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**ISUF Task Force on Research and Practice in Urban Morphology**

**Case Study: South Jesmond Conservation Area, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK**



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## SUMMARY

- The South Jesmond Conservation Area was selected as one of four case studies to investigate the application of urban morphological principles in practice and the issues arising from this
- South Jesmond developed as an elite and upper middle class Victorian suburb in Newcastle upon Tyne with substantial amounts of open space and trees
- The area has undergone a variety of development pressures that have changed over time, the main contemporary ones relating to colonisation by small businesses and, more significantly, the sub-division of property for student residences
- South Jesmond was designated as a Conservation Area in 1987 but it was not until 2007 that a full Character Statement and associated Management Plan was published
- Although not presented in 'academic' terms, the Character Statement recognises a variety of morphological principles as being fundamental in the successful implementation of conservation practice
- The adoption of the Character Statement and Management Plan does appear to have had a positive impact on recent planning and conservation outcomes within the area with some evidence of the positive role of informal negotiation
- However, the recognition of so-called 'character areas' within South Jesmond is problematic and appears to be a convenient management tool rather than a detailed analysis and description of morphological character
- A number of conceptual and functional obstacles in the practical application of urban morphological principles may be recognised from this case study
- Although academic urban morphologists and practitioners share a common interest in urban form and townscapes, they approach these from different professional and cultural perspectives and this remains the most fundamental obstacle that needs to be overcome for successful collaboration

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

### **1.1 ISUF Task Force**

This Report forms a small part of the work undertaken by the ISUF Task Force on 'Research and Practice in Urban Morphology'. This was established early in 2012 to investigate the ways in which ISUF could build 'better bridges between researchers in urban morphology and practitioners'. Four areas of activity resulted:

1. The publication of a manifesto setting out the role, purpose and benefits of using urban morphology in practice
2. The compilation and publishing of university level curricula in urban morphology courses in different countries
3. The production of a 'good practice catalogue' of how and where urban morphology is being used successfully
4. The creation of an urban morphology 'tool kit' for understanding the past and planning the future of urban settlements.

This Report is concerned with the third of these areas of activity and is one of four case studies attempting to assess the degree to which urban morphological principles have been utilised in practice and to examine the issues arising from these attempts.

### **1.2 The South Jesmond Conservation Area**

The study area is the South Jesmond Conservation Area in Newcastle upon Tyne, designated in 1987 (Figure 1.1). However, it was not until the early 2000s that a detailed rationale and description of the area was produced with the publication and approval of the South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement (Newcastle City Council, 2001; 2007). It is in this more recent Character Statement that implicit urban morphological principles can be found. Although there is no explicit requirement that the Character Statement for any Conservation Area should contain or even recognise specific 'urban morphological' principles, it is clear that in the case of South Jesmond and the sections dealing with the area's special character and appearance, several such principles were implicit, even if not formally or directly recognised as such.

The Conservation Area forms a compact area of late Victorian/Edwardian villas and open spaces such as cemeteries and the Northumberland County Cricket Ground (Barke, 2004). However, the area is under pressure (and has been from before designation, although this has increased substantially) from two particular sources (1) its relative proximity to the city centre and easy transport access to the east of the city has brought about significant conversion from substantial town houses to commercial office property and other uses such

as hotels (2) the presence of a substantial student population (increasing enormously of course in the past 15 years or so) in much of the rest of the Jesmond area which has



**Figure 1.1. Boundaries of South Jesmond Conservation Area**

produced a 'spill-over' effect into South Jesmond with pressures for conversion for multi-occupation. In addition to these, the survival of a number of large villa-type properties standing in substantial grounds has led to considerable intensification of ground space occupancy through processes of in-filling and second cycle development. It is evident that, within the property market, there also remains a significant latent demand for this type of change.

These, and other pressures, create a situation where the continued existence of an inherited morphological structure that produces a distinctive character and appearance is under considerable threat. This character is a product of a range of distinctive morphological features and their survival depends substantially on the recognition of urban morphological concepts and principles. This project is concerned with attempting to assess the extent to

which these morphological principles are being recognised and defended in the on-going management of the Conservation Area.

### **1.3 The research methodology**

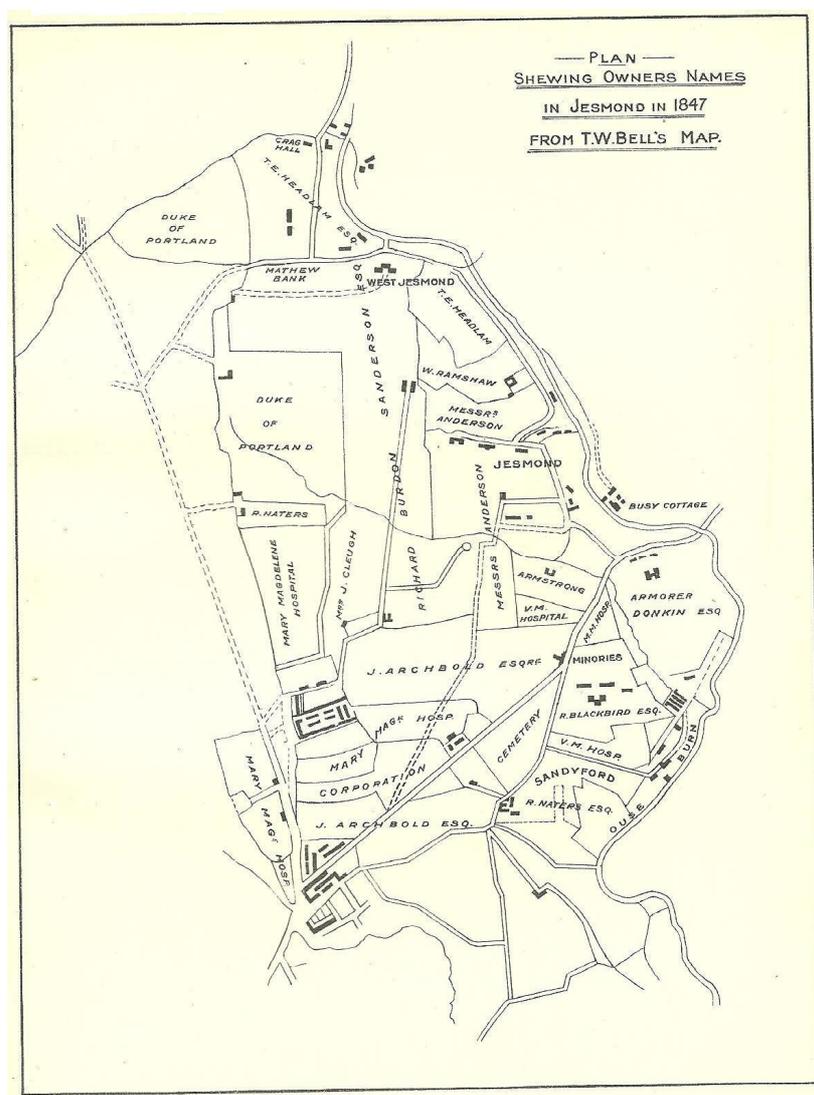
A first stage in the research was to carry out a detailed content analysis of the Conservation Area Character Statement and Management Plan with the objective of identifying the extent to which morphological principles were recognised in defining the character of the area and its component parts and in the strategies to be pursued in their management. It should be stressed that there was no expectation that 'technical' terms used in academic practice would be reproduced within these documents. Rather, the purpose was to identify the recognition 'in spirit' of key morphological features, regardless of the language used to describe them. This issue is discussed more fully in section 5.0.

The research then involved producing a data base of all planning applications and responses within this area from the 1970s to the present in order to evaluate the extent to which urban morphological principles - implicit within the Conservation Area designation and certainly within the Character Statement - are being adhered to in response to the pressures identified above. The Conservation Area is a relatively small one and it is intended to produce a detailed planning history for each plot within the area. Some specific time points are seen as being potentially pivotal, one being the declaration of the Conservation Area in 1987, others being the production of the Character Statement in 2000 and its later revision in 2007. Applications for planning permission within the area are available on-line back to 1972.

A third stage of the research involved carrying out interviews with the relevant Newcastle upon Tyne Planning and Conservation Officers in relation to (a) the original designation of the area (b) the production and influences upon the Character Statement and its up-date and (c) the continuing management issues and problems as they relate to morphological principles inherent within the Character Statement.



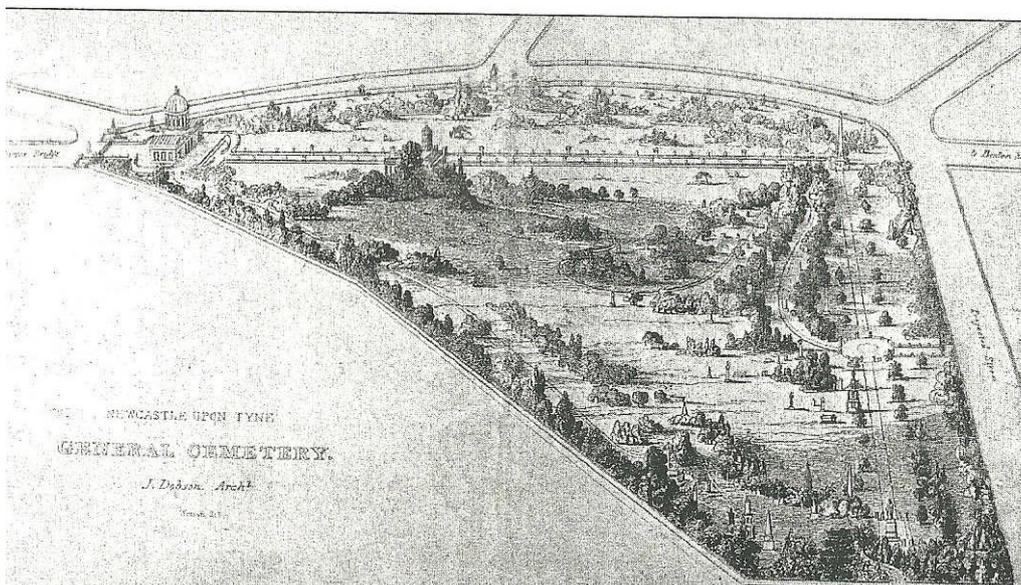
mid-nineteenth century in the wider area of Jesmond produced an even more consolidated pattern of ownership (Dendy, 1904). In the specific area that became the South Jesmond Conservation Area, the bankruptcy of the Warwick family in 1821, who had owned much of the area since 1741, led to the sale of their estate to Thomas Burdon Sanderson and James Archbold. It was the decision making of these individuals that was central to the timing and form of development in this part of Jesmond.



**Figure 2.2. Principal Land Owners in Jesmond, 1847 (after Dendy, 1904)**

However, the first significant developments were not residential but concerned the creation of what, at the time, was Newcastle's outer fringe belt (Whitehand, 1967). This was the opening in 1836 of the Newcastle General Cemetery in 'Jesmond Fields', owned by Newcastle Corporation (Morgan, 2000). This was in response to increasing concern over the crowded and unhygienic state of the parish church yards in the town. After a public meeting in the Guildhall in 1836 a private company was formed with 400 shares of £20

each. The architect for the scheme was John Dobson whose original plan (Figure 2.3) was on a grand scale including a large mausoleum.



**Figure 2.3. Dobson's original design for Jesmond 'General Cemetery' (after Morgan, 2000)**

Although this was subsequently scaled down, Dobson's scheme remained impressive, especially the classical entrance arch and adjoining chapels on what became Jesmond Road (Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.4. Jesmond General Cemetery, John Dobson's Entrance Arch and Chapels**

Dobson designed the cemetery perimeter with high protective walls to deter grave robbers. Dobson's prestige as an architect of international standing has led to his work acquiring special status and the listing of his output, including Jesmond cemetery. This was an important component in the designation of the Conservation Area and, earlier, in controversies concerning proposed developments affecting the area.

Twenty years after the opening of Jesmond cemetery All Saints cemetery was inaugurated (Morgan, 2004) on the north side of Jesmond Road, adding a further distinctive component to the north-eastern fringe belt of the city (Figure 2.5).



**Figure 2.5. South Jesmond 1858**

The architect Benjamin Green's gothic arched gateway contrasts with Dobson's neoclassical entrance arch and chapels on the south side of Jesmond Road, as does the more 'open' aspect of All Saints cemetery (Figure 2.6). By this time legislation had removed the threat of grave robbing. The process of active fringe belt formation continued with the development of what was initially the City of Newcastle Constabulary Recreation Ground in 1887 on land immediately to the north of All Saints cemetery. This later became the Northumberland County Cricket ground. Portland Park, Sandyford Park and The Minories were adjacent areas of open space within the study area and in the early 1900s All Saints cemetery

expanded to the north to abut onto Osborne Avenue with the purchase of land known appropriately enough as 'Dead Mens Graves' (Morgan, 2004). Other 'fringe belt' colonisers were the Sandyford Brewery and Drill Hall.



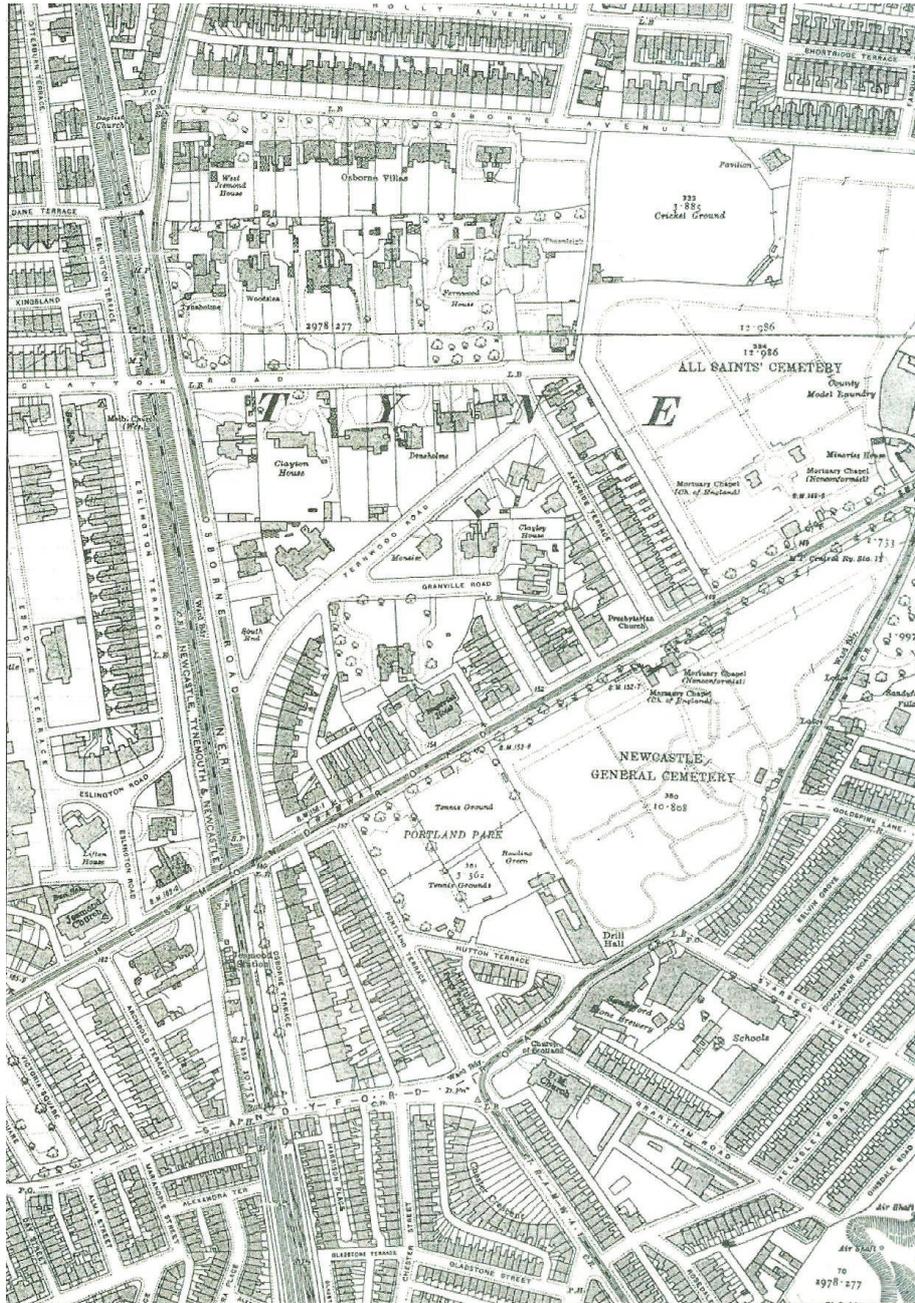
**Figure 2.6. Entrance Arch, All Saints Cemetery**

Although outside the zone that was to become the Conservation Area, other components of the north eastern fringe belt were a series of large detached properties fringing Jesmond Dene, including Wellburn House, Stotes Hall, St. Mary's Mount and Orchard House.

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century the area of what is now South Jesmond constituted the outer north east fringe of Newcastle upon Tyne but In the latter part of the century and early part of the twentieth, the area was radically transformed (Figure 2.7) and it became the city's high status residential suburb. A contemporary described the area as:

*..one of the most pleasant parts of the own. Its streets are wide, its houses are pretty, and its detached villas, surrounded by quickly-growing trees, add to its attractive appearance.*

(Charleton, 1885, p. 373)



**Figure 2.7 Jesmond Study Area 1916**

Clayton Road East, Fernwood Road, and the southern part of Osborne Avenue (Osborne Villas) developed as the main residential area for Newcastle's industrial and business elite (mainly in the 1870s), housing people like T.H. Bainbridge the Department store owner, George Hunter of the Wallsend shipbuilders Swan Hunters. Walter Runciman, a wealthy shipowner lived in Fernwood House, J.J. Forster also a shipowner lived at Woodslea and Sir Arthur Sutherland purchased what is now the Mansion House in Fernwood Road. Most of these properties were large detached or semi-detached villas, set in substantial grounds (Figure 2.8).



**Figure 2.8 Villa development, Fernwood House, Clayton Road**

These villas occur mainly in the northern and central parts of the study area and constitute a characteristic but susceptible morphological component as they are ‘particularly vulnerable to obliteration or infill development as urban areas continue to shift outwards and land values increase.’ (Pendlebury and Green, 1998). In the later nineteenth century however, these developments in turn subsequently attracted terraced house building for the middle classes and lower middle classes in adjacent streets (Holly Avenue, Fern Avenue, Manor House Road, Chester Crescent etc.). By 1880 Osborne Road had a horse drawn tram service linking to the city centre, and this was replaced by electric trams in 1901. The latter was particularly significant as a catalyst for suburban middle class expansion as, at least initially, Jesmond and Heaton were considerably better served than working class districts, even though the latter were sometimes more distant (Barke, 1991).

Although the late Victorian/Edwardian terraces constitute a distinctive and highly recognisable typological form, there are important sub-categories within them which, in terms of morphological character and visual impact, need to be recognised (Figure 2.9). Most of the terraces were built in relatively small groups with variations in design and detailing, but within the different groups a considerable unity of materials and detailing is evident.



**Figure 2.9. Some Terrace Types in South Jesmond**

This variety of terrace types is an integral part of the South Jesmond Conservation Area character and relates directly to the detailed processes of development. In terms of visual impact and urban morphological character, Table 2.1 indicates some of the basic features which constitute the components of urban tissue for this type and isolates some of their detailed characteristics. Although far from an exhaustive catalogue, the potential for substantial variety in just this one type of structure is obvious and, in the context of a conservation area, appears likely to pose a significant problem for the management of change within terraced housing streets.

It is appropriate that attention should be given to these details in the contemporary management of the South Jesmond Conservation Area as such detail characterised the initial developments. The objective, of course, is not necessarily to prevent change but to ensure that such change is managed in the setting of existing character and possibly to enhance this character.

**Table 2.1 Some Features of Variety in the Terrace Type**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Detailed characteristics</b>
Number of storeys	
Relationship to street	e.g. linear or curvilinear (crescent); directly fronting onto street, set slightly back from street, set well back from street
Materials	e.g. stone, red brick, buff brick, glazed brick, etc.
Design	e.g. basement/ semi-basement; steps to front door; decorative and/or contrasting materials; ashlar windows/door surrounds, etc.
Doors	e.g. placement – double fronted or asymmetrical; main door single or double; with/without portico, etc.
Windows	e.g. bay windows, ground floor only, ground and upper floors; single, double, tripartite windows, etc.
Boundaries	e.g. fencing/walls; gate posts; hedges, etc.
Modifications	e.g. horizontal/vertical extensions; roof insertions; window/door replacement; Upvc rainwater goods, etc.

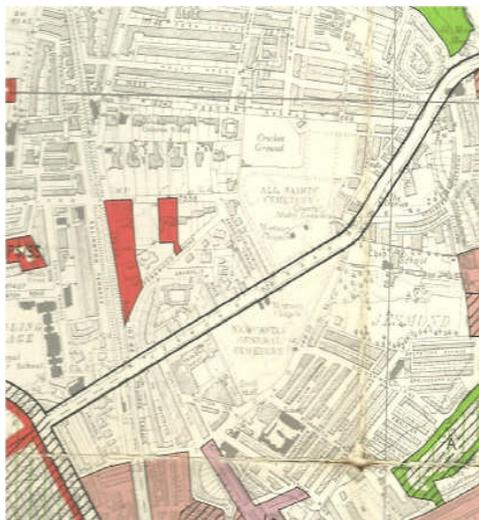
It should also be noted that the emerging character of the South Jesmond area was powerfully influenced by other factors. For example, particularly significant in the built form and townscape (and thereby producing distinctive character areas) was the role of covenants, dictating the style and detail of housing development and influencing land use patterns. Appendix A provides a detailed example of one such covenant from a conveyance of 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1892.

In the early part of the twentieth century, therefore, South Jesmond was a mature residential, high-status and middle-class suburb. The following section examines the development pressures that have impacted upon the area in the latter part of the twentieth century and early twenty-first.

### 3.0 DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES & CHANGE

In terms of its visual appearance, the South Jesmond Conservation Area remains largely a mature late Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb. As already noted, however, as the twentieth century has progressed it has come under increased development pressure from several sources.

Somewhat ironically, a major source of potentially significant change (and one that, although not implemented, was to have continuing ramifications to the present) was the Newcastle Planning Department itself. “The 1960s were to be the period when the planners ruled the city” (Byrne, 2001, p.343). This was the period of modernist city planning under the leadership of the politician T. Dan Smith and planner Wilfred Burns. A major influence on their thinking was the massive growth of traffic in the post-war period and in the key planning document of the period, the *Development Plan Review* of 1963, dealing with that growth was a central concern. A network of motorways around the city centre was proposed and a crucial linkage to the east concerned Jesmond Road, the strategic connection to the Coast Road linking Newcastle to Tynemouth and Whitley Bay. To create an improved link from the Coast Road to the new Central Motorway It was proposed to carry out significant demolition and road widening, directly impacting upon the South Jesmond area (Figure 3.1).

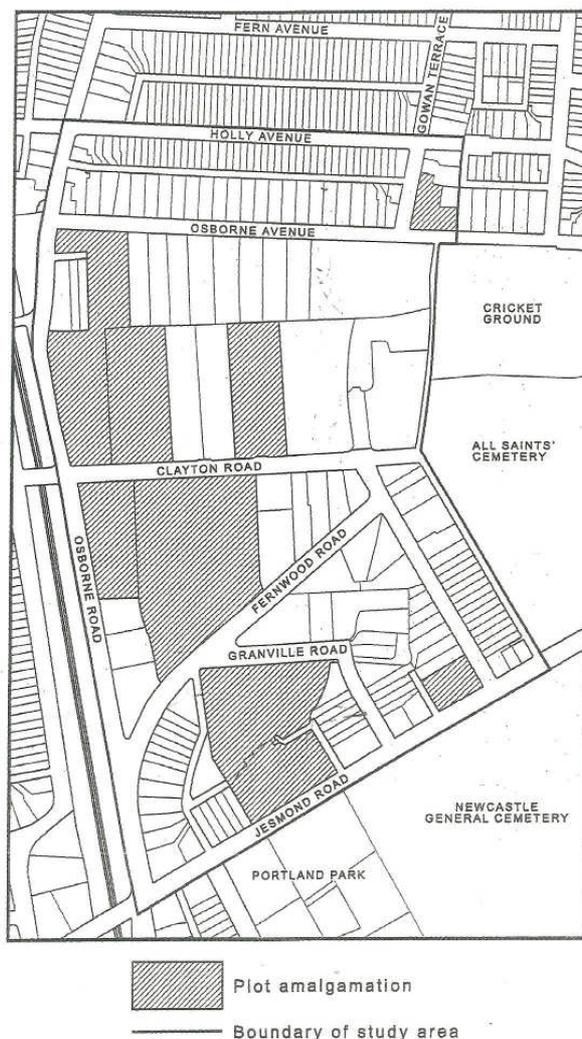


**Figure 3.1 Proposed Coast Road – Central Motorway Link, Jesmond Road, Newcastle Development Plan Review, 1963**

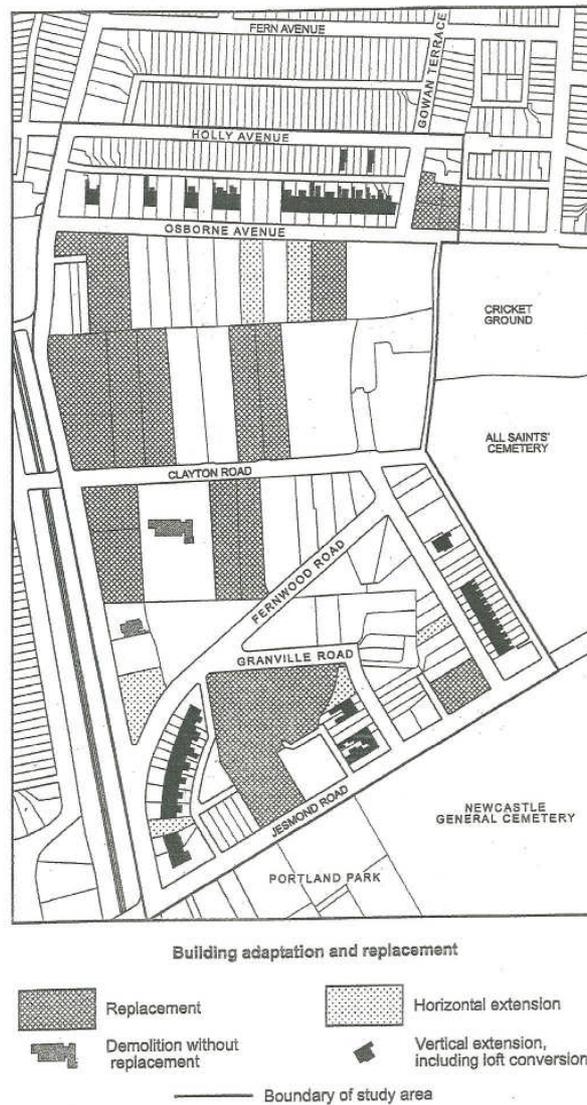
To create space for this road access it was proposed to demolish (or knock down and re-build elsewhere) John Dobson’s entrance arch and chapels at Old Jesmond Cemetery along with some of the terraced property along Jesmond Road (Jesmond Residents Association, 1969; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1970; 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1971). In the event, this

never took place but there have been subsequent controversial proposals for road widening to deal with the problem of heavy traffic on this route (*Country Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1981) and it remains a highly sensitive issue in the public consciousness. It was also a contributory factor – reflecting a complete reversal of perspectives within the Planning Department – in the declaration of the Conservation Area. That is, the latter would strengthen the Planning Department’s position in protecting the area’s open space and built environment from future attempts to privilege traffic volumes over other considerations. However, this remains a live issue impacting on the area.

From the middle of the century, other significant forms of change began to take place – change that threatened the character of the area and was to result in it being declared a Conservation Area in 1987. For example, the Osborne Road, Clayton Road, Fernwood Road area shows a series of morphological changes and building adaptations prior to 2004. These are illustrated in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 showing plot amalgamation and building adaptations.



**Figure 3.2. Plot amalgamation to 2004**



**Figure 3.3 Building adaptation and replacement to 2004.**

Although some of the plot amalgamations are relatively recent and have taken place to facilitate the building of large blocks of flats as ‘second cycle’ development (e.g Fernwood Apartments and Blythswood, Figure 3.4), some others are much older. For example, two plots were amalgamated in the mid 1930s to create the site for the building of the ‘art deco’ Granville Court (Granville Road) (Figure 3.5), adding a further important character element to the area as, along with the similar ‘art deco’ style Osborne Court, it constitutes an important ‘period piece’ architecturally.



**Figure 3.4 Blythswood Apartments, built on former villa site**



**Figure 3.5 Granville Court**

The large plot now occupied by the Mansion House (Figure 3.6), the Lord Mayor's official residence, was formerly occupied by a pair of semi-detached villas (Thurso House and Kelso House) on Fernwood Road and Clayton House on Clayton Road (Figure 2.6, although by the end of the nineteenth century Thurso House and Kelso house had been combined into one residence). In the early twentieth century Sir Arthur Munro Sutherland (of Thurso House)

bought Clayton House and demolished it to create a large garden running through from Fernwood Road to Clayton Road. Other plot amalgamations have taken place to create institutions such as the Nuffield private hospital (Figure 3.7) and residential care



**Figure 3.6 Mansion House, Jesmond**



**Figure 3.7. Nuffield Private Hospital (note surviving entrance posts)**

homes. Various forms of building adaptations have taken place (Figure 3.8 (a) and (b)) some of which (especially in Osborne Avenue) are downright ugly. Most of these took place in the 1960s and 1970s and, at that time, were concerned with turning large 'family' houses into flats and apartments even before the large increase in student residential demand due to university expansion. The addition of unsightly stairwells and poorly designed additional storeys are a source of considerable visual discord within parts of the area.



**Figure 3.8 (a) and (b) Inappropriate building adaptations, Osborne Avenue**

Vertical extension (see Figure 3.9 showing additional third storey added on former roof), much of it to create an extra floor or to expand a former loft space, is a common occurrence especially in the terraced areas of Osborne Avenue (north side), Akenside Terrace (east side) and the bottom of Osborne Road (east side), for example Kriston Court.



**Figure 3.9. Vertical roof extension to create additional residential space, Osborne Avenue**

However, a variety of different processes are at work in these areas, with the latter especially being a response to the conversion of former residential property into commercial functions and the creation of more office floor space (Figure 3.10). In Osborne Avenue and Akenside Terrace the enlargement of existing terraced housing, usually associated with subdivision for multiple occupancy, is more common.



**Figure 3.10 Vertical roof extensions for additional commercial floorspace**

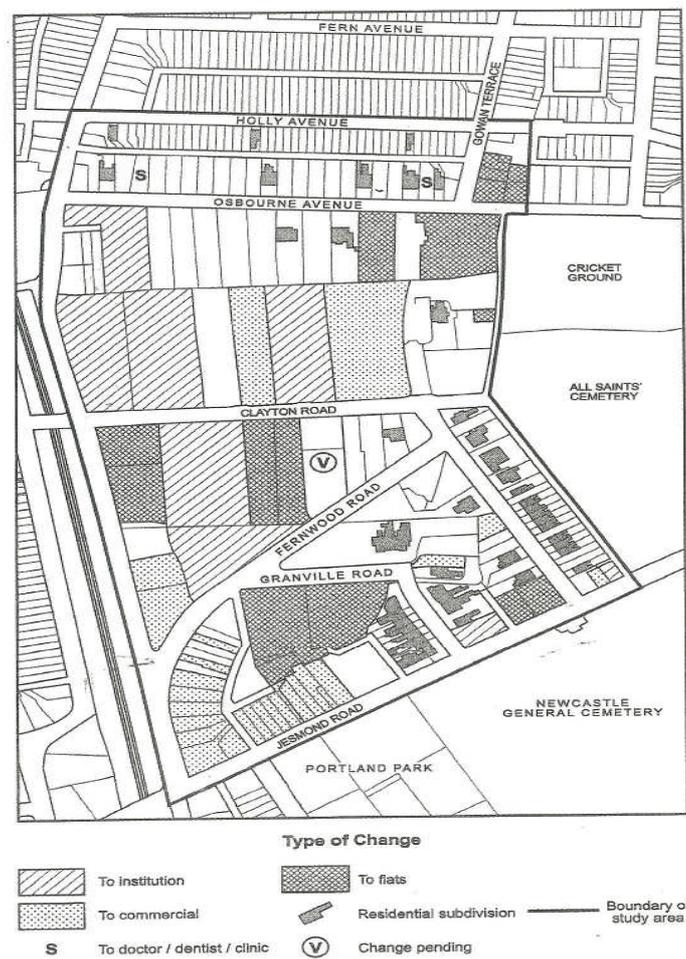
It appears that this first wave of use change and associated building adaptation began in the period immediately after the Second World War. The first street affected was Clayton Road (formerly known as Clayton Park Road) and by 1956 had been significantly colonised by institutional and commercial uses. Table 3.1 shows the occupants of several of the large villas in 1956.

**Table 3.1 Clayton Road, Occupants of some former villas, 1956**

Villa Name	Occupant
Eskdale	Welfare Home for the Aged
The Willows	Consulting Radiologist
Holmwood	Jewish Social Institution Ltd.
Deneholme	Hardy & Co, Furnishers
Fernwood	Private Hospital
Clayton House	College of Art and Industrial Design
Ferndale	Ophthalmic Surgeon

Source: *Kelly's Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1956*

Figure 3.11 shows the main use changes experienced in South Jesmond up to 2004 and it is clear that this part of Jesmond experienced considerable commercial and institutional invasion and increasing residential densification (to flats), all of which have important social and morphological implications for the suburb. Figure 3.11 therefore represents an accumulation of such changes prior to the development of the Conservation Area itself and also before the development of a fully effective management strategy. It is these pressures which led to the creation in 1987 of the South Jesmond Conservation area and subsequent Character Statement and Management Plan in an attempt to try and prevent the further erosion of the distinctive character of this late Victorian suburb.



**Figure 3.11. Use Changes to 2004**

Nevertheless, the area has come under even greater pressure in recent years, largely from the two processes described above – the ever increasing growth in demand for student accommodation (Figure 3.12) and, given the relative proximity to Newcastle city centre and access by vehicle and Metro, the attraction of the area for certain types of commercial space (Figure 3.13).



**Figure 3.12. Student flats advertised on Jesmond Road**



**Figure 3.13. Solicitor's Office, Osborne Terrace**

Although a partial and imperfect measure of these development pressures, formal applications for change of use to Newcastle City Planning Department give some indication of trends of change within the South Jesmond area (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2. Planning Applications for Change of Use, South Jesmond, 1972-2013**

Period	Residential Conversion (number of units)	Change to Commercial use	Other (*)
1970s	93	4	1
1980s	65	2	-
1990s	109	9	2
2000s	161	7	3
Post 2010	19	2	-

(\*) social club; day care centre; residential institution; church meeting room; health centre; consulting rooms

In line with the overall property boom of these seven years, the period of the 1990s and early 2000s witnessed substantially increased pressures for use changes within the area. Significantly, this was the period when, despite the existence of the Conservation Area, there was no overall management strategy or plan. The clear impression is of increasing development pressure during the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first.

The trend of residential conversions has been a particular source of concern for long established local residents as South Jesmond is clearly now a far cry from its origins as a family suburb (Figure 3.14).

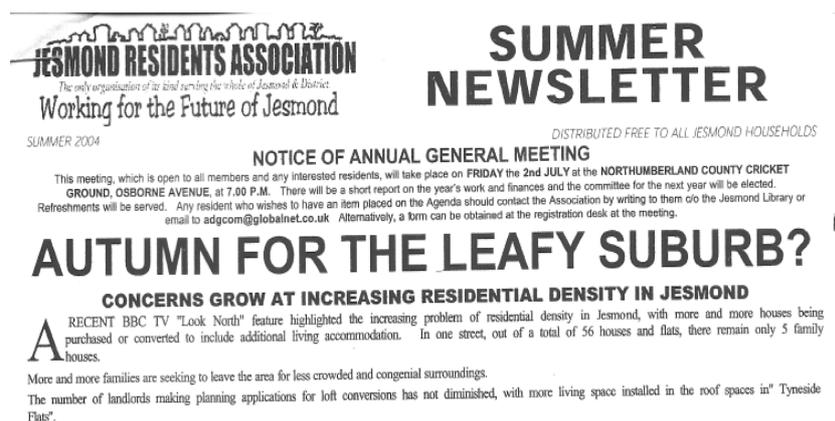
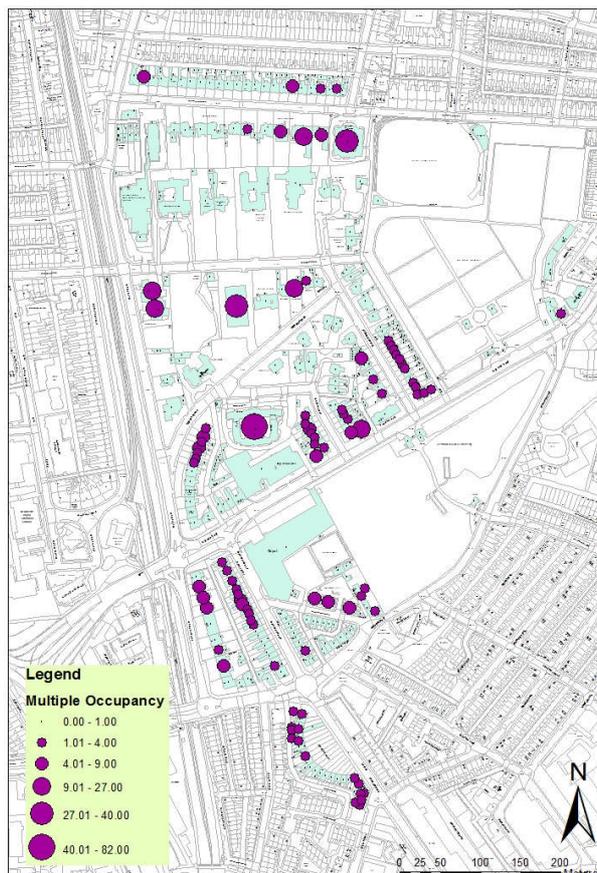
**Figure 3.14 Jesmond Residents Association Newsletter, 2004**

Figure 3.15 shows the spatial pattern and present situation with regard to multiple-occupied properties within the area. Although some of this 'multiple occupancy' is related to large, purpose built blocks of flats such as Fernwood, Blythwood, and the two large 'art deco' blocks of Granville Court and Osborne Court, the majority (especially in the southern parts

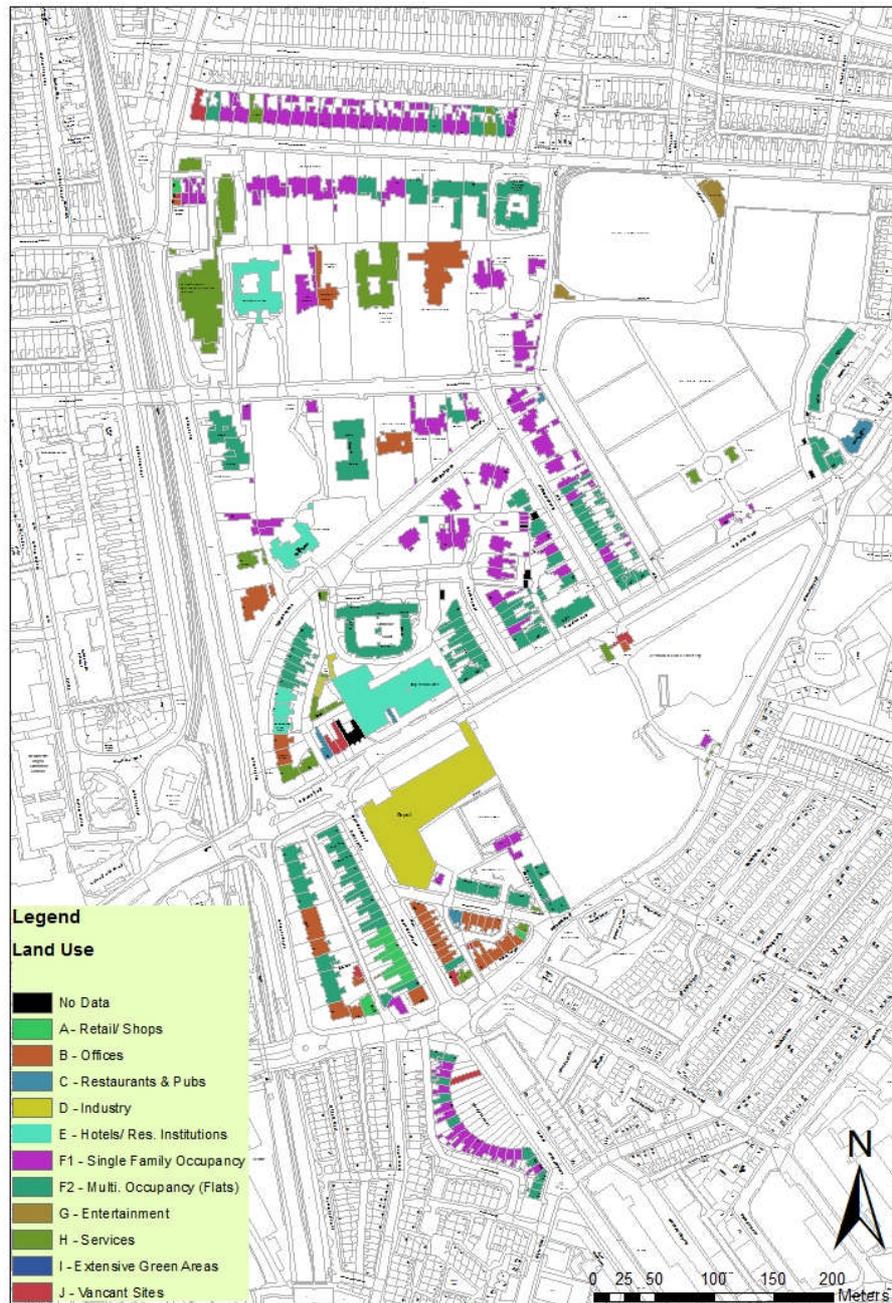
of the area) are conversions within the terraced housing areas of the south part of Akenside Terrace, Osborne Terrace, Portland Terrace and Chester Crescent. A number of social and environmental issues arise from the latter, especially where a substantial influx of students has taken place (Figure 3.15). From the urban morphological perspective, however, given the subtle variations in design and different contributions to urban tissue and character that these terraces contribute, this trend presents another significant management problem within the area.



**Figure 3.15 Multiple Residential Occupancy 2014**

Figure 3.16 shows the contemporary pattern of ground floor land use within the area and the immediate impression is one of considerable complexity. Although the South Jesmond Conservation Area is a small one, it clearly contains considerable variety. This appears likely to be an important issue in the management of the area. The juxtaposition of single family and multiple residential occupancy is reinforced, especially in the southern part of the area, along with the strong colonisation of properties for commercial and some service use in the terraced areas of Portland Terrace, Hutton Terrace and Osborne Terrace. Specialist services, especially those associated with primary (private hospital, GPs surgeries, dentists) and

ancillary health care services are located in a number of villa properties and terraces in the northern part of the area, a trend that began during the Second World War.



**Figure 3.16 Ground floor Land Use, 2014**

## 4.0 SOUTH JESMOND CONSERVATION AREA

### 4.1 Creation of the Conservation Area

It was against this background of considerable development pressure that the Conservation Area was created in 1987. The reasons for designation have been described as:

*"..to reinforce existing local plan policies and protect the concept of the local scene especially the demolition of unlisted buildings. Secondly to exercise additional control over new development and the use of urban space to achieve a higher standard of design in alterations and new buildings."*

(Newcastle City Council (2007) *South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement*, p.3)

Certainly, the first of these reasons is largely 'defensive' in that it is primarily concerned with 'protection', partly a reaction to the growing pressure for change within the area and what was perceived as increasingly inappropriate development.

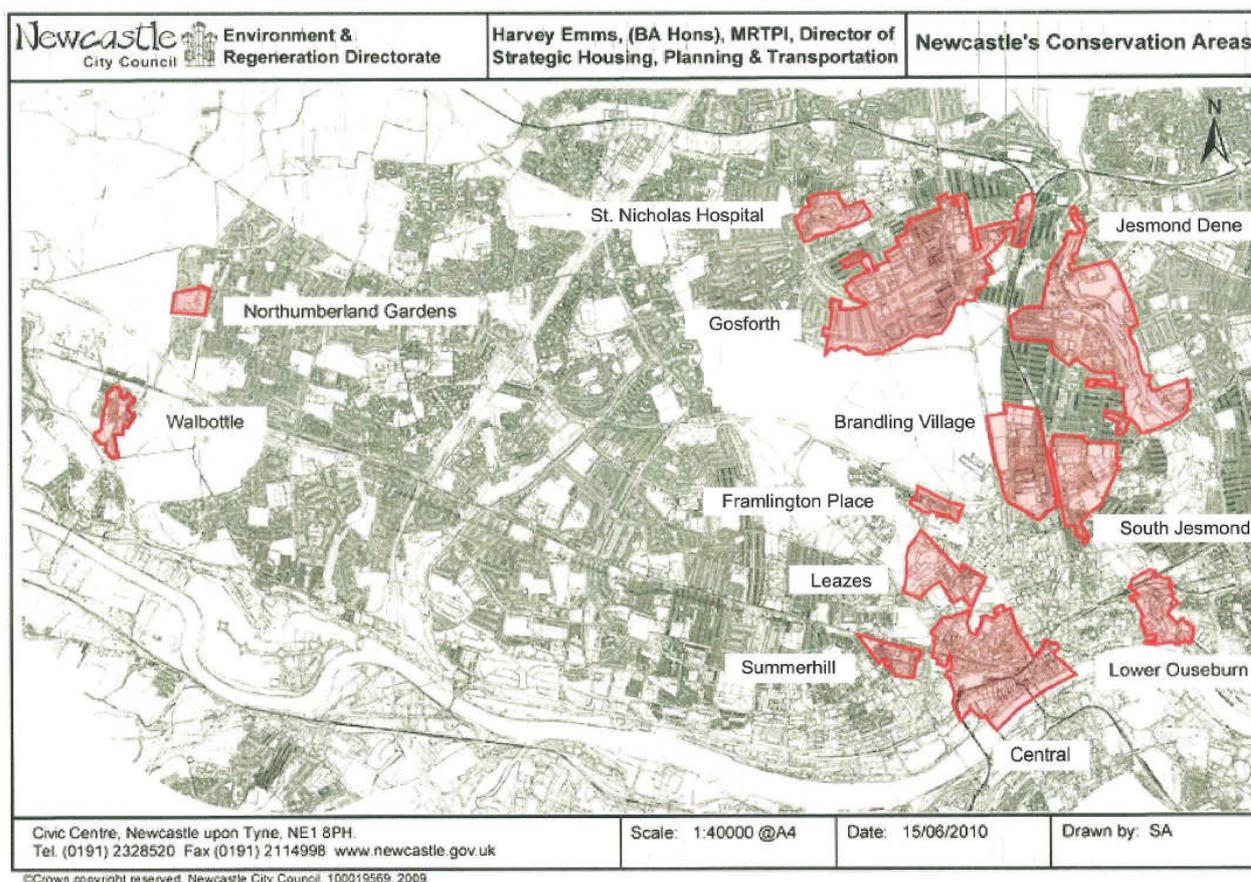
As indicated above in relation to the proposed motorway link from the Coast road to the Central Motorway along the line of Jesmond Road, the designation of the Conservation Area marked a very different philosophy within the Newcastle City Planning Department compared to 10-15 years earlier. For example, a proposal to build 20 'prestige town houses' within the grounds of the Mansion House (Figure 3.6) in 1971 was supported by the planners and private developers were invited to submit plans suitable for the site (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 12/05/1971).

The creation of the South Jesmond Conservation area therefore marked a very different perspective compared to the modernist pro-growth/ strategic planning philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s.

However, the designation of the Conservation Area was not without its problems. The initial area had excluded the north side of Osborne Avenue (numbers 1-24) and, in the south of the area, Osborne Terrace, Hutton Terrace, Portland Terrace and Chester Crescent. These were all subsequently included within the area with the approval of stakeholders. A different decision was reached over the inclusion of the Chester Street, Harrison Place, Gladstone Terrace area (scheduled as the Harrison Place GIA). The debate noted that extensive improvement had been carried out and made a significant contribution to the standard of housing, but "...it is considered that much of the work has been carried out to a standard which would not be entirely appropriate to a Conservation Area." (Minutes, Development, Planning and Highways Committee, 22 January 1987, p. 175). An

exclusionary mechanism was clearly at work here and this reflects a concern about the implications of including areas whose future was potentially uncertain, indicating again a somewhat 'defensive' mentality in the approach to designation. More discussion ensued over the inclusion of what was the Northumbria Motors' Depot (now Arriva) in Portland Terrace with strong arguments against on the grounds that its "architectural style..was unlike adjacent areas of more domestic scale." (Minutes, Development, Planning and Highways Committee, 22 January 1987, p.174). However, as the building had been recently listed as being of special architectural or historic interest it was considered worthy of inclusion within the Conservation Area. Reservations had also been expressed about the inclusion of the Nuffield Hospital (Conservation Area Advisory Sub-Committee, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1986, p.27), largely also on the grounds of its building style. Despite any statements to the contrary, these concerns are illustrative of a continuing view at this time that conservation areas were largely about individual buildings, with broader (and more complex) considerations of urban tissue, plot structure and the relationship between buildings and open space scarcely being recognised.

An important issue here concerns the relationship of the South Jesmond Conservation area to other, adjacent Conservation areas within the city (Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1 Conservation Areas in Newcastle upon Tyne**

South Jesmond is clearly a small area as is Brandling Park, immediately to the west (designated in October 1976) but the latter shares much of the same character as South Jesmond, especially in terms of substantial late Victorian terraces which are under pressure for multi-occupation and some institutional and commercial land use. The north west of Brandling park also has a number of large plots (although initially occupied by institutions rather than large villas, which is the case in South Jesmond) which have come under increasing pressure for second cycle development, especially in the form of large blocks of flats, some with a considerably larger footprint on the plot than the initial structure. The rationale for having two adjacent conservation areas with some similar characteristics and similar development pressures is not clear. Ostensibly, the Jesmond Dene Conservation Area (designated 1991 and extended in December 2001) is significantly different in that it is predominantly a 'green' space but a significant proportion of the South Jesmond Conservation Area is also open space (cricket ground, bowling green and the two substantial cemeteries) and the cemeteries function as wildlife corridors and are important habitats for plant and animal species. So here too, there is some correspondence of characteristics and management issues. The point at issue here is that it is difficult to perceive any overall strategy from Newcastle City council in the designation of its conservation areas and this implies a strong sense of opportunism and reactive designation.

Furthermore, despite designation in 1987 it was a further 14 years before any significant assessment of the character of the South Jesmond area was produced, this in the form of a Supplementary Planning guidance publication in December 2001. Not until March 2007 was a formal Character Statement produced, followed by a Management Plan in May 2009. Thus, basically for two decades the Conservation Area was operating without any clear, published guiding framework. As Larkham and Jones (1993) pointed out some time ago, in the absence of such assessments it is difficult for policy to be formulated and, more functionally, to defend development control issues on appeal.

The first Conservation Areas resulted from the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and were primarily concerned with the protection of historically important town and city centres. Subsequently, the range of areas designated has widened considerably as witnessed by the varying nature of the twelve Conservation Areas in Newcastle (Figure 4.1). It was initially widely assumed that, once designation had taken place, the existing legislation would be sufficient to ensure that the future of these areas would be safeguarded. In addition, over time it became apparent that there was little overall guiding strategy to inform the management of Conservation Areas with approaches being essentially reactive and piecemeal. Research demonstrated that only around 40 per cent of local authorities in England and Wales gave serious attention to townscape management and, of these, only very limited attention was given to the constituent parts of overall townscapes (Larkham and Jones, 1993). Against this background, and the increasing number of designations of

areas of vastly different types, a growing consensus developed that simple designation was insufficient and that a more structured procedure was necessary. This led to the requirement in PPG15 that local authorities should prepare detailed assessments of their conservation areas – a form of character assessment and appraisal. The purpose of this document is to improve the understanding of the distinctive features of the area concerned and thereby enable the local authority to improve its strategies, policies and attitudes towards the conservation and development opportunities and priorities within the area. Inherent within the approach to be taken in the appraisal of conservation areas was the conviction that ‘character’ was not simply a matter of the quality of individual buildings but should also take into account features such as building layout, open spaces, boundaries, thoroughfares, mix of uses, construction materials, street furniture and vegetation.

The specific response in the South Jesmond area to this evolution in the approach to conservation areas will be described in the next section.

#### **4.2 Conservation Area Changes: Character Statement & Management Plan**

The South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement:

*..provides a comprehensive assessment of the physical character and appearance of the Conservation Area and defines what elements are of merit, what the key issues are, what opportunities exist for preservation and enhancement and which elements detract from the Conservation Area. Its purpose is to provide a benchmark for assessing the impact of development proposals on the character and/or appearance of the Conservation Area.*

(South Jesmond Conservation Area Management Plan, May 2009, p.3)

In outlining the ‘principles of character’ structuring the Character Statement, four main elements are highlighted. Large detached or semi-detached Victorian villas set in large gardens, twentieth century replacement development on villa plots, Victorian terraces and open space. The first two of these are located in the north west of the area and contain a mix of commercial and residential uses ‘contributing to its distinctive character’. The area is also characterised by wide streets and mature trees with properties set in large plots. The Victorian terraces also are divided by use. Osborne Avenue (north side) Akenside Terrace (east side), Granville Road and Chester Crescent have remained largely in residential use and substantially retain their original building character, although there is significant variation within this built form. Osborne Road, Jesmond Road, Portland Terrace, Hutton Terrace (south side) and Benton Terrace are predominantly in commercial use and have suffered

damage to their original character and endure the negative impact of high traffic volumes. The open spaces constitute almost 50 per cent of the conservation area and consist mainly of the County Cricket Ground, All Saints Cemetery and Newcastle General Cemetery. These provide both a strong sense of historic continuity and considerable ecological value to the area.

In defining these elements, it is clear that there is some recognition of the combination of typological form and land use in defining the character of sub areas within South Jesmond. The Character Statement then goes on to define sub-divisions within the conservation area defined by *'the nature of land use, historical and architectural character, and the landscape setting'*. However, it is not clear precisely how these criteria are used in combination to define the sub areas, an issue that will be discussed in Section 7.0. The 'special characteristics' of each sub-area are then summarised, features that are 'against the grain' identified, 'key issues' determined and 'enhancement potential' recognised.

Subsequent to the production and acceptance of the Character Statement in 2007 a Management Plan was published in May 2009.

*'The Plan provides guidance through policy statements to enable the effective management of change and secure the preservation and enhancement of the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.'*

(South Jesmond Conservation Area Management Plan, May 2009, p.3)

An integral part of the Management Plan is a SWOT analysis identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the area (Appendix A). Informed by both the earlier Character Statement and this SWOT analysis, a series of specific policy statements have been produced relating to:

- the demolition of existing buildings
- property extensions and adaptations
- materials
- roofs
- dormer windows and roof lights
- masonry, brickwork and pointing
- windows and doors
- chimney stacks and other architectural details
- rainwater goods
- colour and painting
- aerials, satellite dishes and alarm boxes
- boundary treatments
- protected species

- renewable energy adaptations

## 5.0 INHERENT MORPHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

Of central interest to this project is the extent to which there is an appreciation of key morphological concepts within the Character Statement and Management Plan. The section above has indicated that elements of such recognition exist. Although the formal use and adoption of concepts and terms in regular use in the academic field of urban morphology would not be expected within planning and related documents, some of the principles and concepts apparent in urban morphology may be inherent and indeed appear to be present within those documents. Whilst the specific language may be different and the use of technical terms one might find in an academic article concerned with urban morphology may be largely absent, there may well be, in some cases, a correspondence between key features identified by practitioners and those of direct concern to academic urban morphologists. For example, the term 'fringe belt' is not used in either the Character Statement or the Management Plan yet it is quite clear that the identification and preservation of the 'open space and wildlife corridor' referred to in these documents refers to exactly the same area as an academic urban morphologist would probably term 'fringe belt'.

Accordingly, a content analysis of the Character Statement and Management Plan was carried out with the intention of identifying key morphological components identified or recognised (albeit not necessarily in precisely the same language as that used by academic urban morphologists) of the study area. Table 5.1 presents the results from this search.

Some terms and concepts in common usage in urban morphology appear not to be recognised. For example the term 'tissue' does not appear at all and there is no direct reference to 'town plan', although the essentially morphological components of 'town plan' of 'plot structure' and 'building pattern' are directly recognised as being fundamental components of the character of the area. There is only limited reference to the notion of 'street system' in the morphological sense, this being in terms of the contrasting width of streets as part of the character of different parts of the area. Components such as 'land use' and 'building fabric' are recognised directly as is the concept of 'character areas'. However, although encompassing some similar dimensions, the definition of the latter appears to be somewhat different from that used by urban morphologists, an issue that will be discussed in the section 7.0.

**Table 5.1. South Jesmond Conservation Area: Recognition of Key Urban Morphological Components**

MORPHOLOGICAL COMPONENT	SUB-COMPONENTS	RECOGNITION IN CA (*)	EVIDENCE EXAMPLE
TISSUE		X	
CHARACTER AREAS		✓(?)	CS "Identifies five sub-areas"; e.g. Victorian terraces "special character is derived from formality and uniformity of materials and detailing"
FRINGE BELT		✓(?)	"key characteristic is number and size of <i>open spaces</i> "; "on-going maintenance needs of <i>all open spaces</i> ...are key issues"
LAND USE		✓	".. in 20thC change in land use from residential to commercial.. incremental development contributed to erosion of character of CA". Recent upturn in residential "provides opportunity"
BUILDING FABRIC		✓	E.g. "dormer extensions within the roof space...Some well- designed, others inappropriate.. detract from uniformity and rhythm of original architectural detailing"
TOWN PLAN:		?	
	PLOT STRUCTURE	✓	E.g Victorian villas north of Jesmond Road "distinguishable by wide streets, with large properties set back from the road in mature landscaped gardens"
	STREET SYSTEM	?	
	BUILDING PATTERN	✓	"demolition of buildings to facilitate development of new and larger properties will not be considered" unless " replacement building respects the footprint of existing building and maintains the setting and character of the area.."

(\*) CHARACTER STATEMENT & MANAGEMENT PLAN

## 6.0 PLANNING RESPONSE

A key data source for examining the impact of the declaration of the Conservation Area and the subsequent development of a Character Statement and a Management Programme, is the record of planning applications for the area. These are available on-line from 1974/5 onwards and have been used to test some simple hypotheses about the impact of the declaration of the Conservation Area in 1987.

In the period since 1974/5 a total of 769 planning applications are reported in the data base. Note that these are applications, regardless of the decisions taken concerning these applications. Every effort has been made to exclude double counting. As already noted, it is useful to divide the period into three sections as, quite specifically within the Conservation Area Character Statement it was noted that *Its purpose is to provide a benchmark for assessing the impact of development proposals on the character and/or appearance of the Conservation Area.*

1. 1974/5 to 1987 – before the declaration of the Conservation Area
2. 1987 – 2007 – Conservation Area in existence but pre-dates the Character Statement and development of a Management Plan
3. 2007-2014 – Character Statement and Management Plan in existence

Table 6.1 shows the number of applications, the rate per year and the proportion of refusals.

**Table 6.1. South Jesmond Conservation Area: Planning Applications, Rate per annum and Percentage of Refusals, 1974/5 to 2014.**

Period	Number of Applications	Rate per annum	% refusals
<b>1974/5 – 1987</b>	107	8.92	10.3
<b>1987 – 2007</b>	455	22.75	8.1
<b>Post 2007</b>	207	34.50	2.9
<b>Total</b>	769	20.24	7.0

At first sight, Table 6.1 does not appear to indicate any strong impact resulting from the declaration of the Conservation Area. Indeed, the apparent trends initially appear to be counter to any such impact. The rate of applications per year actually increases over the three time periods. However, this is almost certainly a function of two things. First and as noted above in Section 6, the actual development pressures upon and within the area have grown considerably in the recent past, partly from the expansion of small business

enterprises seeking relatively small office and related space and, more importantly, from the substantial growth of demand for residential accommodation within the area. Student demand is significant here, but is not the only source. Secondly, the applications also include proceedings relating to Tree Preservation Orders which are statutorily recorded only from 1987 with the declaration of the Conservation Area. This clearly ‘boosts’ the figures post 1987.

Of more concern than the absolute totals of planning applications is their nature. An application for a completely new build of a five storey block of new apartments is clearly of a different order from an application to change a window within an existing building. Table 6.2 therefore differentiates planning applications over the period by broad type of application and shows the trends over the entire period preceding and post declaration of the Conservation Area.

**Table 6. 2. South Jesmond Conservation Area: Type of Application (\*) by Period**

Type	Pre 1987		1987-2007		Post 2007	
	Number	Rate per year	Number	Rate per year	Number	Rate per year
<b>New Building</b>	3	0.25	11	0.55	1	0.17
<b>Major Re-building</b>	18	1.50	28	1.40	5	0.83
<b>Internal/ Minor Alteration</b>	9	0.75	37	1.85	18	2.57
<b>Door/Window Alteration</b>	8	0.67	39	1.95	12	1.71
<b>Vertical/Horizontal Extension</b>	19	1.58	41	2.05	22	3.14
<b>Use Change</b>	25	2.08	58	2.90	11	0.92
	82	6.83	214	10.70	69	9.86

(\*) Excluding applications relating to signs, tree preservation orders and other minor applications, e.g.

Not unexpectedly, applications for completely new buildings are relatively infrequent within the area. Nevertheless, a number of applications were forthcoming in the early years of the existence of the Conservation Area, indicating that its creation was not necessarily an immediate deterrent to developers seeking to build *de novo* within the area. Major re-building, whilst far from being absent, shows a steady downward trend. Taken together, both these figures suggest that significant developments that may have been likely to change the character of the area or parts of the area, have been held in check and that the creation of the Conservation Area could be interpreted as something of a deterrent.

However, the trend of internal moderation for which planning permission is necessary, other minor alterations and – especially – extensions, suggests something slightly different. The trends in terms of rate per annum is an increasing one. A feasible interpretation of this pattern is that, against the background of increasingly intense development pressures within the area, ways of adjusting buildings and space have been sought that are alternative to a completely new build or significant major alteration. These are more likely to gain planning permission and allow for an adjustment of building and space for a different purpose. Finally, applications for changes of use are clearly quite dynamic for this small area, again indicating something of the pressures that have grown over recent decades. However, there does appear to be a significant reduction in such applications in the period since to production of the Character Statement, although the impact of the economic recession post 2007 could clearly be a factor here.

So far the analysis has been based mainly on applications for planning permission received. Of greater relevance in assessing the impact of the Conservation Area and the subsequent preparation and early implementation of the Character Statement is the decisions reached in relation to those applications. Table 6.3 shows these data.

**Table 6. 3. South Jesmond Conservation Area: Decisions on Applications (\*) by Period**

	Pre 1987		1987-2007		Post 2007	
	Number	Rate per year	Number	Rate per year	Number	Rate per year
<b>Refused</b>	9	0.75	37	1.85	4	0.57
<b>Withdrawn</b>	2	0.17	19	0.95	5	0.71
<b>Conditional acceptance</b>	26	2.17	114	5.70	55	7.86
<b>Acceptance</b>	45	3.75	44	2.20	5	0.71
<b>Total</b>	82	6.83	214	10.70	69	9.86

Although at best a crude measure, the general trend of Table 6.3 suggests a stronger planning regime in the more recent past with a significant reduction in the rate of unconditional acceptance. The rate of conditional acceptances has increased notably in the period since the development of the Character Statement and Management Plan. One interpretation of this trend and explored in an early analysis of planning applications within conservation areas in central Bristol and Birmingham (Barrett, 1993) is that the emergence of a more coherent set of policies for the area has resulted in a greater degree of negotiation and dialogue over emergent development issues within the Conservation Area.

## 7.0 MORPHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES UPHELD?

The most important demonstration of links between the academic study of urban morphology and the practice of urban management lies in the evidence 'on the ground' of the former being applied in the latter. In seeking to contribute to a catalogue of 'good practice' the project sought to identify in the South Jesmond Conservation area instances of the practical application of the philosophy, concepts or principles of academic urban morphology. In this section a number of specific case studies will be examined in two groups. The first group provides examples of where, in the opinion of this author, urban morphological principles have been successfully applied within the study area. The second group identifies cases where management practice appears to be neglecting such principles.

A particularly interesting case concerns the site of Clayton House (formerly Deneholme) on Clayton Road East (Figure 2.7). The background events relating to this case are, in themselves, familiar ones relating to the enhanced profitability of densification of site occupancy resulting from second cycle development on a large plot. Deneholme was one of the several large, although probably least attractive, villas on Clayton Road built in the early 1880s (Figure 7.1)



**Figure 7.1 Deneholme (later Clayton House) early twentieth century**



**Figure 7.2 Clayton House, vacant in 1990s**

Although in residential use until the 1930s, on the outbreak of the Second World War it was requisitioned by a Government Department. It was then sold to Hardy & Co, a local furnishing store in 1952 who, in turn, sold the building to the Newcastle based architects, Williamson, Faulkner, Brown and Partners at auction for £25,000 in 1962 (*The Journal*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1962). The growing reputation of this firm led them to move on and, by the 1980s the building was empty and falling into disrepair (Figure 7.2). In 2002 a planning application was lodged to demolish the building (now called Clayton House) and build two three-storey blocks containing 16 apartments and eight maisonettes with parking space for 31 cars, clearly following the (pre Conservation Area designation) second cycle development model of the adjacent Fernwood and Blythswood sites (Figure 3.4). This application was refused and following a long period of negotiation and change of ownership, a change of use from residential to commercial was allowed, the building renovated, and a reasonable outcome secured, retaining the original footprint of this part of the area (Figure 7.3).



**Figure 7.3 Clayton House Renovated**

Rather different examples concern use changes in the opposite direction, from commercial to residential, and illustrate the way in which the opportunity this has provided for restoring some original features has been grasped by practitioners. A recent example of 7, Portland Terrace illustrates this development. The planning application of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013 was to change the use from offices (class B1) to a 6 bedroom house for up to 6 unrelated residents. Conditional approval was granted with the applicant being advised particularly about the details of frontage restoration:

*The principle of the conversion and the proposed frontage treatment involved with this residential conversion is welcome as the existing use and loss of historic integrity of the properties is identified within the key issues section within the adopted Character Statement and Management Plan for the Area as a cause for concern. The principle of this type of conversion has significant precedent within the area and affords the opportunity of establishing frontage boundary treatments and elements of improvement within the proposed development for improving the appearance of the area within the context of the South Jesmond Conservation Area.*

Newcastle City Council, *Officer Report, Change of use from offices (Class B1) to 6 bedroom house (class C4 HMO) 7, Portland Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne, p.5*

This example illustrates the significant trend within the area of re-conversion to residential use, other examples being, 3,4, 5, 6 , 11 and 12, Portland Terrace. (Figure 7.4) where a proactive policy has ensured the restoration of the traditional frontage areas and the restoration of the boundary structure of properties within the Conservation Area. The overall result is a trend of returning to uniformity and detailing with small front gardens, posts and heritage railings instead of the hard standing for office workers' cars.



**Figure 7.4. Portland Terrace. Restoration of some traditional features with return to residential use**



**Figure 7.5. Osborne Road. Terrace Restoration**

Although there has been a very limited amount of new build for residential purposes within the lifetime of the 'post-Character Statement' Conservation Area, Figure 7.6 illustrates the largest and reasonably successful example of Middleton Court in Hutton Terrace. Whilst the development is unmistakably new, its style makes some acknowledgement of the detailing of older terraced residential areas within South Jesmond.



**Figure 7.6 New Apartment Development, Middleton Court, Hutton Terrace**

This three storey development has re-introduced purpose-built (as opposed to conversion or sub-division of existing properties) residential development into the area.

*.. the sympathetic brick colour, artstone bands and modelled façade help to meld the scheme successfully into the sub-area. The attention to the landscape setting has made an important contribution. To the street, small soft landscaped gardens set behind iron railings and brick piers successfully emulate the design of the Victorian terraces.*

Newcastle City Council (2007), p. 31.

A further example of the successful application of morphological principles, in the sense of ensuring the maintenance of traditional elements of morphological structure through encouraging appropriate uses, concerns former stables, carriage houses, garages and former gatehouses of large villas within the conservation area. Where separate from the original associated dwelling, most of these were located on large plots and, over the years, the ownership of many of these became separated from ownership of the main plot. A number of these were used for a range of activities, lock ups, small car repair businesses etc. Within the conservation area there has been an active policy of encouraging conversion of these distinctive townscape components to 'mews' style residential use, often with 'mews' style (Figure 7.7).



**Figure 7.7 Restoration of Carriage Houses and Gatehouses**

A final example concerns the active management of what has become an 'interior' fringe belt of eastern Newcastle upon Tyne, the open space areas of Jesmond General Cemetery, All Saints Cemetery and the County Cricket Ground. The ecological and social value that these areas contribute to the surrounding predominantly built up environment is deemed to be irreplaceable. Whilst unity is derived from traffic-free pathways, and sheltered spaces characterised by mature trees and shrubbery, a distinctive part of the character is also due to the sharp contrast between the informal 'organic' layout of Jesmond General Cemetery and the more open, formal design of All Saints cemetery. Collectively, these components constitute an important wildlife corridor and Jesmond General Cemetery has been designated a Site of Local Conservation Importance and is the habitat of Biodiversity Action Plan species such as the song thrush, bats, several small mammals and 12 butterfly species. A Cemetery Management Plan has identified work that needs to be done and responsibility for those works. As part of this development the high eastern wall along Sandyford Road, badly eroded by acidic spray, has recently been repaired.

Even if not directly referred to in policy documents, these examples do indicate a serious attempt to uphold morphological principles in the management of the character, urban form and townscape of the South Jesmond Conservation area. There have clearly been:

- Attempts to maintain the existing plot pattern and building footprint as vital parts of the urban texture within the area
- Active management of use change to secure townscape outcomes that restore or enhance the character of the built environment
- The re-introduction of character uniformity in terms of materials and detailing
- The active preservation of open space as wildlife corridors and habitats, maintaining an 'interior' fringe belt

However, despite these positive notes, there are a number of specific issues where some of the key principles of an urban morphological approach are evidently absent.

Whilst it is clear that officers are going to considerable pains to preserve and restore frontages to properties within the conservation area, it would appear that there is less concern about the rear of premises where, in many parts of the area, uniformity and regularity are distinctly lacking. Although, to some extent this is an inheritance from the pre- Conservation Area period, a number of developments have taken place since that designation, particularly in the period before the production of the Character Statement and Management Plan. The contrast between the front and back of part of Chester Crescent shown in Figure 7.8 indicates this problem as does Figure 7.9 in commercial properties in Osborne Terrace.



**Figure 7.8. Chester Crescent, front and back contrast**



**Figure 7.9 Osborne Terrace, front and back contrast**

Discordant and inelegant extensions have taken place to the rear of properties whose equivalents would never have been permitted at the front. To a large extent this is due to the pressure of demand for student accommodation that developed during the 1980s and 1990s. However, this feature is not solely a product of conversion for multiple occupation as the conversion to commercial functions has had a similar outcome with a negative impact upon some back lanes (Figure 7.9). Thus, whilst due care and attention has been given to ensuring a restrained frontage for commercial uses, significant redevelopment of the interior and rear of properties has sometimes taken place, producing a haphazard and jarring relationship between street and building from this rear perspective.

There are two general points that arise from this ‘front street/back street’ contrast. First, it illustrates the problems inherited from the long period between the conservation area being designated and the production of a strategy to manage the area. It is quite clear that a

number of developments took place within this period, despite the location within the boundaries of the conservation area, which would have been much less likely in the period since 2007. Second, in some circumstances, a degree of compromise may have been required by planning and conservation officers. There can be no doubt that some significant and legitimate changes to the built environment may be required to ensure a viable and economically active neighbourhood. Some uses do require significant adaptation, a good illustration being the recent modernisation of the Holiday Inn on Jesmond Road (Figure 7.10).



**Figure 7.10 Holiday Inn, Jesmond Road**

Nevertheless, such modifications may well have a fragmenting impact upon the urban tissue and introduce discordant elements into particular character areas.

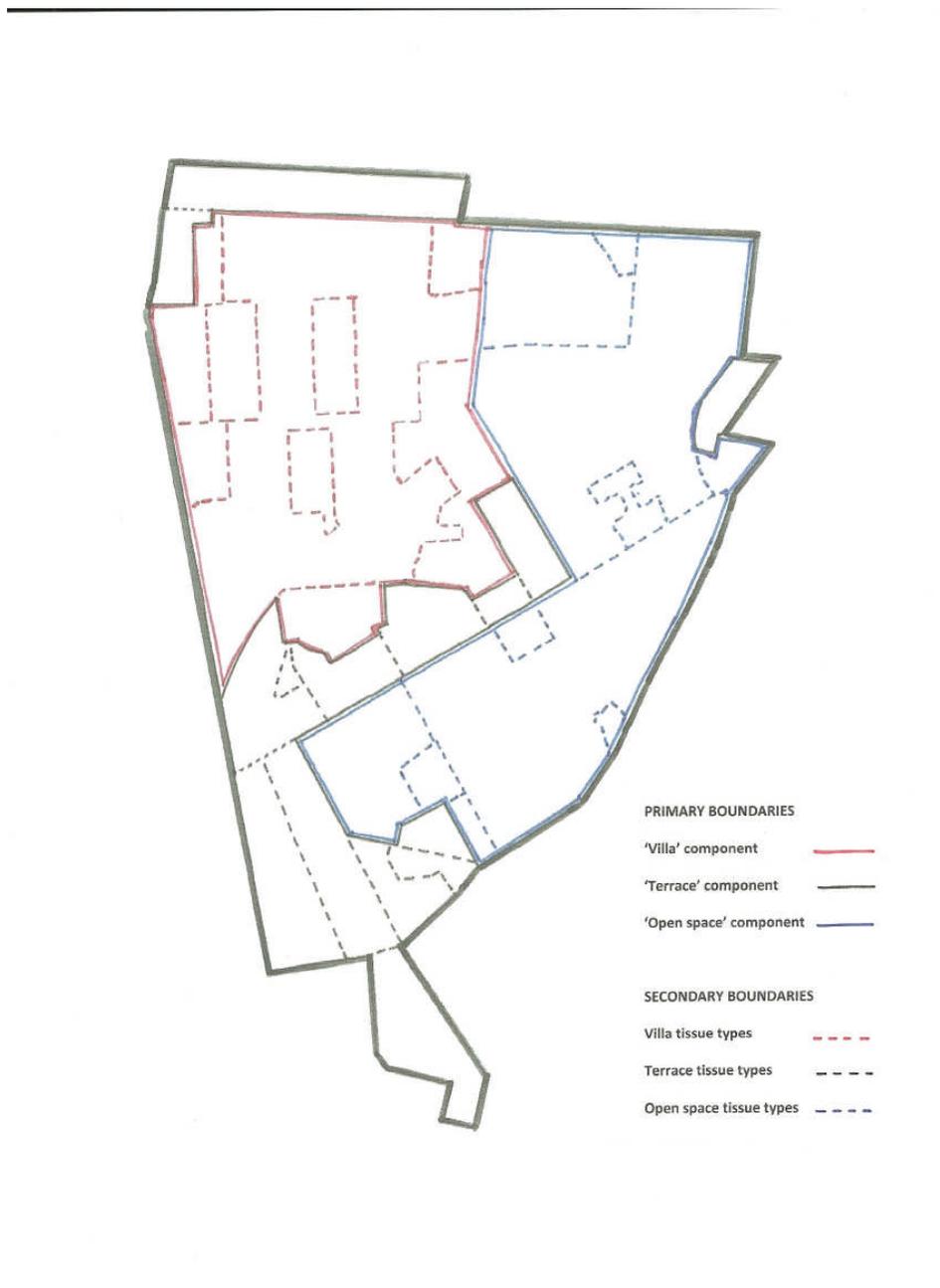
A close reading of the South Jesmond Character Statement reveals some ambiguity over the interpretation of the concept of 'character area'. Within the document different parts of South Jesmond are identified and the criteria for recognition specified which appear to indicate a clear attempt to separate out character areas. Thus: *five identifiable sub-areas with distinctive character and appearance* are classified, *determined by the nature of land use, historical and architectural character and landscape setting*. At first reading, these criteria appear to provide a basis for the recognition and classification of distinctive tissue or character within the Conservation Area. However, an examination of the map of these five areas (Figure 7.11) indicates that several of these are not 'character areas' in the strict morphological sense in that they contain within them quite different tissue components.



**Figure 7.11. Sub-areas identified within South Jesmond Conservation Area**

Figure 7.12 identifies the urban tissue sub-areas within the area broadly following the methodology of Kropf (1996) but with the addition of visual and architectural details. No attempt is made to incorporate a hierarchy of tissue-related details as this would introduce even more complexity. But even this restricted categorisation produces an extremely complex pattern, arguably one that is nearer to the reality of 'character' on the ground but, crucially, also one that is possibly more difficult to operationalise in day to day practice. In accord with the South Jesmond Character Statement, three basic components are recognised initially (1) large plots currently or formerly associated with large detached or semi-detached villas (2) areas of terraced residential development (3) open space with associated ancillary structures. Within each of these categories, different tissue types are then identified. For example, in the case of the terraced category, no fewer than 13 sub-types may be recognised within South Jesmond using the criteria described in Table 2.1, and even this is acknowledged to be incomplete. For villa plots, the distinction is based on surviving or redeveloped sites, typological form and the relation of building to plot. For the open space category, the distinction is based on use type with associated structures distinguished from 'true' open space.

The suspicion remains that the five 'sub districts' or 'character areas' defined in the South Jesmond Character Statement (Figure 7.11) essentially represent a pragmatic management tool rather than an application of fundamental morphological principles. However, it is legitimate to ask what advantages would accrue to the practitioner by pursuing the detailed analysis to produce the taxonomy indicated in Figure 7.12. They may be forgiven for regarding this as a largely 'academic' exercise. But this leads us directly to some of the issues and obstacles encountered in the practical application of urban morphology within the context of a conservation area.



**Figure 7.12. Urban Tissue Areas in South Jesmond**

## **8.0. ISSUES AND OBSTACLES IN THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF URBAN MORPHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES.**

This section will deal with some of the more generic 'lessons learnt' from this investigation of the role of morphological principles in the management of the South Jesmond Conservation Area.

A recurrent issue, arising from both discussion with practitioners and reflections on the issues arising in the management of the area, concerns its sheer complexity. In some senses this observation may appear surprising. The South Jesmond Conservation Area is small and, in many ways, rather typical case, found in many inner city, former middle class late Victorian/Edwardian suburban areas of UK cities. But these factors should not blind us from the difficulties experienced in townscape management as many such areas experience similar problems arising from their complexity, regardless of their size and many have undergone irreversible decline. As section 6.0 demonstrated, an important feature of this complexity is the variety of development pressures impacting on the area.

These include continuing growth on traffic density both through (Jesmond Road/Osborne Road) and within the area. Both types introduce different problems with different challenges for management and different implications for the area's morphological structure. The high volume of through traffic, especially on Jesmond Road, is a significant source of visual, atmospheric and noise pollution detracting from the appearance and character of the Conservation Area and, on at least two occasions in the past, leading to proposals for significant modification of the built environment in order to cater for this through traffic. Furthermore, such traffic is deemed to require significant visual directional and other informational signage, further detracting from the visible character of the area. Increases in car ownership within the area, not least from a significant student population, has produced substantially increased demand for car parking spaces either on-street or through the conversion of former garden areas for hard-standing for motor vehicles. The latter has been a particular characteristic of a further dimension of the area's complexity, that relating to the growth of small businesses within the locality.

Figure 3.16 indicated the complexity of land use within the area and drew attention to the colonisation of many former residential properties for small business use. This has several morphological implications in addition to the generation of additional traffic and the parking requirements associated with the growth of such land use functions. Conversion of the use of property from residential to commercial requires significant internal and sometimes external adaptation of the structure. These can include incremental change in features such as the style of windows, the inclusion of additional elements such as dormer windows and an increase in commercial signage. Such apparently small developments can add up to

highly significant change in the character of a streetscape over a period of time. However, in addition to the potential growth of such features is the possibility of loss of original architectural features and detailing as buildings are gradually adapted for their 'new' use.

The South Jesmond Conservation Area demonstrates that, even when the use of a building remains the same, significant change with implications for the townscape, can take place. Of particular concern within the area is the conversion of former family homes into multi-occupied residences, many for the rapidly growing student population. Figure 3.15 demonstrated this trend. Such change demands substantial internal modification of buildings but, as with adaptation for commercial use, has implications for external detailing in terms of doors, windows, door bells and other access devices, television and related media access devices and, especially problematic, the proliferation and almost permanent presence of 'To Let' signs.

But there are further dimensions to the complexity of the area as, for example, it contains several listed structures. These vary considerably in their character and the challenges these pose for their maintenance. The contrast between John Dobson's Jesmond General Cemetery archway and chapels and the Arriva bus depot illustrate this point (Figures 8.1 and 8.2)



**Figure 8.1 Arriva Bus Depot, Grade II Listed Building**



**Figure 8.2 Jesmond General Cemetery, Grade II\* Listed Building**

Quite different strategies may be required to face any challenges to either of these two listed buildings. As listed buildings they are integral parts of the Conservation Area and need to be recognised as such in the management strategy but, because of their specific locations, the uses to which they are currently put and may be put to in the future, their inherent design as elements of the built environment and the differing levels of esteem in which they are held by local stakeholders, they give rise to quite different issues and potentialities.

All of the above indicates the variety within the area and, to some extent, this is recognised and celebrated within the Character Statement and Management Plan. Indeed, areas do not necessarily have to possess significant unity in order to have 'character'. An integral part of the character of an area can be diversity and variety. However, this sits a little uncomfortably with many of the approaches and methods of urban morphology, which are concerned with recognising and identifying recurrent features and underlying common structural determinants within the townscape and with producing classifications and typologies. This may tend to point in the direction of somewhat rigid templates to guide and inform development and management practice. But if the essential character of the area in question is constituted of diversity and variety, such templates may be of limited utility.

Both practically and philosophically, it may be difficult for urban morphology as an academic practice to cope with the management demands within areas characterised by substantial physical diversity and variety of elements. Flexibility may be a key requirement of the latter. If the problems of the practical application of urban morphological principles within planning practice are compounded when faced with a geographical area of considerable internal diversity, the complexity of urban morphology itself is also an issue. Kropf (2009) has demonstrated the range of different phenomena that can be involved as the object of urban morphological enquiry and, whilst an inevitable reality in the academic pursuit of understanding the inherent character physical built forms, may be somewhat problematic in the application of morphological principles in practice. The component elements of urban morphology are varied and multiple and related to each other in a hierarchical manner (Kropf, 2014). A wide range of phenomena such as architectural style, building materials, streets, street blocks, plots, and land use are involved and different modes of analysis including town plan analysis and typological form analysis may be used and different component forms such as fringe belts, plot series and character areas recognised. The range of issues which any detailed consideration of this list gives rise to seem likely to be problematic in any practical 'day to day' (i.e. in on-going planning practice) applications.

But the complexity does not stop there. As is apparent from the list cited above, a further crucial issue concerns scale. What is the most 'useful' scale at which academic urban morphology can make a contribution to planning and urban management practice? Urban morphologists would no doubt respond that their subject area is concerned with all 'relevant' scales from the whole town, its character areas, plan types and individual plots, and that all of these are relevant for any well-informed intervention. But, the practicing planner or conservation officer working within a specific area and responding to the immediate demands emanating from within that area may regard such a hierarchically structured approach as something of a luxury.

A further point here is concerned with the 'point of intervention'. If it is accepted that it is beneficial for both parties and for society in general for phenomena such as conservation area practice and management to develop much closer relationships between practitioners (planners and conservation officers) and academics (urban morphologists), then an important question concerns the point at which this dialogue should begin. An obvious answer is – from the very beginning. But, in the UK, in the vast majority of cases the plain reality is that this is impossible. Of the 9,300 conservation areas within England, a high proportion have existed for a number of years. In other words, if urban morphologists are to get involved in one way or another in what's going on within most of the conservation areas in the UK they are joining a party that has not just already started but has been in progress for some time. This immediately creates a different and more challenging scenario for any intervention – the 'secular' processes within any area will be well under way as will the

policies and practices of the planners/conservation officers attempting to respond to these processes. And the relationship between these two is likely to vary in a myriad of ways in different conservation areas across the country. In such circumstances, what is the appropriate role for the academic urban morphologist to play? Is s/he best utilised as a 'critical friend' commenting and advising on on-going policy and management practice, or as a consultant, attempting to create an overall management strategy based on morphological principles? Alternatively, the urban morphologist may play the role of 'expert witness', responding to specific issues and providing specialist advice on very particular aspects or cases. Yet another rather different role could be that of partner, where any management strategy is devised in equal collaboration with the relevant officers.

In the context of the relationship between academic urban morphology and practice, Marshall and Çalışkan (2011) argue that there are three 'applications' of urban morphology:

- As an investigative or exploratory technique to find out 'what happened' within an area and where change in form is studied to better understand urban change more generally
- As a diagnostic or evaluative tool – a way of studying 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' kinds of urban fabric
- A means of identifying examples, types or elements of urban form that could be used as units of design

Leaving aside the issue of 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' in whose terms, some of these applications – especially the latter – resonate with the ISUF Task Force case studies, based on the conviction that a lack of morphological understanding can lead to poor design. But urban design and urban management are quite different things. In conceptual terms (if not always in practice), the relationship between academic urban morphology and urban design is a close one. The relationship between academic urban morphology and conservation and planning practice is not so immediate. Figure 8.3 tries to summarise the reasons for this.

Both academic urban morphologists and practitioners share a common interest in urban form and the townscape. But it may well be the case that the cultures within which these two professional occupations operate, militate against easy collaboration, no matter how desirable and how mutually willing and co-operative the various parties may be. Figure 8.3 attempts to isolate some of the issues and comparisons between the requirements of someone doing a 'practical job' on the one hand and the very different, essentially intellectual role of the professional academic on the other.

Whilst the practitioner is usually legally bound to operate within an established legal framework which creates the parameters for the role played, the academic can operate within a very different agenda, one that is much more personal in character or, possibly

defined in terms of the role played within a larger research group. The practitioner's role is frequently one of attempting to reconcile the perspectives of a variety of interested parties in any development or policy whilst the role and training of the academic is to recognise the established orthodoxy but then, frequently, to challenge it. In carrying out their role, practitioners inevitably have to operate within an established consensus whereas the job of the social science academic at least is arguably to challenge existing paradigms.

### TWO CULTURES?

<b>PRACTITIONERS =&gt;</b>	<b>&lt;= MUTUAL INTEREST =&gt; URBAN FORM/TOWNSCAPE</b>	<b>&lt;= ACADEMIC URBAN MORPHOLOGISTS</b>
<b>OPERATE WITHIN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS</b>		<b>OPERATE WITHIN RESONAL/RESEARCH GROUP AGENDA</b>
<b>RECONCILE PERSPECTIVES OF DEVELOPERS, PROTAGONISTS AND PUBLIC</b>		<b>RECOGNISE ESTABLISHED KNOWLEDGE BUT CHALLENGE IT</b>
<b>OPERATE WITHIN ESTABLISHED CONSENSUAL PARADIGMS</b>		<b>PROBE THE HORIZONS OF KNOWLEDGE: SEEK NEW PARADIGMS</b>
<b>ANSWERABLE TO A LOCAL POLITICAL BUREACRACY</b>		<b>ANSWERABLE TO SELF/OWN INTELLECTUUAL INTEGRITY</b>
<b>TANGIBLE OUTPUTS – IMPLEMENTATION OF A PLAN/STRATEGY</b>		<b>'IDEAS' MAIN OUTPUT – ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS</b>
	<b>HOWEVER: (IN UK) 'REF IMPACT' AGENDA?</b>	

**Figure 8.3 Contrasting professional Contexts of Practitioners and Academic Urban Morphologists**

The cultural background of the two groups varies in other ways also. Whilst the practitioner is directly a public servant, answerable to local communities but also to a local and national political bureaucracy, despite significant recent attempts to curtail this, the academic retains a considerable degree of freedom of thought and action, still being answerable primarily to his or her own integrity. Finally, whilst the practitioner is essentially concerned with tangible outputs – with the preparation or implementation of a specific plan or

strategy, the main 'output' of the academic is frequently considerably less tangible, being concerned with ideas in the abstract (although they may of course subsequently have practical application).

Thus, despite sharing interest in broadly the same phenomena – urban form/townscapes – the practitioner and academic seem likely to bring a substantial but crucially very different cultural background to their roles, attitudes, judgements of priorities and the real possibilities of genuine collaboration. Whilst most would agree on the desirability of such collaboration, the obstacles in the way of it are formidable. However, recent changes within the academic assessment of research quality within the UK are of interest in this context as a significant criterion for judging this 'quality' is the 'impact' that research has had on wider society, defined as:

*an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia*

(REF 2014 (2012) Definition of impact for the REF, p.26)

Whilst the longer term influence of this significant 'new' criterion for 'measuring' research 'quality' remains to be seen, finance conscious universities are increasingly likely to place emphasis on impact-based research in their own research strategies. One outcome of such pressures may well be a greater degree of convergence in the dichotomies between practitioners and academics identified in Figure 8.3 above.

## 9.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is unquestionable that the progress of the conservation area and its management has been severely compromised in the past by a number of factors. As change in the built environment is a cumulative effect over a period of time, the current character and appearance of an area is still powerfully influenced by inherited elements. The contemporary appearance of the South Jesmond Conservation Area therefore does not just reflect current strategies but also issues from the recent past. The administration and management of the area has therefore laboured under several difficulties. The powerful forces for change impacting on the area have been stressed throughout this report, as has the compounding of these pressures by the inherent complexity of the area. Although small, the complex variety within the area has led to an equally varied set of challenges. A further practical difficulty relates to the long delay in the emergence of an effective management strategy. Until the production of the latter, it is fair to describe the management of the area as essentially passive. It is only with the adoption of the Character Statement and Management Plan that a transition to a more pro-active strategy can be identified.

This project set out to explore whether or not urban morphological principles were being used in the South Jesmond conservation area and the issues arising from any attempts to apply such principles. Although not formally recognised as such, it is clear that a number of principles are being adopted by practitioners that resonate strongly with academic urban morphologists. A number of the 'traditional' components of urban morphological study are recognised and promoted in management practice within the area. For example, the fundamental importance of plot pattern and existing building footprint is recognised. There are clear attempts to maintain and even re-introduce elements of character uniformity in terms of materials, colours and detailing. Equally, active management is being applied to the open space components of the area (fringe belt) and their role as wildlife corridors and habitats is being enhanced.

In terms of the broader but central question of the applicability of urban morphological principles to practice in the management of conservation areas, it is evident that there is considerable divergence between the two groups (academic urban morphologists and planning/conservation officers) in the definition and interpretation of some key elements. The most obvious is the delineation and understanding of fundamental issues such as character areas within a conservation area and the importance of, for example, categorising the different types of urban tissue that constitute the area and give them their fundamental characteristics. In general terms, it is possible to recognise a tension between urban morphologists and practitioners in their approach to defining 'urban tissue'. Urban morphologists, especially in the British school, most frequently take the two-dimensional town-plan as their starting point and interpret 'tissue' as being largely (although not

exclusively) a product of the various components contained **within** the town plan. In contrast, it is clear from the South Jesmond Management Plan for example that the town plan is seen as a considerably less significant element and the three-dimensional physical appearance of the area and its component parts are privileged much more.

Fundamentally, this distinction relates to the historical development and internal 'cultures' of the two professions of practicing planner and/or conservation officer and academic urban morphologist. Their training and 'world view' is different and constitutes a significant obstacle to a closer rapport between researchers in urban morphology and those engaged in 'day to day' practice.

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## APPENDIX A

## Jesmond Covenants

### Covenant created by Richard Burdon Sanderson governing his land in Jesmond. From a conveyance dated 7th September 1892

The following are details of the covenants contained in the Conveyance dated 7 September 1892 referred to in the Charges Register:-

Covenant by the Purchaser for himself his heirs and assigns with the vendor that he and they would abide by and perform observe and keep the stipulations as to building on and user of the said premises contained in the second schedule

The second schedule referred to

1. The Purchaser shall build and complete upon each site within twelve calendar months from the date hereof a substantial dwellinghouse and boundary wall or fence
2. No house shall be erected in Sanderson Road at a less cost for labour and materials than £600 such cost in each case to be estimated at the lowest current prices and to be exclusive of stabling. Not more than one house shall be erected upon each site. The whole of the materials to be used in the houses, wall or other erections to be of sound quality. The front walls of the houses to be faced with the best selected bricks of uniform colour.
3. Every house shall be self contained That is it shall never be let or occupied in separate parts but shall be occupied by one family only.
4. The Purchasers shall, before commencing to build any house or other erection on the land sold submit a design plan and description thereof to the Vendors Surveyor and obtain his approval thereto. The Purchaser will complete every house or other erection on the said land in accordance with such approval design plan and description
- 5 - The frames of external doors and windows of all the houses shall be set in 4 1/2 inch rebates. None of the windows facing front streets shall have outside shutters.
6. The yard walls and yard division wall shall be built with 9 inch brickwork on edge or other approved coping and shall be 8 feet high above the level of the back street
7. The gable walls shall be of 9 inch brickwork or of stone not less than 16 inches thick and 9 inch brick backs to fire places. The gable walls and also the division yard walls shall be party walls and the middle shall be the boundary between the adjoining sites. The purchaser first building a party wall shall be repaid by the Purchaser pf the site adjoining one-half the cost of such party wall and (in case of dispute) the sum payable shall be decided by the vendor's Surveyor. All gable abutting upon streets shall be faced with bricks and shall belong to the purchaser of the site upon which they are built such gables shall have a stone water tabling 14 inches by 3 inches clean chiselled.
8. The roofs of all houses and back offices shall be covered with blue Welsh slated of uniform tint and shall have chisseled stone or other approved ridges and hips.
9. The chimeneys outside the roofs shall be built of brickwork should the kitches be built in the yard the chimeneys should be carried above the eaves of the main roof of the house
10. No stable or coach-house shall be built without the previous written consent of the Vendor and no stable or coach-house shall be placed higher than 12 feet to the top of the ridge or have any fireplace or flue without the previous consent in writing of the Vendor.
11. The space in front of each house shall be, for ever maintained and used as a garden only and no building whatever shall be erected thereon. Such garden shall be enclosed with such parapet pallsading, gate and gateposts of such designs as the Vendor's surveyor shall approve. Each garden shall be above the level of the street and be divided from the adjoining garden by open iron railing.
12. The Purchaser shall at his own expense lay and maintain proper branch drains or drain pipes in each site to communicate with the common sewer as directed by the Vendor or his Surveyor. The common sewers will be laid by the Vendor who will also lay the curb in front of each site, but each Purchaser on completing his purchase shall pay the Vendor ..... being a proportion of the cost of the same sewers and curb and subject to a proportion of the cost same sewers and curb and subject to a proportionate cost of maintaining the same according to the bye-laws of the Corporation of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
13. The Purchaser shall be at the expense of forming, making, paving, flagging and completely fishing the streets in front or abutting upon each site and keeping the whole in good repair, but if and whenever any street shall be used in common by the houses on both sides of the said street then the Purchaser shall be at only, half the expense of forming, making, completing and keeping in good repair the said street or atreets as aforesaid and the other half of such expense shall be borne and paid by the Purchaser of the site on the other side of the street
14. Should the Vendor find it expedient to execute the paving of the streets or flagging the footpath adjoining any of the sites shhould the purchaser on completion thereof by the Venndor shall pay to him a proportionate share of the expense of such paving or flaggiig which shall be fixed by the Vendor's Surveyor or in case of dispute by the

City Engineer of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

15. Unless with the previous consent in writing of the vendor no trade business manufacture or calling of any description shall be carried on on the land sold or in any house or erection thereon and in particular no shop, inn, tavern, Warehouse or other place of bussiness shall be erected thereon and no house or building thereon shall be used as a lodging house or for the purpose of any public or private institution or society or for the sale of ale, beer, wine or Spirits but without such consent as aforesaid to the contrary all the houses are to be used exclusively for private residences and nothing shall be done or suffered on the premies which shall be a nuisance or annoyance to any neighbouring residents and unless with such consent as aforesaid to the contrary no building or erection commenced on the said land shall remain thereon in an incomplete or unfinished state for a longer period than 12 calendar months from its commencement and every breach of each stipulation contained in this clause shall be under a penalty of £20 for the first six calendar months and a further penalty of £5 for every succeeding calendar month during which any stipulations contained in this clause shall be violated such penalties respectively to be recovered by the Vendor in each case in full as liquidated damages ascertained and assented to for each breach notwithstanding any variance of degree of importance in any of the breaches or stipulations

16. The Vendors consent in writing may be given under the hand of his Surveyor and the Vendor may alter or dispenses with the above conditions on the sale of any other part of the estate without prejudicing the Purchaser's covenant or agreement to keep the above conditions.

17. The term, the Vendor, used in this Conveyance shall include the said Richard Burdon Sanderson his heirs and assigns and the term the Purchaser, shall include the above named John Cochran Gover his heirs and assigns and the term Surveyor shall include the Vendor's Surveyor for the time being