bends. The location is shown on older maps and was covered over when the road was widened circa 1968. However, the road sank a few years later in the location of the well and additional work was undertaken to reinstate the road. The steel trough currently in the paddock to the rear of number 8 is the trough also shown on the old maps which was originally located adjacent to the Well and the Teasdale way. There is an ancient historic hedgerow, which predates 1850 and is well documented and recorded, in the field to the East of Gate Lane and located to the rear of number 8.

School House, 11 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.31 Built as the residence of the school mistress and is attached to the school. It was completed in 1890 and is an interesting T shaped construction, with the gables of the School and the school house facing in different directions, which was not a common design of its time. The construction is of 19th century bricks with a slate roof as is the adjoining school.



The Old School, 15 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.32 Built in 1877 at which point the orchard on the chosen site was destroyed. Arthur Pease of Hummersknott paid for the building of the British school after a girl had been killed crossing the Merrybent railway bridge to attend classes in Cleasby.

3.33 A mixed school was erected to accommodate 105 children - the average attendance was 42. The name was later changed from Low Coniscliffe British School to Low Coniscliffe Council Junior Mixed and Infants' School. As referenced with the School House, it is built of traditional 19th century brickwork with a slate roof. What is interesting and still apparent is the small playground to the frontage which is isolated from the road by brickwork and steel railings for the protection of the school children.



3.34 The school closed in 1960 and was subsequently used as a storage facility until sold in the 1980's for conversion into a residential property which has retained a number of the original features.



Durmast, 17 Low Coniscliffe

3.35 This property was originally known as Durmast House (a name derived from a European Oak) and was built in 1678. The back of the house was added between 80 and 100 years later probably during the Industrial Revolution when back to back properties were popular. This addition doubled the size of the property and created a double pitched roof forming a valley gutter.



3.36 Durmast House operated as a dairy farm until the 1970's and had its own milk bottles with Durmast Dairy emblazoned in red. The property faces south and is of an interesting construction of random river stone with sliding sash windows. The original handmade clay tiles were replaced many years ago with tiles sympathetic to its history and construction. The dairy was to the north of the property which provided access directly onto Back Lane.

3.37 The area in front of the property is reputed to have been the village green during the 17th and 18th century but now forms the front garden. The property was originally a Grade II Listed Building but was delisted a number of years ago. It was common practice due to sparsity of property in villages during this period to identify houses and farms by name and it was only recently that the number 17 has been allocated to the property.

The Barn

3.38 A 17th century barn is located on Gate Lane and is built of random rubble river stone with a handmade clay pantile roof. It is believed this was used to store farm equipment and was associated with a bull shed which has subsequently been incorporated into the adjacent property. Several years later an addition was added to the southeast gable end of the barn as can be seen from the different building materials used.





The Cottage, 16 Low Coniscliffe

3.39 The Cottage, 16 Low Coniscliffe, was built in 1890 and having undergone restoration the adjacent bull shed was incorporated into the property's structure. An interesting fact is the adjoining cottage has a flying freehold over the front door

of this property. While this is not completely unusual it was not a common practice in rural locations of the era.



Teasdale House, 18 Low Coniscliffe



3.40 Built in 1850, Teasdale House used to be the village pub and Post Office. The property has a rendered finish to the front elevations, a slate roof and sliding sash windows in keeping with the period. The external trapdoor which was used to provide access for the barrels into the cellar still exists. The rear of the property has an interesting roofline, where the property has altered over the years, and is partly tiled and partly slated. The garden to the rear of the property runs directly to the River Tees and holds fishing rights.

Wellbank Cottage, 20 Low Coniscliffe

3.41 Originally named Wellbank House and is listed as such. It is a grade II listed building, (listing entry 1121197), near the south east corner of the village and in close proximity of the river. It is built on Wellbank Lane, from which its name is derived. The lane leads directly to the bank of the river and the name relates to the original well, which serviced the village and is in the garden of this property.



3.42 The house was originally linked to the farming community and is late 18th Century. It is built of roughcast rubble and has a pantiled roof with brick chimney stack. It has 2 storeys, 2 windows, flush quoins at the right and central boarded door with cambered lintel; replaced 4-pane sash at the left and 16-pane horizontal-sliding sash, with segmental head, at the right. There are two 20-pane horizontal-sliding sashes above. The steeply-pitched roof has a raised right verge. The right end stack has been rebuilt. There is an external chimney on the right return. A rear one- storey outshoot has been added. The interior of the property has a two-flight cut-string dogleg staircase and a 19th century iron range which is flanked by panelled cupboards in the sitting room.

West Farm, 19 Low Coniscliffe

3.43 Built in the late 17th Century. It operated daily as a pig farm until 1995 and also had a grain dryer which was accessed from Back Lane and was used as part of the working farm until its closure in 1995. The buildings housing the pigs were on the adjacent sites, now known as West Farm Villa and West Farm View.

3.44 Although originally built in the 1600's an extension was added to the eastern end of the rear face of the property in 1869 – this is



evidenced by the date chistled into the lintel above one of the entrance doors. The farm had its own blacksmith facility and the wall separating the property from the nearby cottages still has the remains of the fireplace which was used to forge steel by the blacksmith.

Clove Cottage, 21 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.45 One of three cottages now converted to two which were built about 1790 in cobble stone which is evident beneath the render and were originally used to house farm workers of West Farm. To enlarge the property a two-storey extension was added in the 1990's to the rear elevation.



Appletree Cottage, 23 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.46 Also, one of three cottages now converted to two, which were built about 1790 and were originally used by farm workers of West Farm. The frontage was originally built of cobble stone with a rear extension added at a later date.



Britton House, 27 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.47 Built in 1750 and operated as a farm. This house together with the two adjoining cottages were the first houses in the village to have electricity installed. The rear of the property still has the original forge with bellows which were used by the blacksmith for many years. Adjoining this building is the original stables with boxes to accommodate three horses.



Orchard House, 29 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.48 Built in 1795 it was originally 2 cottages forming part of the next-door farm, Britton House which at that time was owned by Henry Stourton. Originally this property was known as Tees View House and was number 31 Low Coniscliffe. To the rear of the property was a dairy which was built from random rubble stone. The boundary walling which is still present today is of the same construction and built at the time the property was erected.



31 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.49 This property was also built of river stone in 1790 to accommodate farm workers. It has undergone substantial restoration to retain its original character and it is now used as a family home.



34-40 Low Coniscliffe

3.50 Numbers 34 – 40 Low Coniscliffe formed part of the farming aspect of the Manor House. These cottages were once part of the water corn-mill and were built in 1650, their design being a standard two up and two down property. The deeds state that in 1789 there were four dwellings with orchards. At that time, the river ran much closer to the back gardens than it currently does and boats tethered to the rear of these properties. Over subsequent years some of these cottages have been extended, which has primarily been to the rear to increase the accommodation space within, while maintaining the building frontage. The rear boundary walls of these cottages still exist built of original cobble stones. Indeed, evidence of this can still be seen in places, where parts of the front boundary walls are still remaining.



34 Low Coniscliffe

3.51 This property was built in 1650. Mill Cottages deeds state in 1789 Alfred Austin and Elizabeth Rickaby owned the 4 dwellings and orchards. At that time, this property was named 1 Rickaby Cottages and the village was covered with orchards, but the last of them was destroyed to build the school in 1877. This property which has been extended to the rear is constructed of cobble stone

which has been rendered over. The original cobble stone boundary walling is still visible.



36 Low Coniscliffe

3.52 As referenced, this property was also built in 1650 and is constructed of cobble stone which has been rendered over.



38 Low Coniscliffe

3.53 As with the previous reference to these cottages, this property was built in 1650 and is constructed of cobble stone which has been rendered over. However, this property has had some extension to the frontage which has been undertaken in recognition of the age and style of the property to ensure it is sympathetic to the character of the period.

Old Mill Cottage, 40 Low Coniscliffe

3.54 Old Mill Cottage, 40 Low Coniscliffe, is the last in this 1650 development of four cottages and as with the neighbouring cottages is also constructed of river stone which has subsequently been rendered over. The property has been extended to both the front and the rear. In 1650 the river ran along the bottom of the garden but over the years the river has gradually changed course and is now some hundred yards away from the property.



35 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.55 This house was built in 1790 and was originally built as one property, then split into two cottages, but later converted back into one. The current resident believes there were salt pits behind his property. The driveway at the rear of the property runs north onto Back Lane next to number 93 where there is evidence of a Saxon path.



55-57 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.56 At the south west end of the village, are numbers 55 and 57 Low Coniscliffe which date from the 17th century. They were originally built as one construction providing a farmhouse with a cottage to the right. Today this pair of cottages are listed Grade II (listing entry 1139006) and are built of roughcast brick and rubble structure with a pantiled roof and have brick chimney stacks.



- 3.57 The cottages are two storeys high with three windows and a number of years ago were subjected to substantial restoration to ensure their preservation. The doors, which flank a central window, have been replaced. The windows have also been replaced with four pane sashes in 19th century openings. There are three projecting brick courses at the eaves and as the building was built as one the roof line is continuous being tiled with tiled verges and the ridge stacks have been rebuilt. These properties have a rubble stone boundary wall which is curtilage listed.



Hinde Cottage, 94 Low Coniscliffe

- 3.58 94 Low Coniscliffe, was built in 1898 as part of the farming network. This is now a rendered property but what makes it unique, within the village of Low Coniscliffe, is at the time of construction all the houses were facing onto Gate Lane but this one was built behind the other dwellings with the entrance door on the gable end facing onto Back Lane.



Walls, gateways and street furniture

- 3.59 Low Coniscliffe has more natural stone walling than any other village in the Borough of Darlington and the following range of photographs



portray the natural stone walling which runs throughout the village. These walls are primarily constructed from river stone which was a natural and easily obtainable material locally, with many of the walls dating from the 17th century. These walls are found in numerous places within the village, separating individual properties from their neighbour and providing a barrier to the highway. The walls act as a stone chain, linking the various boundaries of individual properties within the oval highway which forms the ring of development of the village.



Wood Lane

- 3.60 Wood Lane runs off Gate lane at the bottom south western corner of the village, and leads to an old ford, which provided the village with access over the river to Boathouse Lane and Cleasby. The area to the left of Wood Lane is frequently flooded, especially during winter periods. This is indicative of how the River Tees has moved south from the original path at the rear of properties on Gate lane, resulting in a low water line in this area. There are sections of the River Tees at Low Coniscliffe which are passable by large farming machinery and are used seasonally.

Gateways

- 3.61 As referenced previously, the village has a ribbon of natural river stone walls and these are broken by a range of individual styled gates. Many of these represent the farming heritage while others reflect the rural cottage nature of the village. Photographs of some of these have been included to provide a flavour of the views and gateways around the village. It is clear that where gates have decayed or been damaged they have been restored or replaced to retain the style associated with their original era.



Street Furniture

- 3.62 The present mix of verges and pavements of varying dimensions host the traditional post box, litterbins, timber bollards and bridleway signage which endorses the rural feel of the village. To identify the village of Low Coniscliffe, whilst maintaining the rural feel, a sandstone plaque was installed in 2000 at the entrance to Gate Lane. Ten years ago, craftsman constructed wooden notice board were positioned on the verges of Gate Lane and the Northern side of the A67 in Merrybent to notify residents and visitors of future events and important local information. Recently, attractive wooden barrels have been purchased and located near the notice boards and at the entrance to the villages to create attractive displays of plants throughout the year.



- 3.63 A decommissioned telephone box in Low Coniscliffe has recently been purchased from BT and converted into a library and book exchange for the use of villagers. This has been welcomed by residents and is being well used.



4. Key Actions and Next Steps

- 4.1 The Parish Council has been looking at ways to enhance our historic villages for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors alike and at present are addressing a number of issues as presented below:
- Reinstating street name signs in the original style and materials;
 - Installing a bench to be positioned on Gate Lane for visitors to enjoy; and
 - Exploring the options of purchasing a red K6 telephone box as previously located in the village.
- 4.2 An important role of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that through the planning process, new development will provide protection and enhancement of heritage assets across the Parish. Thereby conserving and respecting the traditional historic character, scale, density and feel of buildings and places across the Parish.