



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: Environment and Infrastructure

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2007

Public

Key Decision: No

Recorded in Forward Plan:

Yes

Inside/Outside Policy Framework

Title: Dalston Conservation Area Review

Report of: Director of Development Services

Report reference: DS.117/07

Summary:

Following the work done on the Dalston Design Statement it was suggested that the Dalston Conservation Area should be reviewed. This report contains an appraisal of both the existing conservation area and the adjoining parts of the village. It examines the character and quality of the village and the possibility of extending the conservation area. It also highlights key issues for concern relating to protecting, strengthening and enhancing the character of the area.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the appraisal and map contained in this report be approved to form the basis of public consultation on changes to the conservation area for Dalston prior to any decision on alterations to the Dalston Conservation Area. The public consultation will include a public meeting and exhibition to be undertaken in conjunction with Dalston Parish Council.

Catherine Elliot

Director of Development Services

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan 2001 – 2016; Carlisle District Local Plan (saved policies); Carlisle District Local Plan 2001 - 2016 Revised Redeposit Draft

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

- 1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The Act emphasises that the appraisal and designation of Conservation Areas are not to be considered ends in themselves. It places a duty on local authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas in their districts, and to consult the local community about these proposals.
- 1.2 As part of the consultation exercise for the Dalston Design Statement, English Heritage recommended that a Conservation Area Appraisal should be carried out as part of the development of the Design Statement and its recommendations. This would examine the current boundary of the Area, identify key characteristics of the area and suggest possible extensions and/or reductions of the boundary. It should also identify issues to be considered in a Management Plan for the Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal in Section 2.0 of this report has been compiled by the City Council in conjunction with members of Dalston Parish, whose help and local knowledge has been of considerable value.
- 1.4 The public consultation on the Design Statement identified a number of issues specifically related to the care and management of the Conservation Area. These will be put forward for discussion and public consultation. A Management Plan will then be prepared which will seek ways of improving and enhancing the Conservation Area as well as propose ways in which to protect significant elements of its architectural, historic and landscape character.

- 1.5 The Appraisal identifies some of the issues currently affecting the village. Issues such as the pressure for housing development will need to be addressed in settlements like Dalston and where any land has to be considered for future development, specific sites will need to be assessed to determine appropriateness as well as the level of impact on the character and appearance of the village. Elements of this Appraisal, and the Management Plan that will follow, will help in identifying those areas and buildings of character and significance that should be protected and conserved or where measures have to be taken to ensure the area's character is enhanced rather than destroyed.

Dalston Conservation Area Appraisal

2.0 Summary of Dalston's Special Interest

- 2.1 Although it has a fragmentary early history from Palaeolithic times, the earliest parts of Dalston still visible date from medieval times, particularly the layout of The Square and the construction of its Parish Church. St Michael's is built across the wide northern end of this space, while the eastern side of The Square gradually curves until it almost meets the western side. A narrow gap at the southern end opens onto the space where three paths divide, one to Townhead, one to the Green and a third to the White Bridge and Buckabank. It is at this point that you become aware of the River Caldew and that it is responsible for the alignment of the eastern side of the Square, as it once flowed close to the back of these properties.
- 2.2 The main physical element that links the village of Dalston to its separate parts is the River Caldew. At the northern end the broad flood plain is occupied by the river itself and on either side are fields and woodland. Running due south from the village centre is the road and an area of Common Land known as The Green, from which the road takes its name. A variety of vernacular and modern buildings line the western side of the road.

- 2.3 At the southern end of the village the Caldew turns at right angles at Hawksdale Bridge where the ground starts to rise sharply. It is at this point where it has had to cut through the sandstone scarp. Here the river has fairly steep sides and it is at this point that advantage has been taken of the head of water created by the landscape. A sluice diverts water through Buckabank into a mill-race which follows the Caldew almost all the way back to St Michael's. Along this mill-race developed Dalston's Mills, a substantial industrial heritage that still has a presence both economically and architecturally. The earlier rural hamlet of Buckabank still survives up on the scarp at the crossroads to Durdar and Raughton Head.
- 2.4 South of Hawksdale Bridge is Hawksdale, consisting of a scatter of houses and cottages along the roadside. The tree covered ridge provides a significant physical boundary to the village.
- 2.5 The essential characteristics are the medieval village core, the long road on the western margin of The Green, the "industrial" suburb of Buckabank and the heavily wooded area around Hawksdale, out of which comes the River Caldew which in its course binds all of these elements together.

3.0 Location and Topography

- 3.1 Dalston lies 4 miles to the south of Carlisle on the west bank of the River Caldew. The Caldew rises in the Caldbeck Fells and runs northwards across what was Inglewood Forest. By the time it reaches Rose Castle and Hawksdale Hall the river has a fairly broad flood plain that lies within an undulating landscape of fields, woodland, scattered farms and hamlets. Approaching Bridge End the river is forced by the harder underlying rocks to turn first west and then north before the softer strata allow the river to cut, once again, a broader flood plain.
- 3.2 Within the river the native sandstone is clearly visible and on top of this is laid the river gravel and shingle that is evident across much of the valley, indicating the former river bed as it has shifted over time. Further complicating the picture are the glacial deposits, mostly boulder clay, and the finer alluvial deposits. All of which have left a rich and varied landscape which contains some of the better farmland in the County.

- 3.3 The area that is being examined has a southern boundary where the land rises from the river up to Hawksdale and an eastern boundary formed by the scarp slope from Buckabank northwards. The western edge of the area is less clearly defined, although there is a wooded ridge that runs northwards from Green Lane towards the village where it is most evident as the edge of the Showfield. At this point the higher level ground is where the new housing has been constructed at Madam Banks and Townhead.
- 3.4 The area between Townhead Road and Barras Lane is level and open, consisting of allotments and private land near the village and farmland further out. Beyond Barras Lane and the Carlisle Road lies the other large area of modern housing, built in the triangle formed by these two roads and the railway line.

4.0 Historical Development

- 4.1 The River Caldew has always played a fundamental part in Dalston's prosperity. The Romans established a corn mill on the River and the woollen industry boomed in the fifteenth century. In 1666 a bay at Lakeheughs diverted water from the Caldew into a mill-race. Water from this mill-race, or dam as it was known locally, could be directed into the Forge Pond (where The Forge houses now stand) to power Bishop's Corn Mill or to water wheels and trip hammers further down stream. Another bay was built across the Caldew below the churchyard and this directed water to Low Green and Low Mill.
- 4.2 The first cotton mill was built in 1782 at Mill Ellers and by 1830 there were four cotton mills, two corn mills and a forge. The forge made tools for agricultural use and was on two sites: one at The Pond and the other at Walk Mill where finishing also took place. There was a dye works at the New Rookery, near Walk Mill, together with a row of cottages. Much of Mill Ellers burnt down in 1901, with the four-storey Mill being reduced to two-storeys, which remains today. The sixteen-foot wheel remained until 1970.

5.0 Spatial Analysis

- 5.1 In order to make a full assessment of the village and its significance it was felt appropriate to examine a relatively wide area, beyond the confines of the conservation area boundary designated in 1980. The survey area extended from the railway bridge on Carlisle Road as far as Hawksdale, above Bridge End in the south. Buckabank was felt to be a reasonable eastern edge but the western boundary is far more nebulous and the tree line referred to in Para 3.3 is probably the most useful line to take, along with the edge of the modern housing in the village.
- 5.2 The survey area is shown on Map 1 and has been sub-divided into character areas in order to make analysis easier and comprehensible. These areas are Carlisle Road and Barras Lane; The Square; Townhead Road; The Green; Green Head/Green Lane; Bridge End/The Forge; Hawksdale; Buckabank.

6.0 Character Analysis

- 6.1 *Carlisle Road and Station Road/Barras Lane (See Map 1 – ChA1)*
- 6.1.1 The area from the railway bridge southwards is dominated on the east by Nestles and the Caldew School. Both of which have an enormous impact on the character of the Caldew Valley at this point. The variety of 20th century housing on the western side, although pleasant enough has little merit. Overall, this is a fairly harsh architectural environment and there is little that could be considered worthy of interest as an area of special architectural or historic value.
- 6.1.2 *Key Issue* : There may be some justification in considering the open areas to the east for some form of landscaping to soften the open views on the approach to the centre of the village. To the south of Station Road the land is used for agricultural and market gardening. An open area such as this which separates the most recent housing developments is likely to come under pressure in the future. Its relationship to the village and the impact of any proposals will need careful consideration. If this area were to be included within the conservation area all planning applications relating to it would have to carefully consider their impact on its character and appearance.

6.2 *The Square (See Map 1 – ChA2)*

- 6.2.1 This area includes those sections of Station Road and Carlisle Road that are currently within the conservation area boundary as well as Church Lane and the cemetery. The first building of any architectural or historic merit is the former National School, built in 1864 of local sandstone, which has significant charm and character. This is currently outside the conservation area. At the corner of Station Road, next to the shop, there is a block of sandstone outbuildings which are in very poor condition. These vernacular structures have considerable townscape value, particularly the sandstone flag roof, and should be retained and repaired.
- 6.2.2 St Michael's Church, is the oldest building with parts dating to the 13th century, partly rebuilt in 1749. It is listed Grade II*. Adjacent is the Church House, and the Church Farmhouse. Both are late eighteenth century, with dressed red sandstone and a graduated green slate roof. Across the road are two former, clay dabbin cottages with cruck frames (25 and 26 The Square) possibly dating from the fifteenth century. Most of the other properties date from the eighteenth century. Gardens behind the East Side sloped down to the River Caldew prior to it changing its course in the eighteenth century.
- 6.2.3 There were at one time six pubs in The Square - the Indian King, the African Queen and the Crown and Mitre on the west side; the Blue Bell, and the Temperance Hotel on the east side; and The Swan on the south side. Dalston also had three breweries: one at Green Lane, another Wilson's opposite Caldew School and a third in Indian King Yard. The latter was also used as a dance hall before the Victory Hall was built in 1922.

- 6.2.4 The current uses found in The Square are a mixture of residential and commercial, with many of the buildings converted to retail and office premises from residential and farm buildings. The Square is relatively uncluttered with street furniture and signage and most shop fronts are of traditional style with no aggressive signage. The overall style of building is mainly two storey, Georgian properties, with sash windows and dressed stone surrounds. Smooth rendered buildings are also common, with no dominant colour. Narrow cobbled lanes from The Square leading to the rear of buildings are still present between buildings, but are a dying feature. The Square was originally cobbled, but it now has tarmac overlay. The Square has perhaps as many buildings on its frontage as it does behind them, accessibly by wide arches or narrow lanes.
- 6.2.5 Materials are distinct, primarily local sandstones for walls and roofs and ridging, together with Cumbrian slate, such as Buttermere slate roofs, cobbles from the river gravels or Boulder Clay are also used. When split, the dark gabbro cobbles produce an attractive effect.
- 6.2.6 *Key Issues* : The unregulated and ill-disciplined car-parking in The Square detracts from the quality and character of the area. In addition the treatment of the surfaces, particularly by the Highway Authority and the utility companies, has left little that is traditional or vernacular.
- 6.2.7 There are a number of significant buildings which are not listed but which could merit inclusion on a local list, as described in Policy LE17 of the Revised Redeposit Plan. The buildings adjacent to the shop at the corner of Station Road are worthy of being retained.
- 6.2.8 A further disappointment is the number and variety of street lights, particularly around The Bluebell. Some of the commercial properties have increased the size of the plate glass windows. These now look too modern and are not in keeping with the area.

6.3. Townhead Road (See Map 1 – ChA4)

- 6.3.1 The southern exit from The Square opens out into an open space where Townhead Road, The Green and the road to the White Bridge meet. There are other subsidiary smaller roads leading to the car park, the Garage, the Building Society and the housing behind Low Fauld, as well as sections of road linking all of the above. Where these are separated by areas of grass and trees the character is fairly attractive, however where the spaces are dominated by metalled surfaces and car parking the character is less appealing. The most significant architectural blemish is the Garage consisting of a number of mid-20th century buildings of little merit. Prior to the construction of these buildings there existed a low, terraced row which faced the southern exit of The Square. One of these was a thatched, clay dabbin that was probably 250 years old then. If it had survived we would probably be considering putting it on the statutory list.
- 6.3.2 Despite the overall impression being negative, Townhead Road has a number of attractive and historic structures that help to give the area some character. Part of Townhead Road is within the existing conservation area, including some attractive vernacular buildings such as Yew Tree House and Highbury. It is suggested that the current boundary on Townhead Road does not need to be extended. The most positive element is the part played by the landscape at the edge of The Green. The trees, shrubs and grassland help to provide a secondary focus away from the Garage, however, when busy this area is also used for informal parking and the area can look very cluttered.
- 6.3.3 *Key Issues:* Reducing the impact of the Car Park and the Garage should be a priority, this may be achieved with, for example, judicious landscaping. The informal parking on the roads leading to the White Bridge is also a significant issue that needs to be addressed. Some of the attractive but unlisted buildings should be included on a local list.

6.4.0 *The Green (See Map 1 – ChA5)*

- 6.4.1 This area forms the southern part of the current conservation area. It consists of two elements. The first is the housing which lines the western side of the road and the second which consists of the open Green, together with woodland and scrub that lies to the east of the road up to the bank of the River Caldew.
- 6.4.2 Most of the buildings on The Green are residential and many of them are excellent examples of the local vernacular building style, with sandstone walls and Cumbrian slate roofs. There are some buildings which had specific uses such as the Methodist Church and the Victory Hall. One of these is the former school, the site for which was set aside in the Enclosure Award of 1807 (following the Enclosure Act of 1803) and which was subsequently built in 1815. The quality of this area is also improved by the substantial amount of sandstone walling on the property boundaries. The current boundary of the Conservation Area is at the end of the ribbon development along The Green at Green Head House. This is a considerable distance from Dalston Bridge, Green Lane and Bridge End.
- 6.4.3 Behind the housing are the Showfield and the Recreation Field. Beyond these to the west is a steep bank which forms a significant topographical feature that marks the edge of the Caldew's flood plain. This bank extends southwards into the adjacent character areas, as far as Deepdale and then changes direction, eastwards to mark the ridge above Bridge End at Hawksdale.
- 6.4.4 The eastern side of The Green is well treed but most of the space is open countryside. An area that was formerly Waste and Common has more woodland and scrub at its southern end where the river comes very close to the roadside. It is used for recreational purposes and gives direct access to the River and beyond. The Green itself is protected by a perpetual restriction against building. Along the edge of the road some effort has been made to protect the grass verge with concrete blocks which allow grass to grow through them. Although not entirely successful they are still an improvement on those scars where untreated verges are used for parking.

6.4.5 *Key Issues:* Infill development and increasing the density of existing housing will have an impact on the character of the area. Care will need to be taken with proposals of this kind. A careful assessment of the woodland areas should be carried out to determine the best methods of managing this asset. The damage to the road verges is unsightly where parking occurs. Consideration needs to be given to either enhancing the surface of these areas or by introducing parking management.

6.5.0 *Green Head (See Map 1 – ChA6)*

6.5.1 This area consists of sporadic development along the roadside with Dalston Bridge and Green Lane the main focus. The buildings at Green Lane are quite impressive and were formerly one of Dalston's Breweries, the Old Brewery. Adjacent are the attractive Whitesmiths Cottages built in 1825. Surrounding these buildings is attractive open countryside with some relatively modern housing close to the road. Dalston Bridge is a significant piece of engineering which is still in use and provides a valuable link across the Caldew.

6.5.2 This part of Dalston is the most rural with relatively little development visible. However beyond the trees that line the riverbank on the other side of the Caldew is a substantial amount of 20th century housing that has no impact on the Green Head area.

6.5.3 *Key Issues :* The openness of this area is its principal asset and these gaps should be considered at risk from development pressure. The retention of these open spaces should be seen as a vital part of the character of this part of the village and any loss of these would harm the character of the area. Retaining the open but well treed landscape should be seen as a priority for this part of Dalston.

6.6.0 *Bridge End and The Forge (See Map 1 – ChA7)*

- 6.6.1 Hawksdale Bridge is a busy link for traffic coming from Buckabank and the east of Carlisle, into Dalston and on to areas to the south and west. Apart from the bridge there are also a number of attractive groups of buildings to the south of the river, including Deepdale, the Bridge End Inn and around Caldew Bank. There is some new housing, mostly at the back of Caldew Bank, and it is either relatively neutral in its impact or it is hidden from the road. The main negative feature is the Garage together with the open parking area in front of the Inn.
- 6.6.2 On the opposite side of the bridge is Ellerslea, behind which is the principal sluice that diverts water from the Caldew that used to power Dalston's 18th and 19th century mills. The Forge Mill Pond is now filled in and occupied by new housing. At one time at the northern end of the pond was Jacob Cowen's smelter and forge with a trip hammer that made edged tools. The forge's finishing mill was a short distance away at Walk Mill, now a private house. The Company had a national reputation and was in business from 1756 to 1918. The Forge Mill no longer exists but nearby is the Bishop's Mill, a corn mill that was in use up until the 1950's, it was later Graham's Joiners and has recently been converted into residential accommodation. Just to the west of this Mill is the site that was set aside for a workhouse under the Enclosure Award. Eventually built in 1827 the Forge Green Workhouse later became the Parish Council Offices.
- 6.6.3 *Key Issues* : The appearance of the Garage and the open parking in front of the Bridge End Inn are the two negative elements of this part of the village. Solutions to ameliorate their impact may be difficult to find. Although Hawksdale Bridge has two-way traffic going over it, the bridge is only wide enough for one lane. There are some significant unlisted buildings in the area which may benefit from being included on a local list.

6.7.0 *Hawksdale (See Map 1 – ChA8)*

6.7.1 This part of the village sits on top of the bank above Bridge End. It consists of a small group of buildings and is included in the appraisal because it is only a relatively short distance down the steep, tree-lined bank. As described above this is where the north-south ridge that lies to the west of the Caldew turns sharply through 90 degrees. The road to Rose Castle rises up this bank and joins the two small settlements together. There are a number of significant buildings that have architectural or historic interest. There are also several modern houses. The area's chief significance is its attractive woodland setting.

6.7.2 *Key Issues* : Hawksdale is slightly isolated from the rest of the appraisal area and there are currently no apparent or significant pressures evident.

6.8.0 *Buckabank (See Map 1 – ChA3)*

6.8.1 This area was completely excluded from the original conservation area designation, yet it contains some of the most substantial remains of Dalston's industrial past. It is separated from the village by the River Caldew and it was on the west bank of the Caldew that the boundary was drawn. During the 18th and 19th centuries Dalston had a thriving industrial suburb at Buckabank. Corn milling had probably been making use of the water power here since medieval times. In 1782 a cotton spinning mill was erected and this was followed by a bleach works and a dye works, the latter being near the New Rookery. Other cotton mills were established and mention has already been made of the Forge Mill and Walk Mill. A significant number of these buildings survive and most are linked by the mill-race which in itself is a further significant industrial monument. The mill-race runs northwards, parallel with the Caldew until it returns back to the river at a point almost opposite Church Farm, which is just of The Square.

- 6.8.2 Some of the Mill buildings survive despite fire and other depredations and at the Old Rookery some of the workers housing survives. Again trees play an important part in the charm and character of this area close to the river. Further east the land rises to mimic the other side of the valley, and open fields, hedges and trees in the valley bottom are overlooked by a steep, scarp slope. Up on the top of the slope are the slightly isolated cottages and farmhouses, constructed of local materials and at the Durdar and Raughton crossroads, on the bank itself, there are several modern properties.
- 6.8.3 *Key Issues* : The industrial buildings in Buckabank do not appear to create any negative problems for the area. The impact is minimised in the main because the area is heavily wooded. Also many of the buildings are built of local materials and are of architectural or historic significance. There are a number of buildings of little merit, but again their location within this landscape reduces their impact. Finally flooding of this low lying area is clearly a risk which is readily acknowledged by those living close to the river or the mill-race.

7.0 Conservation Area Boundary

- 7.1 The appraisal has highlighted a number of areas where the conservation area boundary could be extended (see Map 1) and this can form the basis for public consultation. The major change is the proposal to extend the area down to Bridge End and also to take in the lower open ground to the east and west of the Caldew valley.
- 7.2 The present suggestion has excluded the higher areas of Hawksdale and Buckabank which are considered to be isolated and separate from the majority of the village.
- 7.3 The City Council is required to consult the general public, the County Council and other organisations on this review and to take account of any responses before making any amendments to the designated area. It is considered that a public exhibition and local meeting are the most desirable methods of explaining the options available and obtaining feedback that can be reported back to this committee.

- 7.4 The consultation exercise will seek local views to assess the degree of support for these changes. In addition it will seek to expand on the key issues raised in this report so that these matters can be addressed in a Management Plan that will be prepared following consultation with the public. The Management Plan will identify specific issues raised by the consultation and give guidance on ways of ensuring that the area's special architectural and historic interest is maintained and strengthened.

8.1 CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation to Date

Members of the Parish Council and officers of the City Council undertook an initial survey of the village prior to the review being carried out.

8.2 Consultation Proposed

As stated in the recommendation it is proposed to hold a public meeting and exhibition. This will be in conjunction with the Parish Council's own presentation and public meeting on the traffic and highway surveys it has recently carried out. A leaflet will be produced on the conservation issues raised for the general public with a six week period allowed for consultation.

9.0 FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 9.1 Following the meeting of Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny on 29 November 2007 Members requested that the public meeting and exhibition be arranged in conjunction with Dalston Parish Council. Officers consider that this would be a more valuable consultation for local people and therefore specifically refer to this in the recommendation.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is recommended that the appraisal and map contained in this report be approved to form the basis of public consultation on changes to the conservation area for Dalston prior to any decision on alterations to the Dalston Conservation Area. The public consultation will include a public meeting and exhibition to be undertaken in conjunction with Dalston Parish Council.

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The review of the City Council's Conservation Areas is an on-going part of the statutory planning process as required by S. 71 of the Planning (Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG 15.

12.0 IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – Contained within the existing resources of the Local Plans and Conservation Section.
- Financial – Minimal costs required for the exhibition and consultation can be found within existing budgets.
- Legal – The Conservation Area Review is consistent with the requirements of the Planning legislation and guidance mentioned above.
- Corporate – Consideration of amendments to the conservation area is in line with recognition and protection of the district's environmental qualities.
- Risk Management – The adoption of a new revised Conservation Area boundary could be challenged.
- Equality Issues – None.
- Environmental – This review recognises the value and importance of the historic environment and its protection.
- Crime and Disorder – None.
- Impact on Customers – This review provides for the involvement of customers in the process of amending the conservation area boundary and provides them with the opportunity to raise significant issues affecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Catherine Elliot

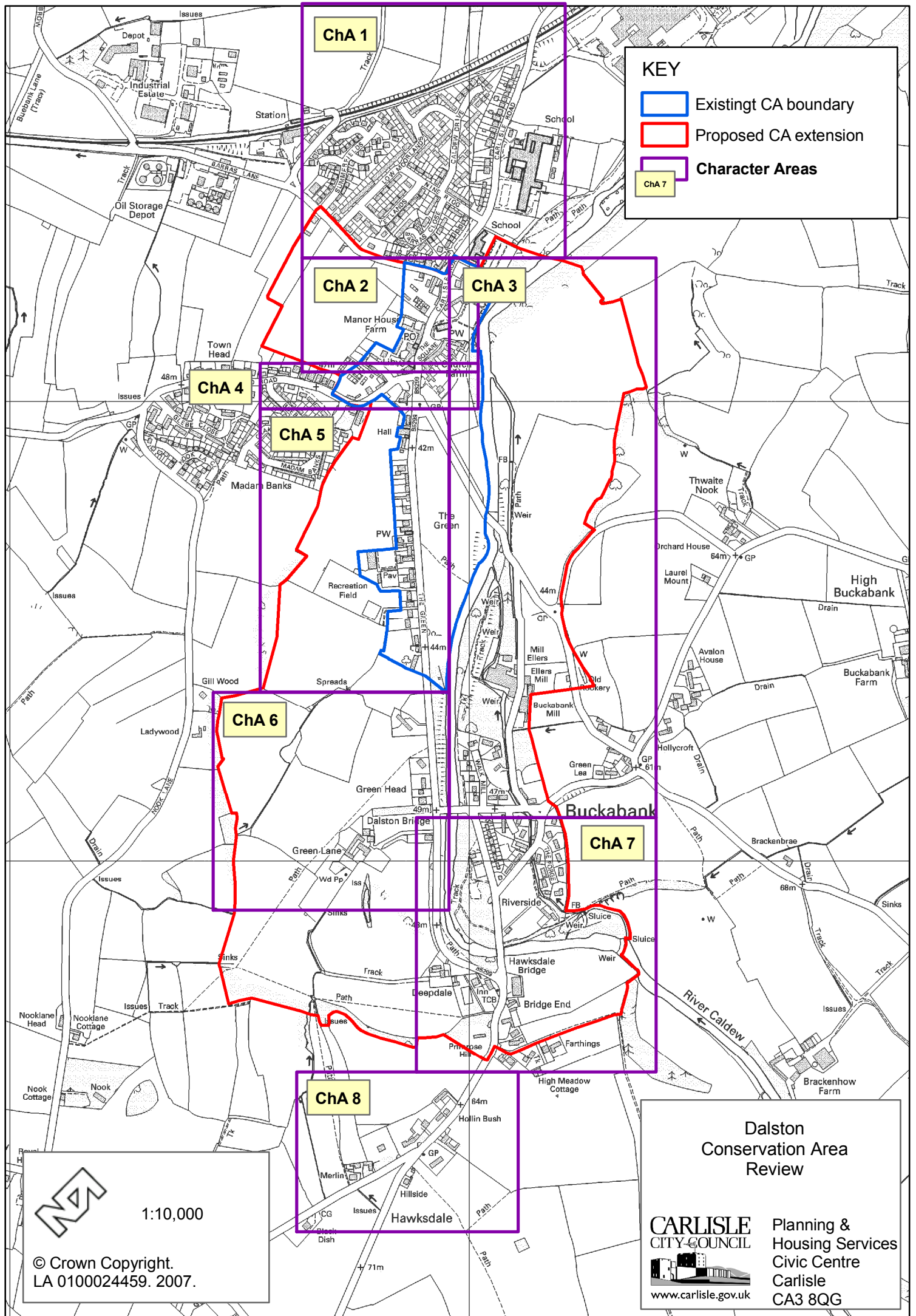
Director of Development Services

Contact Officer:




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Map 1



KEY

-  Existing CA boundary
-  Proposed CA extension
-  Character Areas

ChA 7

ChA 6

ChA 8

ChA 7

ChA 5

ChA 2

ChA 3

ChA 4

ChA 1

**Dalston
Conservation Area
Review**

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