

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT, 1971

HIGH CONISCLIFFE CONSERVATION AREA

Part XV (Section 277) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 is designed to secure the protection and improvement of the character of areas of special architectural or historic interest by their designation as Conservation Areas. The emphasis on areas, which can include whole streets, village greens, groups of trees, means that all the elements which compose an attractive scene can be protected as a whole, and improvements planned and changes controlled comprehensively. Thus the Act strengthens the powers already available. The County Council as Local Planning Authority is required to determine the areas to be designated and to consult with the Local Authority and other interested bodies.

High Coniscliffe is a pleasant example of a roadside village, though inevitably marred by the amount of traffic now carried by the A.67. The village green, church, rectory and a few other houses now lie somewhat isolated on the south side, in a wedge of land between the road and the river Tees, where it turns south again in a large meandre. The village is high above the river which is almost completely hidden from it by the levels and large plantations. Lying within well-defined limits marred only by some unsympathetic development at the west end, it is an almost continuous row of houses of all periods from the early eighteenth century to the present, which nevertheless blend successfully, despite varied styles and materials. The eighteenth century mill is believed to be built on the foundations of a mill recorded in the thirteenth century when the village was part of the manor of Low Coniscliffe.

The Darlington R.D. villages study indicates that beyond infilling and some redevelopment the village is not expected to grow, because of attendant traffic problems and in order to preserve the shape of the village and its definition in the landscape. The Conservation Area therefore includes, besides all the main buildings, land around the village which will help to maintain its character, in particular at the east end where converging woodlands along the roadside enclose views of the village across open fields.

The main consequences of designation will be:-

- (a) Greater emphasis on improvement works, including improvements to property. Certain properties which make an outstanding contribution to the village may become unsound, and the District Council would be asked to give early notice of any clearance programmes in case the planning authority should wish to make representations about the possibility of rehabilitation.

In addition to housing improvement grants, in certain cases grants or loans may be available from the County Council towards repairs, mainly to meet the additional cost of more appropriate external materials than might otherwise have been used. All alterations to Listed Buildings now need specific consent, and on others, particularly where improvement grants are given and the work involves alterations to the main elevation, a higher visual standard will be required than

has always been evident in the past. The Council will seek Directions under Article 4 of the General Development Order, to bring under planning control external alterations which are at present permitted under that Order.

- (b) As the lists of buildings of architectural or historic interest are being revised by the Department of the Environment, additions to the list may be expected in High Coniscliffe. Meanwhile the County Council will seek to protect certain buildings by Buildings Preservation Notices and Directions under the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act, 1972 where these may be deemed necessary in the interests of preserving the character of the Conservation Area.
- (c) Little new development other than infilling and improvement or conversion is envisaged and this will be controlled to ensure it accords with the special architectural and visual qualities of High Coniscliffe. In appropriate cases permissions will be given on detailed applications only and no conditional or outline approvals issued, as is provided for under the General Development Order. Landscaping works may be required as part of any consent.
- (d) Any application which, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, would affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be advertised and comments invited and taken into consideration.
- (e) Tree Preservation Orders will be made and these will cover not only trees in the Conservation Area but those outside which are important to its landscape setting.
- (f) The improvement of the village through minor repairs, tidying and improvements to fencing, painting, paving, street furniture will be encouraged and where appropriate agreement for additional tree planting sought. Such schemes should also cover any works necessary to improve the approaches to the Conservation Area, particularly to the garage and council estate at the west end.
- (g) Measures to control advertisements will be taken as may prove necessary.

It should be made known to the public that the advice of the Planning Department is freely available at any stage before an application is made or when problems arise and early consultation could in many cases be helpful.

Schedule of the Area

The village as enclosed by Ulnaby Lane, Hill Lane and the adjacent fields behind, the Mill house and Ulnaby Beck as far as High Coniscliffe bridge, enclosing woodland, the green and principal buildings south of A.67 and following the River Tees as far as Carlbury Grove.