

STRANTON CONSERVATION AREA



VISUAL ASSESSMENT



A INTRODUCTION

1. The following report gives a short assessment and appraisal on the Stranton Conservation Area which was declared in 2004. The assessment and appraisal follows the framework given by English Heritage in its advisory document "Guidance on conservation area appraisals". The report is not intended to be an in depth analysis of the Stranton Conservation Area but is intended as a short working document to identify the current strengths and weaknesses of the conservation area and what actions, if any, are required to tackle emerging issues within the area.

B. DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA

1. The plan in Appendix 1 gives the current boundary of the Stranton Conservation Area. Stranton is situated to the south of the town centre.
2. The northern limit of the area is Park Road. This is a busy road that forms a natural boundary to the area separating it from the main town centre. On the corner of this boundary is the substantial former Co-operative Department Store which was recently converted to commercial use on the ground floor with apartments in the upper storeys.
3. Running down the east side of the area is the A689 a four lane road which cuts through the middle of Hartlepool. To the south is Burn Road where local traffic filters off the A689. Commercial buildings merging with residential properties bound the western side of the conservation area.



Photographs showing boundaries of conservation area (clockwise from top-left) Park Road (north), A689 (east), Waldon Street (west) and Burn Road (south).



4. The plan in Appendix 1 indicates the listed buildings contained within the conservation area. The listed buildings are clustered to the north of this conservation area. One of the most prominent is All Saints Church (Grade II*). Pictured above the square tower of this building can be viewed throughout the conservation area, dating from the 12th century but developed and altered through the years until the 1800s. The building remains relatively unchanged from this point constructed in sandstone with a slate roof.
5. The largest listed building which dominates the northern end of the conservation area is the former Co-operative Department Store (Grade II). The building has recently been brought back into use with the upper floors converted to apartments. The white Portland Stone building fills the corner of Park Road and Stockton Road. The clock tower can be seen punctuating the sky beyond the limits of the town centre.
6. Along side these two large imposing listed buildings are smaller townscape features, no less worthy of listing but that probably go unnoticed by most visitors to the area. Both are shown in the photographs above. The lion statue on the brewery wall, distinguishable as it is the only one of the three lions which is standing, is grade II listed. Alongside this at street level are two cast iron bollards which have 'Han's Town' imprinted on, they are also grade II listed.
7. Fronting on to Stranton Garth is a small parade of shops all three storey with the third floor accommodation in the roof space constructed in a pale, cream brick which is known as Pease brick (see photographs below). The buildings have varying styles of dormer windows, some set back into the roof with decorative barge boards and others spanning the front of the property with timber and render detailing. The shops have been altered over the years, however, they retain enough original features such as the wooden bay windows, corbels and original openings to show the character that once existed.



8. Housing Hartlepool occupies a property called Greenbank (photograph to right). It is set in its own grounds behind a high wall that fronts the green. The building is elegant and retains many of its original features despite being largely extended. It also provides a snapshot of the few large residential properties that once existed in this area.



9. The Causeway Public House is an attractive redbrick building that has retained traditional features such as sash windows, doors and tiling in the entrance. It is located in the centre of a small terrace of three properties.



10. Bathgate Terrace (photograph to right) is a small row of five residential properties on the west side of the area, two storeys in height with some extending into the roof space evident by the small dormer windows. Although some of the windows and doors on these properties have been changed the buildings have retained much of their original character. Openings remain the same retaining the rhythm of the terrace. In some instances original railings can also be found to the front of the property providing an example of what the boundaries of these properties once looked like.



11. A variety of materials are used in the properties in this area from the red brick buildings of the brewery and the Causeway Public House to rendered properties such as Greenbank. Most roofs are slate and examples of original joinery details on windows and doors can be found.

12. The main open space in the area is Stranton Garth to the south. Historically the area was once part of the gardens to West Hall a large property in the area. It is now a focal point for the area with the parade of shops overlooking it. The area has been landscaped and has some attractive mature trees; it is enclosed by a low wall. Seating areas have been provided. Despite the proximity of busy roads the area has a quiet feel.





13. The church is set in a pleasant green area and includes mature trees and some flowerbeds (see photograph above). It is raised from immediate public view and therefore appears to be less accessible than Stranton Garth

14. There are other smaller areas of space including the area adjacent to the large retail unit to the south and at the end of the parade of shops (see photograph above). Both include trees and landscaping but are in poor condition and contribute very little to the setting of the buildings in the area. Despite this as the areas can be viewed from the public realm they do contribute to the feeling of “greenness” in the area.

15. A number of mature trees are located in the area. Mainly found in Stranton Garth but also located in the garden of the social club they make a substantial contribution to the area separating it from the town centre beyond which has sparse tree coverage.

16. The main views within the area are those towards the church that stands on higher ground on the eastern side of the area. The top of the tower can be seen when looking across Stranton Garth.

17. There are attractive views looking north across Stranton Garth through to Greenbank. The main building is framed through the gateposts standing either end of the high wall that bounds the property.



19. Two large retail stores are located to the south east side of the area (see photograph to right). This part of Stranton has a modern character in comparison to the rest of the area however it is an important space to the front of the church and a key site in the context of the conservation area.

20. A large part of the brewery site are modern structures (see photograph to right). These areas are functional and reinforce the identity of a modern working brewery. Such areas are not particularly special however, they provide a link between the original red brick Victorian buildings.



C. LOCATION AND SETTING

1. Stranton is located to the South of the town centre on largely level ground. The Church is the only building which is positioned on a raised area thereby elevating its prominence. The dominance of other buildings in the area such as the former Co-operative Department Store are due to the scale of the buildings and their setting in a relatively low storied townscape surrounding the property.
2. The area is virtually cut off from the rest of urban Hartlepool which surrounds it due to the major roads which bound the area on three sides. Immediately to the north of the area is the shopping centre however the separation of this area and the conservation area by Park Road, leaves an impression of this being some distance away.



D. HISTORY

1. The old village of Stranton was absorbed by the Victorian new town of West Hartlepool in the 1850s and 1860s. Only All Saints Church on its limestone outcrop and part of the street layout give any clue as to the previous existence of a settlement. The earliest plan of the area shows green fields and the initial development in the area including the church and the brewery (see Appendix 2).
2. Stranton (literally settlement on the sea-shore) was a farming village. In 1812, William Tate, Parish Clerk at All Saints, wrote:

“The Parish of Stranton chiefly consists of cornlands... There are two extensive flour mills that manufacture great quantities which is conveyed to Newcastle and Sunderland by water: each having a vessel for that purpose. Hartlepool is well supplied by these mills. Also a grist-mill, for the use of the neighbourhood. They all go by wind.

Stranton stands upon a gently rising ground, at the distance of two and a half furlongs from the sea shore; the houses are irregular and scattered; and the road from Hartlepool to Stockton leads through it.

The church is on a fine mount near the centre of the village; it is an exceedingly good one, and dedicated to All Saints, the tower or steeple of this church is 68ft high.”

3. Stranton Garth was originally part of the vicarage gardens. Historically this has always been open ground. Robert Surtees described it in 1827;
- “This little piece of ground, covered with blossoming trees, looks like a portion of Worcestershire or Herefordshire dropped on our naked coast.”*
4. The present brewery dates from 1852. William Waldon opened “The Lion Brewery”

using water from wells buried deep beneath the present site. However beer has been brewed in Stranton since at least 1572.

5. Later plans from the early 1900s (see Appendix 3) shows the majority of buildings developed in a fine grain closely together. The larger commercial properties in the area are the same as those today namely the former Co-operative Department Store and the Brewery.
6. In the post war period the area surrounding Stranton changed significantly. The plan from the 1960s in Appendix 4 shows the establishment of the prominence of Stockton Road as it separates Stranton from other areas of the town. In addition a clearance programme motivated by a wish to modernise resulted in the demolition of sub-standard housing. Buildings along Church Row were lost along with others just outside the area.

E. PUBLIC INVESTMENT

1. Stranton Conservation Area was designated in 2004 and since this time it has benefitted from public investment not only in the public realm but also in the buildings within the area. In total over £500,000 has been invested in the area through funding from New Deal for Communities, the Local Transport Plan and the Councils own budgets.



2. Works were carried out in Stranton Garth to improve the paths within the area, provide seating and install railings round the low wall which bounds the garden.

3. Further to this a number of commercial properties have benefitted from grant. Wholesale changes were made to the shopfronts and upper floors of 62 and 64 Burn Road restoring traditional shopfronts to the properties and providing windows and doors to the flats over these shops. In a similar vein the property adjacent to the Causeway Public House was restored with grant assistance enabling the existing business to extend into it (see photographs to right).



4. In addition the main parade of shops within the area has benefitted from a number of re-roofing grants to ensure that properties remain watertight. Further to this some properties have repaired and restored traditional features, the most recent of which is Stranton Pets.

F. REVIEW OF CURRENT POSITION AND ISSUES

1. Today the area has a somewhat secluded feeling of being separated from the main town centre. This has been the result of the demolition within the area which assisted the emergence of major roads in the town. The feeling of isolation is not to the detriment of the area but reinforces its unique character within the context of the rest of the town.

2. The recent public investment in the area has made a significant difference to the conservation area. In particular the public realm works have enhanced the central green space which is a key feature within the area.

3. The majority of the commercial properties on Vicarage Row are occupied and in the past a number have benefited from grant funding for re-roofing works. The introduction of the conservation area encouraged the restoration of shopfronts on two properties in Burn Road however this has not impacted as much on those shops in Vicarage Row. For the most part the shopfronts remain unchanged and an emerging issue is the incremental changes which continue to be made to properties.



4. Integrating a roller shutter into an existing shop front can be difficult, often disrupting its design and appearance, particularly so if the frontage is a highly detailed original example. External shutters may in some cases be the only alternative if owners' understandable concerns to protect their properties are to be addressed and the quality of the shop front preserved. However such an approach can have a detrimental effect upon the character of Stranton as a conservation area. There should be investigation of alternative approaches to help owners protect their properties rather than adopting external shutters to both protect the character of the area and address some owners' needs to protect their properties.



5. The design of adverts to properties in the form of fascia signs to shop fronts and hanging signs to front elevations and their illumination can enhance the quality of a building and the conservation area. The choice of materials, style or font type for letters used, the colours used for backgrounds and letters and the way the advert is illuminated are some of the detailed issues which need to be addressed to achieve satisfactory advert design. Design advice made available to owners and agents who submit applications would be a means to address this design issue.

6. As previously mentioned Stranton was subject to extensive street environment works as part of a strategy to improve the appearance and increase the confidence

of owners. This investment was only installed relatively recently and is, in good condition. The works targeted key areas in Stranton including Stranton Garth and the pavement to the front of the shopping parade. There is scope to extend these schemes elsewhere in the conservation area to provide a uniformed streetscape throughout the area.

7 Besides the identified listed buildings there are a number of significant other buildings identified at the beginning of the assessment which add to the overall quality of the Stranton Conservation Area, due to their individual architecture and materials used. Their quality would not be sufficient to justify listed status in their own right but inclusion on a local list of significant buildings would be a material consideration if there were a proposal to demolish. A local list of significant buildings is currently being considered. Potential buildings for inclusion in a Local List of significant buildings have been identified as:

- Greenbank
- Social Club, Waldon Street
- The Causeway Public House
- Buildings with the brewery site



Photographs showing potential locally listed buildings from top left, Greenbank, Social Club, Waldon Street, The Causeway, Cameron's Brewery.

G. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Overall the conservation area appraisal report concludes that the character of Stranton is finely balanced between the positive aspects which support Stranton being a conservation area and those negative aspects which would not support it being so. The quality of Stranton and its status as a conservation area comes from the traditional detailing such as shopfronts, windows and doors which are evident within the area despite the more recent works to both commercial and residential properties in the area. The following issues are highlighted as key in the future management of the Stranton Conservation Area:

- Building appearance.
- Design of advertising.
- Maintenance of the street environment. .

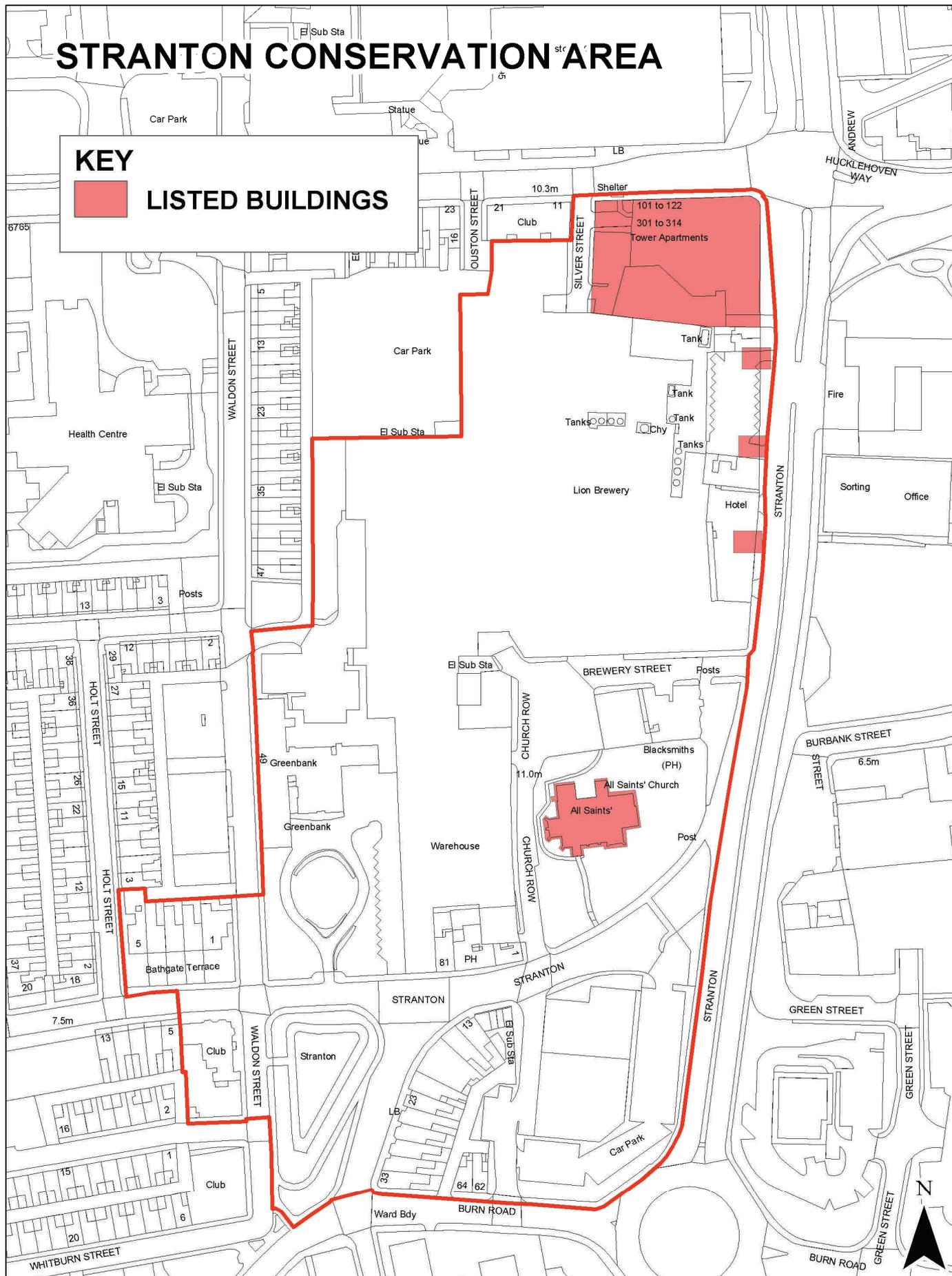
2 **Building appearance** - The report indicates the quality of the conservation area is reduced by inappropriate alterations to buildings, poor design and maintenance in the context of a conservation area. The report noted the example of properties in Vicarage Gardens where all the traditional appearance has been lost by inappropriate alterations. Long continuous horizontal frontages have removed the variety and interest that a number of differing traditionally detailed frontages would provide. Part of the solution to achieve an improvement would be to provide building design advice to owners particularly concerning shop front design. A leaflet "Shop front Design Guide" already exists along with a Supplementary Guidance Note in the Local Plan providing guidance on shopfronts and advertisements. These could be adapted and expanded in a leaflet to be applicable to Stranton.

3. **Design of advertising** – The type of design and detail of advertisements to buildings and shop fronts can have a positive impact on the appearance of Stranton as a Conservation Area. The leaflet on "Shop Front Design" mentioned above could be adapted to address good design of advertisements on buildings and shop fronts in the context of a conservation area. The integration of roller shutters into the overall shop front design can enhance the character of individual buildings and the wider appearance

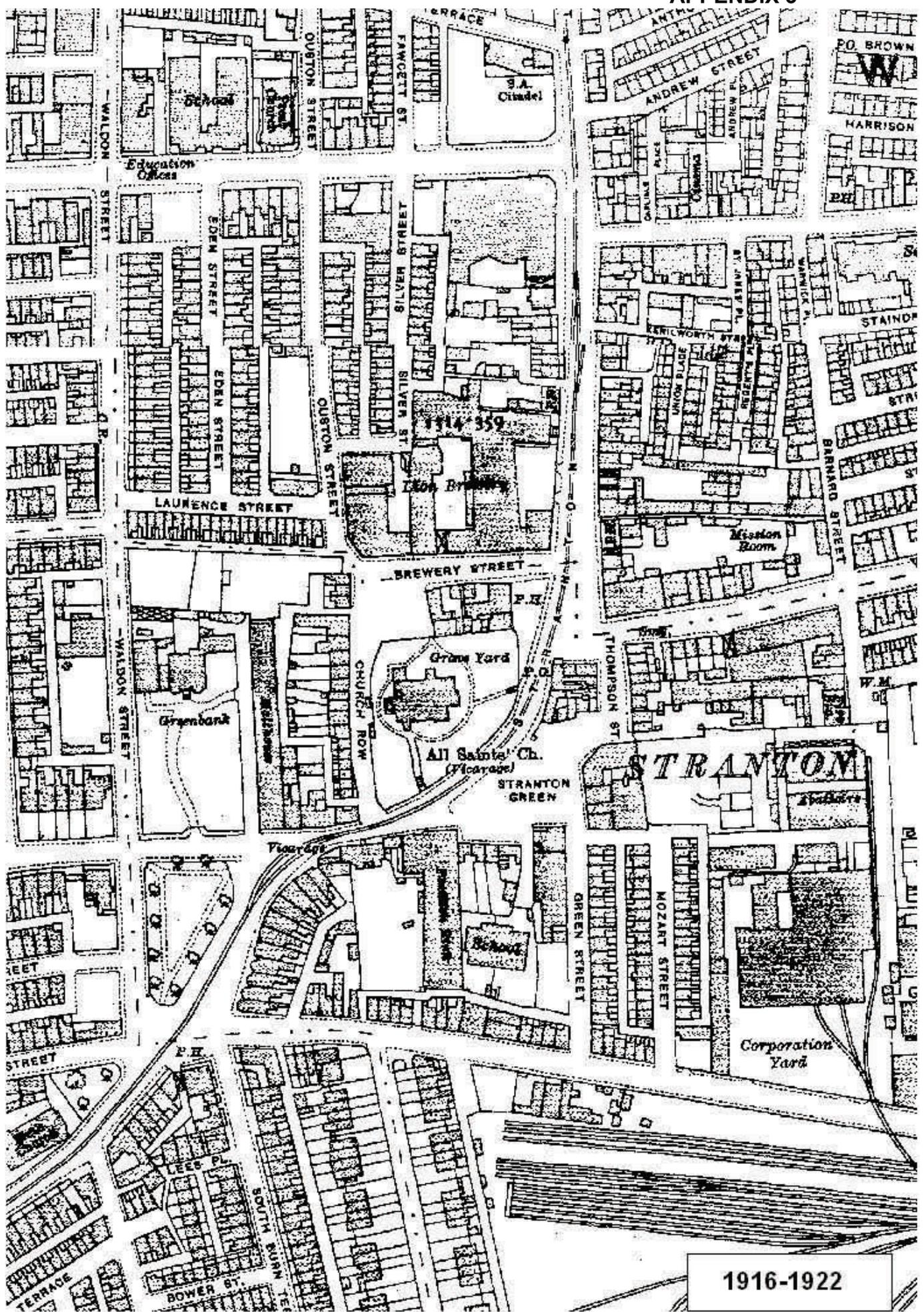
4 **Maintenance of Street Environment** – If building owners or new owners are to be encouraged to invest in empty buildings, decorate their buildings and be more careful in their proposals for advertisement and painting of shop fronts then the maintenance of the street furniture needs to be addressed. Subject to appropriate budgets being available a regular schedule of maintenance would address this issue.

H. ACTION PLAN

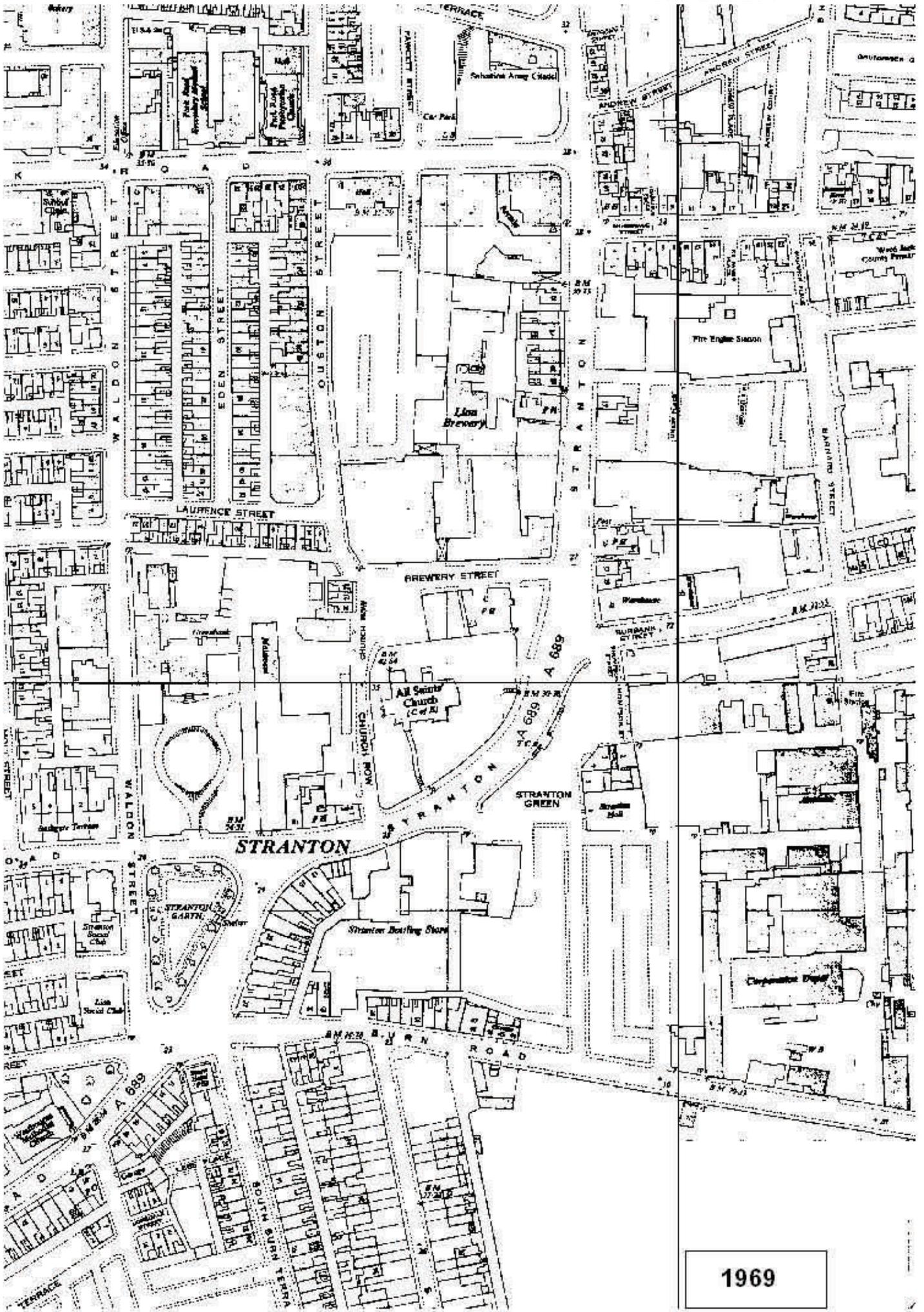
1 Attached in Appendix 5 is a table outlining the issues in the conservation area drawn from the above conclusions and the way in which these can be addressed through existing working practices.



APPENDIX 3



1916-1922



1969

**ACTION PLAN ADDRESSING ISSUES WHICH HAVE ARISEN FROM THE
STRANTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

Issue	Potential Action
Unsympathetic alterations and loss of traditional architectural details to buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where consent is required, resist unsympathetic alterations and loss of traditional architectural details through positive use of existing development control powers. • Encourage appropriate reinstatement of traditional architectural details in future development negotiations. • Take enforcement action against unauthorised removal of traditional architectural details where a breach of planning control has occurred.
Poor quality shop fronts and signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take enforcement action against unauthorised change of use or removal of a shopfront where there is a negative impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. • Encourage appropriate reinstatement or sympathetic shopfront and signage design (following guidance in Local Plan Supplementary Guidance Note 5) • Provide a leaflet offering guidance to building owners of alterations to shop fronts similar to that provided by the New Deal for Communities Partnership.
Poor maintenance of buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek improvements to poorly maintained buildings or land by negotiation through the development control process. • Consider a strategy for using Section 215 Notices*¹ to improve quality of built environment. • Serve Section 54 Urgent Works Notices*² on listed buildings at risk, and consider use on unlisted buildings at risk, with agreement from appropriate authorities.
Maintenance of street surfaces and street furniture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the retention/reinstatement of traditional paving and hard landscaping. • Encourage like-for-like replacement, provided material is 'fit for purpose', where damage to street surface occurs. • Where wholesale replacement is required co-ordinate with appropriate sections to ensure consistency and quality of alternative material. • Encourage good maintenance of street furniture, and, where replacement is required that they are of an appropriate design.

The implementation of the potential actions may depend on the existing and future financial and staff resources that Hartlepool Borough Council departments work within.

*¹ A Section 215 Notice is a notice that is served on the owner or occupier when the poor condition and the appearance of the property or land are detrimental to the surrounding area or neighbourhood. The notice requires proper maintenance of the property of land in question, and it specifies what steps are required to remedy the problem within a specific time period.

*² An Urgent Works Notice is served under section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended, and can be served on a vacant (or vacant parts of a) listed building where works are urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building. In exceptional circumstances there are special powers available to the Secretary of State to authorise the use of these powers to an unlisted building in a conservation area where the preservation of the building is important for maintaining the character or appearance of the area. The works that can be implemented include making the building weather tight, safe from structural collapse and preventing unauthorised entry, vandalism or theft.

