

# Silksworth Hall Conservation Area <sup>SP.42</sup>

## Character Appraisal and Management Strategy



**PLANNING GUIDANCE**



# Silksworth Hall Conservation Area

## Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

Janet Johnson  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Sunderland City Council  
PO Box 102  
Civic Centre  
SR2 7DN

Tel: (0191) 561 1515  
Fax: (0191) 553 7893  
e-mail: [implementation@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:implementation@sunderland.gov.uk)

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# Background

## Conservation areas

Conservation areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Local authorities are obliged to determine which parts of their district are of special interest and declare them conservation areas. Designation is dependent on the overall quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings, although it is common for such areas to contain a number of Listed Buildings. There are currently 14 conservation areas in the City of Sunderland, ranging from city centre areas to pre-conquest villages to the Victorian suburb of Ashbrooke and the coastal resort of Roker. Each conservation area has its own unique character and appearance. Designation as a conservation area has a number of implications. In all cases "special" consideration must be given to the impact that development would have on the character and appearance of the area. Importantly, it requires planning consent to be gained for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas and for certain types of development which are elsewhere classified as permitted development. These generally cover various types of cladding, the insertion of dormer windows into roof slopes, the erection of satellite dishes and radio masts/antennae. Designation also brings extra controls over works to trees.

## Appraisal of character

The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" urges Local Authorities to prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their conservation areas. A character appraisal defines and analyses the special qualities and the architectural and historic interest which warranted the conservation area designation. PPG15 states that "the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions, as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area". Character appraisals should therefore provide a framework against which development proposals can be assessed for their appropriateness in the historic environment.

English Heritage published its 'Conservation Principles' guidance in 2008, providing an overarching set of principles that should underpin all work in the historic environment and heritage sector. These are:

1. The historic environment is a shared resource
2. Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
3. Understanding the significance of places is vital
4. Significant places should be managed to sustain their values
5. Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent
6. Documenting and learning from decisions is vital

These six principles have strongly influenced the council's approach to writing this document and give additional weight to the importance of the production of Character Appraisals and Management Strategies.

## Changing policy context

Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15 - Planning for the Historic Environment has recently been issued for consultation by central government - in its final form, this PPS will consolidate national planning policy on the historic environment into a single streamlined planning policy statement and will replace PPGs 15 and 16. Additional detailed guidance is now to be found in a separate document produced by English Heritage. This guidance is in turn to be supplemented from time to time by more in-depth guidance on specific topics, also to be prepared by English Heritage in association with central government.

The Government's broad objectives for the PPS are:

- to apply the principles of sustainable development to proposals involving the historic environment;
- to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past.

The draft PPS is firmly based upon the principles within English Heritage's Conservation Principles guidance.

## **Preservation and enhancement of character**

Local Authorities are under a duty from time to time to "formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas" (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)) Act 1990, s. 71). English Heritage guidance on the management of conservation areas advises that such proposals should take the form of a mid-to-long term strategy, setting objectives for addressing the issues and recommendations for actions arising from character appraisals, and identifying any further and more detailed work needed for their implementation.

## **Silksworth Hall Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS)**

This document has been prepared in response to the guidance outlined above and, as such, discharges the council's obligations and duties under the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, as well as complying with English Heritage's recommendations. The CAMS will provide formal planning guidance to the adopted City of Sunderland UDP and future Local Development Framework (LDF) and will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the Conservation Area.

## **Heritage at Risk**

English Heritage publishes a national, annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Register includes Grade I and II\* listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens and scheduled monuments that English Heritage considers to be at risk. The 2009 Heritage at Risk Register features a small number of the city's conservation areas; Silksworth Hall Conservation Area is not on this list. This is testament to the quality and condition of the Conservation Area – both its buildings and spaces. The area does, however, contain a building on the At Risk Register – Doxford House. This matter is considered on page 44 in the Management Strategy section of the document.

## **Consultation and document development**

This document is the final adopted version, which has been revised in light of representations received during the public consultation. A public consultation period was held from 16 November 2009 to 11 December 2009, during which time members of the public, local and national amenity groups and locally active architects and developers were invited to contribute to its development. A public exhibition was held on 01 December 2009 at St. Matthew's Church, Silksworth.

Comments and suggestions received have been incorporated into this final version of the document; a full schedule of the consultation responses and subsequent amendments can be obtained from the council on request. This Planning Guidance will be subject to review again in five years time.

# Introduction

Silksworth Hall Conservation Area was designated in 1970 in recognition of its architectural and historic interest. The Conservation Area includes the former grounds of Silksworth Hall - originally the seat of Silksworth Manor, the former grounds of Doxford House - now Doxford Park, and the now disappeared medieval village of Silcesworth which developed around the spine of Warden Law Lane. Given the early history of Silksworth, it is likely that the Conservation Area could yield significant archaeological evidence should opportunities arise to investigate this in the future. It is clear that Silksworth has changed significantly throughout its lifetime, and while most physical evidence of the early history is long lost (including all of the medieval buildings), development from the 18th centuries onwards remains of great interest. The current Silksworth Hall, for example, was built in 1902 and replaced a former (possibly Georgian) Hall, which no doubt would have been of architectural and historic interest, and which itself probably replaced a Tudor Manor (remains of which were found on site in the early 20th century). Sadly, only a small amount of photographic evidence remains of these buildings, but the current Hall is nonetheless an important building in its own right and is listed at Grade II.

This document combines an appraisal of the Conservation Area's character and appearance with management proposals for preserving and enhancing its special qualities. Part 1, the character appraisal, identifies and assesses those characteristics and features that give the area its special architectural and historic interest and considers the current issues which threaten its unique quality. Part 2 of the document is a management strategy which contains a series of management objectives and proposals to address the issues raised in the character appraisal. This includes consideration of the resources needed, further work required and envisaged timescales to implement the management proposals.

## Location

Silksworth Hall Conservation Area lies some four miles to the south west of Sunderland city centre. Surrounded by fields on all sides until at least the 1950s, the area is now flanked by modern housing estates to the east, west and south.

## Boundaries

The boundary of the Conservation Area follows the field pattern evident on the first edition OS map of 1856, and takes in the former grounds to Silksworth Hall and Doxford House. The Conservation Area boundary is clearly discerned from the air (right) and on the ground by the heavy tree cover that borders it.



Aerial photograph of the Conservation Area, illustrating it in its wider context; the boundary of the Conservation Area is clearly defined by the heavy line of mature trees around the entire area.





## UDP Conservation Policies

Policy B4 of the City of Sunderland UDP states that: "All development within and adjacent to Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance". Under this policy the council is obliged to prepare supplementary guidance in the form of character assessments for each of its conservation areas. These will identify features and characteristics that contribute to the areas' special interest, identify opportunities for enhancement and, where appropriate, establish design criteria for new development and restoration projects. The Silksworth Hall Character Appraisal and Management Strategy is one of a series of such assessments that will cover all the city's conservation areas.

Certain buildings and structures within the Conservation Area are Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and are thus protected by tight planning controls. Policy B8 presumes in favour of the retention of Listed Buildings whilst policy B10 seeks to preserve the setting of Listed Buildings. Listed Buildings are protected from inappropriate alterations by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and by the policies and guidance found in PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

Policy B6 further encourages the retention of unlisted buildings and their features, open spaces, historic street patterns and plot boundaries and for the council to exercise control over landscape features such as mature trees. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are a good example of this; they ensure that the consent of the council must be obtained before trees can be cut down, topped or lopped. This policy also seeks to control the display of advertisements in conservation areas.

Within Silksworth Hall Conservation Area, however, the gradual loss of features, both architectural and natural, and the effects of new development give cause for concern and raises the issue as to whether further measures should be introduced that would better protect and enhance the Conservation Area. To this end, the Management Strategy in part 2 of the document expands upon existing UDP policy to give clearer guidance on issues of particular importance to Silksworth Hall Conservation Area.

All UDP policies relating to Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and archaeology are reproduced in full in the appendix.

## Location and features



# Part One - Character Appraisal



# Historical development

## Early history

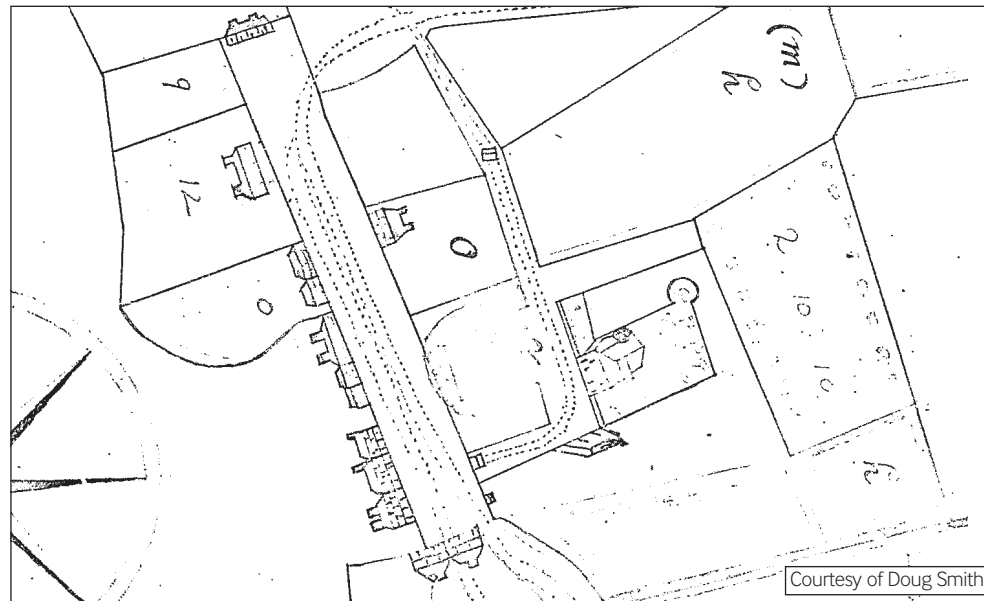
According to the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record (HER) no prehistoric finds were found in the Silksworth area, but there have been a small number of archaeological finds dating to prehistory. In June 1879 a stone coffin was discovered on lands between Silksworth Hall and Silksworth House; the coffin contained human bones and some antique weaponry, although the burial date remains unclear. In 1972, while making a road at Doxford Park housing estate (adjacent to the Conservation Area), a large coarse sandstone axe was found. In 1876 a bronze age barrow was excavated at nearby Steeple Hill which was found to contain two skeletons, two food vessels and a cremation.

The name Silksworth is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means 'the enclosure of a man called Sigelac'. In Old English, Silksworth was probably written as Sylceswurthe. The earliest documentary reference to Silksworth, however, is thought to be as "Silcesworth" in a list of appendages of South Wearmouth in King Athelstan's gift to the See of Durham in 930 AD.

## Medieval period

Although none of the existing buildings in Silksworth are medieval, the history of the estate is relatively well documented from the medieval period, for example in wills and court hearings. At the end of the 11th century the lands of Silksworth were in the possession of Bishop Flambard. In the 13th century the ownership of the land was granted to the Priory of Durham by Philip, Son of Hamo, and leased to the Fitz Marmadukes (Lords of Horden) - a family with a long history in the Durham area and holders of considerable estates in the region. In 1318 Sir Richard Marmaduke, steward to the Bishop of Durham, was murdered on Framwellgate Bridge in Durham. One third of the land was retained for Ida Marmaduke while two-thirds of the landholding was granted to Sir Richard de Holland, who in turn leased it to Thomas Crouchback - the 2nd Earl of Lancaster - who forfeited the land a few years later upon his beheading for treason against his cousin, King Edward II.

Subsequent to Lancaster's death, the King granted Holland's land to Richard de Emeldon, who was Mayor of Newcastle on a number of occasions in the early 14th century; Emeldon later also acquired the third parcel of land on the death of Ida Marmaduke. In the late 14th century the lands were granted to Sir Robert de Umfraville who paid King Edward III a feudal due of 4s. 5 ½ d. in lieu of military service.

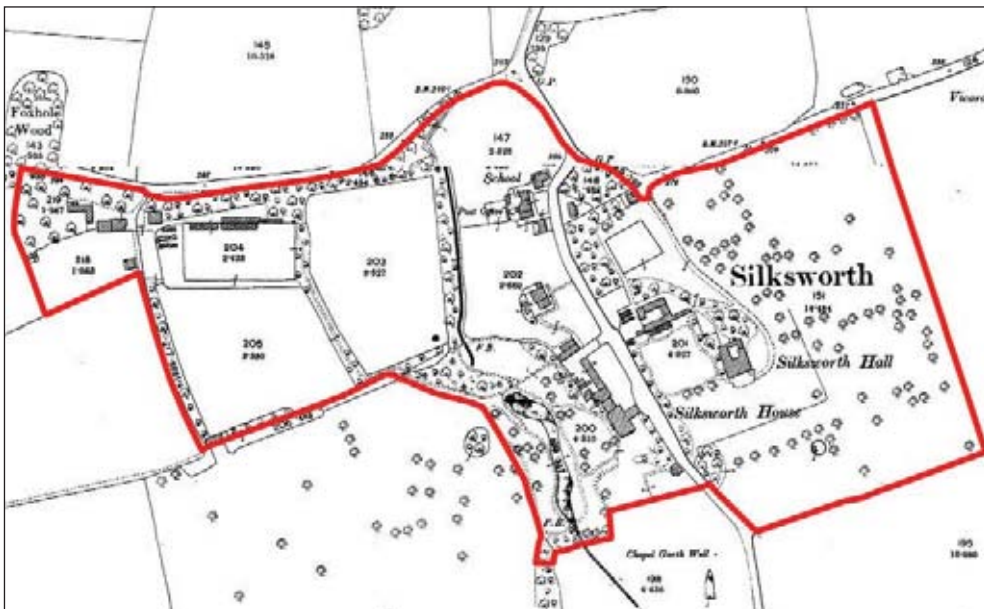


Above: Lewin's survey of Silksworth estate, drawn in 1714  
Below: Tudor remains found within the previous Silksworth Hall, on a photograph taken in 1905 when the current Hall was completed.





1842 tithe map



1896 OS map

The landholding later passed to Sir John Middleton of Belsay (Northumberland). In the mid 15th century the land was again split into thirds, with one third given to Thomas Middleton, John's brother. Parts of the land appear to have passed into the Ettrick family and then in 1553 to the Robinson family. Both were branches of the Middleton family by marriage. The Robinsons held at least part of the land (including Silksworth Hall) until the late 19th century.

Documentary evidence suggests that around the 15th and 16th centuries there was some built development in the area, although it is unclear to what extent. It is thought that there was a Tudor Manor built on the current site of Silksworth Hall, remains of which were apparently discovered in the early 20th century when the current Hall was being built by Robert Doxford (see photo, page 26). This would suggest occupation of the site from at least the 1600s. It is also likely that there was a chapel in the village. Surtees, in his 1816 History of County Durham, referred to a parcel of land "on the west side of the vill next to the Chapel of St. Leonard". It is most likely that the chapel would have stood on what is now Morrison's supermarket, immediately to the south of the Conservation Area; this land is referred to on the 1856 first edition Ordnance Survey map as Chapel Garth Well (garth meaning garden). This medieval church is believed to have been demolished during the dissolution of the chantries in 1574, and presumably gave its name to the current Church of St. Leonard in New Silksworth.

### Post medieval

Records of a hearth tax from 1662 indicate that Silksworth had 25 dwellings, 22 of which were single-hearth properties (i.e. small enough to only have one fire), one had four hearths and two had five hearths (one of these being the house of George Middleton; presumably the Hall of the time). William Lewin's plan of 1714 (previous page) indicates 17 dwellings within the boundary of what is now the Conservation Area.

William Lewin's early 18th century survey drawing of Silksworth shows the predecessor to the current Silksworth Hall, on the same site as the existing. The Hall was the first substantial house to be built in the village. It is, however, unclear how many Halls have stood on the site (it is thought that there have been at least three), or when the first Hall was built. What is clear from Lewin's plan is that in 1714 there was a Hall to the east of Warden Law Lane, although apparently some distance to the west of the site of today's Hall: this presumably is the Hall that Robert Doxford demolished. Lewin's drawing shows a large house facing an enclosed green.

What is also clear is that by 1714 the routes of Warden Law Lane, Silksworth Lane and Silksworth Hall Drive were firmly established; these remained the only routes into and through the Conservation Area until residential infill development occurred in the late 20th century and Silksworth Hall Drive was extended.

Along with the Hall, the plan shows a row of small houses on the west side of the lane (on the current site of Doxford House and in a row up to and probably beyond Silksworth Cottage) and a windmill to the northeast of what is now the Conservation Area (known much later as Mill Hill Farm).

By the next documented plan (Robson, 1831) the row of houses has been largely demolished and Silksworth House stands in their place. The early footprint of the House was much smaller than today's and had few outbuildings associated with it.

Between the drawing of the 1831 plan and an 1842 tithe (tax) map, the footprint and location of the Hall change significantly, suggesting that a replacement Hall may have been built at this time. In 1842 the Hall appears to be in an H-plan, but by the 1860 OS map it appears to have been squared off.

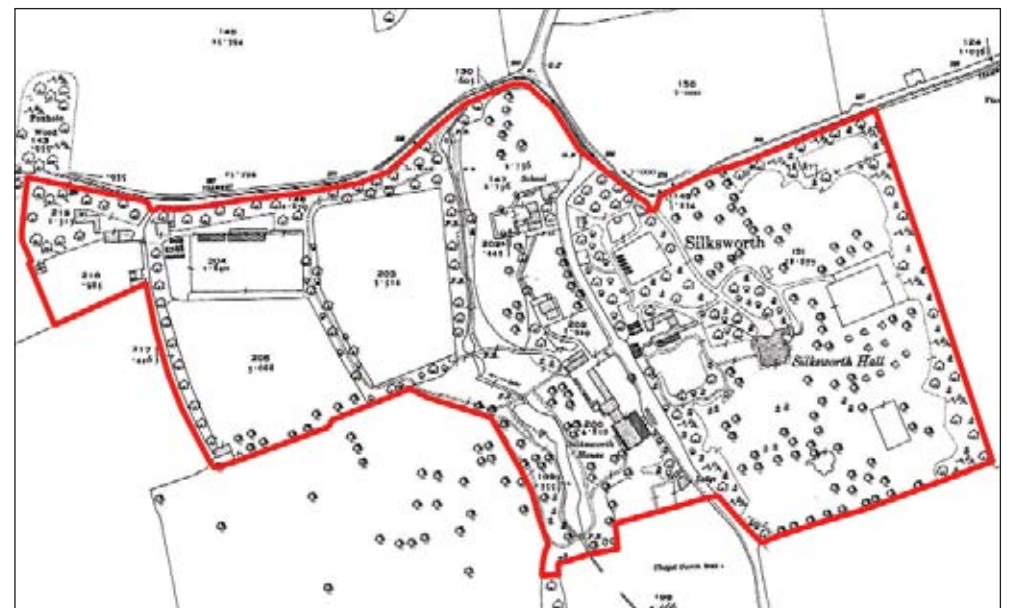
The hearth tax survey together with early map evidence indicate that medieval Silksworth was a reasonably well-populated village; it was certainly significantly larger than it was in 1831 when just 7 properties were indicated on Robson's plan, indicating that the village shrank fairly drastically between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries. This was probably due, in large part, to the development of Silksworth House and grounds (now Doxford House and Park). A tithe award from the 19th century indicates that in 1840 one of the stone houses to the north of Silksworth House was a farm; it is quite probable that this was Silksworth Cottage, now a Grade II Listed Building on the west side of Warden Law Lane.

## 20th century

Much of the landscaping works to Doxford Park were carried out in the early 20th century by Charles Doxford, including the creation of the artificial cascade. The 20th century also saw a significant level of infill residential development in the former grounds to Silksworth Hall, resulting in an intensification of development in Silksworth previously unseen in its long history. The Conservation Area now contains nearly 60 buildings, twice that of its 17th century peak.



Silksworth Hall as it would have been when the Robinson family occupied the manor. This photograph was taken in 1903 by Robert Doxford and shows the current Hall under construction behind it.



1919 OS map

## Historical development



# Local connections

## **FitzMarmadukes (Silksworth Manor)**

With their early medieval connections to Silksworth the FitzMarmadukes were the earliest known landholding family in the area. Richard Marmaduke was the steward to the Bishop of Durham (indicating the close relationship between the Church - owners of the land - and those upon whom land was bestowed) and was infamously murdered on Framwellgate Bridge in Durham, in 1318.

## **Thomas Crouchback, a.k.a. Plantagenet (Silksworth Manor)**

Thomas Plantagenet was Earl of Lancaster, Leicester, Lincoln and Salisbury, grandson of Henry III, cousin of King Edward II and one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in England; he was responsible for the extension of Pontefract Castle and, in 1313, the construction of Dunstanburgh Castle in Northumberland. He was given Silksworth Manor by Richard de Holland shortly after the murder of Richard Marmaduke but held it for only four years. Initially supporting his cousin's reign he later led two separate rebellions against the King, for a time effectively ruling England. Eventually defeated in 1321 Lancaster was beheaded on a count of Treason in 1322. In the mid 1320s Parliament posthumously reversed Lancaster's conviction and he rapidly became something of a mythological character, thought of as a martyr and saint. On Lancaster's death, the lands of Silksworth were granted by the King to Richard de Emeldon; records show that Holland unsuccessfully contested this decision in court in 1323.

## **Ettrick family (Silksworth Hall)**

Following the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 Sunderland's coal trade flourished and the Ettrick family was one of the leading coal merchants at that time. At this time Walter Ettrick was Customs Collector at the River Wear and a leading merchant; Ettrick Grove in High Barnes is named after the family. William Ettrick (son of Walter) married Ann Middleton and they lived together at Silksworth Hall. One of William and Ann's daughters married into the Robinson family, and the Hall remained in the hands of the Robinsons (along the female line of the Middletons) until the 1900s when Robert Doxford bought it.

## **General William Beckwith (Silksworth House, 1830s-1890s)**

Priscilla Hopper inherited Silksworth House (now Doxford House) from her uncle, Hendry, and married General William Beckwith in 1831. Beckwith, a Knight of Hanover and High Sheriff of County Durham, led the notoriously bloody and violent charge of the Light Dragoons at the Reform riots in Bristol. Beckwith and his wife apparently loved France

and visited Paris annually; the large French tapestry in the main hallway of the house may have been brought back from France by the couple. Mrs Beckwith had her own money and as a Catholic convert she paid for St. Leonard's Church at New Silksworth to be built. The Beckwiths moved to Shropshire in 1890 and let the house out.

## **Christopher Maling (tenant, Silksworth House)**

Christopher Maling was the son of Robert Maling, who founded the Maling Pottery in North Hylton. Christopher devised new technology to make pottery by machine, thus vastly increasing the company's output and profits. Orders were taken from manufacturers making various goods including marmalade and printing ink. The Maling ware name was so prestigious that it was sold in Harrods, and is still collected today. Legend has it that the foundations of Maling's first kiln remain in the garden of the Old School House.

## **The Doxfords (Silksworth House and Hall)**

William Doxford (b. 1812) founded William Doxford & Sons Ltd, a Pallion-based shipbuilding company, in 1857. Known locally as Doxfords, the company also manufactured marine diesel engines, one of which has been preserved at Beamish by the Doxford Engines Trust. William Doxford expanded the company rapidly and by 1875 had received an Admiralty order for auxiliary steam gunboats and the construction of other naval orders. By this time his two eldest sons, William and Alfred, had joined the company.

Robert Doxford took over responsibility of the Doxford General Engine and Brass Foundry Works, and in 1867 designed and built Pallion Engine and Boiler Works. He married Ada Barber in 1876 and in 1880, along with the youngest of the brothers, Charles, became a partner in Doxfords.

Charles later married Laura Barber (Ada's younger sister) and took Silksworth House in 1902. Robert and Ada, meanwhile, purchased Silksworth Hall and demolished and rebuilt it to the design seen today. Charles and Laura did much work to Silksworth House and Gardens, including the creation of the cascade and the unique 'grotto' on the east side of the House. It was for this family that Sunderland Corporation renamed the House and grounds as Doxford House and Doxford Park, and later the housing estate to the south of the village, which is also called Doxford Park.



# Fundamental character

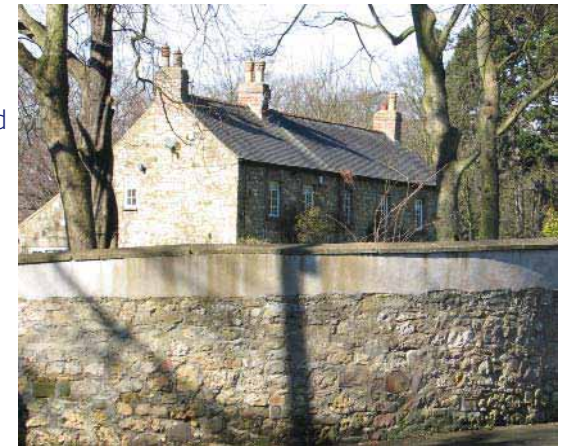
The fundamental character of Silksworth Hall Conservation Area derives from its origins as a medieval settlement (subsequently much shrunken) combined with an attractive mix of 18th, 19th and 20th century houses. The Conservation Area covers the area of the early medieval village of Silksworth or 'Silcesworth', the historic gardens of Doxford House, now a public park, and the original extent of the gardens to Silksworth Hall. The grounds to the Hall today are much diminished, as a substantial part of the land was developed for housing in the 1970s. The narrow, winding lane through the heart of the Conservation Area, bounded by a high stone wall, lends the area a very distinctive character; combined with dense green cover the settlement feels extremely compact, enclosed and tranquil in nature.



View from Doxford Park across the lake to Doxford House

## Layout

The development of the Conservation Area has been largely focussed upon Silksworth Hall, the seat of Silksworth Manor for many hundreds of years, and its associated activities, which in medieval times included a ribbon of development along Warden Law Lane, as illustrated on a 1714 plan by William Lewin. Much of this early development disappeared over subsequent years; just over a hundred years later there were less than half as many buildings on Warden Law Lane, and most of those were ancillary to either the House or the Hall. This change in the pattern of development may suggest that when the manor of Silksworth was split into parcels and sold, the new owner of the land to the west of the lane (William Johnson) essentially redeveloped the whole of the area to provide a setting for the new house. The layout of the Conservation Area today is broadly made up of a ribbon of development on the central route of Warden Law Lane, the two main houses and their associated estate buildings, and a significant area of late 20th century infill development in the former grounds of the Hall.



## Architectural style

The vernacular style of architecture in the Conservation Area is of rustic stone buildings with slate roofs - largely in evidence on the ancillary estate buildings and cottages. Silksworth Hall is a Baroque style early Edwardian building, while Doxford House was built in the Italian Renaissance style, undergoing numerous alterations over the past 250 years, each in a slightly different style. Modern infill development in the grounds of the Hall has largely been of a mock-Georgian style, popular in the 1970s.



## Built form

The Conservation Area contains buildings of various sizes and styles. Historic buildings in the area are generally characterised by large houses in substantial grounds (the House and the Hall) and their ancillary estate buildings (e.g. lodges, stables); in addition there is also the old school building and Silksworth Cottage. Modern infill development is characterised by contemporary homes set in good-sized gardens, which reflect to a degree the historical layout and density of the area and should be retained/ protected.

## Building materials

The predominant building materials in the Conservation Area are limestone, sandstone and red brick. Doxford House features sandstone to the front (east) elevation and brick to the rear (west) elevation; Silksworth Hall is of bright red brick with sandstone terrace and dressings. Stone rubble (i.e. not regular blocks) features heavily in boundary treatments, particularly along Warden Law Lane, and in a number of the historic cottages.



Right: red brick and sandstone at Silksworth Hall

## Landscape

The landscape of the Conservation Area is generally characterised by a gentle slope from east to west, divided in two by Warden Law Lane. The lane itself is narrow, curving and framed by high boundary walls and dense mature tree cover, creating a strong sense of enclosure. The east-west slope is most evident within Doxford Park, through the centre of which runs a shallow valley; this was utilised by Charles Doxford to create the artificial cascade through his gardens and emphasised with formal terraces. The slopes in the park provide views through and across to the House, as well as an attractive setting for the House and the other historic buildings. The landscape character of the Conservation Area changes from season to season as a result of the deciduous tree cover, yet at all times of year the trees have a strong presence in the area and cast interesting shadows across the lane.



Above left: the curve of Warden Law Lane, surrounded by high walls and mature trees; above right: the formal terraces in Doxford Park, emphasising the natural valley in which the House and gardens sit.

## Use

Apart from Doxford Park, which is a public recreation park, the majority of the Conservation Area is currently in residential use and it is desirable for it to remain this way.

## General condition

Generally speaking, the Conservation Area is in good condition - buildings in private ownership are well maintained, as are gardens and the tree cover. Doxford Park is well maintained by the council but could, nonetheless, benefit from restoration/ improvement works; this is particularly the case with the walled garden.

Doxford House is, unfortunately, on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register, which states that "the property is vacant and is a target for vandalism despite on-site security systems. The roof over the main house is in a poor state and the resulting leaks are causing internal damage". The House has been registered as grade C, which indicates slow decay with no solution agreed. At the time of writing the building is, however, the subject of a development proposal.

**Fundamental character of Silksworth Hall Conservation Area comprises:**

- Site of medieval village of Silcesworth
- Dense tree cover flanking Warden Law Lane and the historic boundaries of Doxford House and Silksworth Hall
- Two large houses in substantial landscaped grounds and associated estate buildings
- 18th and 19th century stone properties in large gardens, to west of Warden Law Lane
- Doxford Park - former designed gardens to Doxford House, now a public park
- Late 20th century residential infill development on the Silksworth Hall estate
- Gently winding Warden Law Lane provides the central focus of the Conservation Area
- Strong sense of enclosure from high walls and green cover
- Key listed buildings of Doxford House (grade II\* listed), Silksworth Hall (grade II listed) and Silksworth Cottage (grade II listed)

# Landmarks, views and vistas

The sense of enclosure provided by dense green cover and narrow lanes throughout the Conservation Area limits the scope for views and vistas within, into and out of the area. The longest views are found in Doxford Park, a landscape designed to provide sweeping vistas both from and to Doxford House.

The two key landmark buildings of the Conservation Area are Doxford House and Silksworth Hall, although there are a number of other buildings and features that act as landmarks in the area, including Silksworth Cottage and the lamp standards outside Doxford House.

## Key characteristics of the landmarks, views and vistas of Silksworth Hall Conservation Area

- Views across and within Doxford Park, designed landscape setting of Doxford House
- Narrow, winding Warden Law Lane gradually reveals views
- Wall along lane, combined with the dense mature tree cover, provides strong sense of enclosure
- Dense tree cover limits long views in most directions
- Views out of the Conservation Area limited to negative impact of large modern supermarket to south and attractive vistas of Foxhole Woods to north
- Doxford House, grade II\* listed landmark house
- Silksworth Hall, grade II listed landmark house
- Silksworth Cottage, grade II listed former farmhouse

## Landmark buildings

### Silksworth Cottage

Listed at grade II, Silksworth Cottage sits in a large piece of land to the north of Doxford House. A former farmhouse, the Cottage is now a fine private residence.



### Doxford House

Built by William Johnson in 1750 and originally named Silksworth House, the House is a particularly dominant presence in the Conservation Area. Of high architectural and historic interest, the House is Listed at grade II\* and features a particularly unusual entrance and forecourt onto Warden Law Lane, with separately listed lamp standard, dwarf piers and chains.

### Silksworth Hall

Robert Doxford built this Edwardian Hall next to the site of both the early 18th century Hall and the original Tudor Manor House. The Hall is tucked away from Warden Law Lane and cannot be viewed except from the air or within its gardens. Formerly set in extensive landscaped grounds, it is now surrounded by modern infill development and the gardens, while still grand, are much diminished in size.



## Views in

There are the merest of glimpses to be had into the Conservation Area when right at the gateways, otherwise the dominant presence of the mature tree cover and the shallow valley in which the Conservation Area sits generally prevent any views in and create a strong sense of seclusion within the area.

## Views out



Views out of the Conservation Area are generally as limited as the views in; the two key views out are at either end of Warden Law Lane. To the north end of the lane the view remains much as it has for hundreds of years; views along the lane are terminated by the incline of Foxhole Wood, which further contributes to

the sense of enclosure within the Conservation Area. To the south of the lane, however, views are terminated in a most unsatisfactory fashion. The lane suddenly opens out and is truncated by the large, alien concrete space of the supermarket car park, instantly destroying the rural illusion created throughout the Conservation Area.



## Vistas

Warden Law Lane provides an unfolding experience of views as you travel along it, although due to high stone boundary walls and dense greenery on either side views off the lane never open out. Rather, tantalising glimpses into gardens and of rooftops and chimney pots can be obtained.

In contrast to the narrow enclosed space of the lane, Doxford Park is a landscape designed with views in mind. The House is oriented to the Park and the Park to the House; in addition sweeping views can be had north-south along the watercourse through the shallow valley.

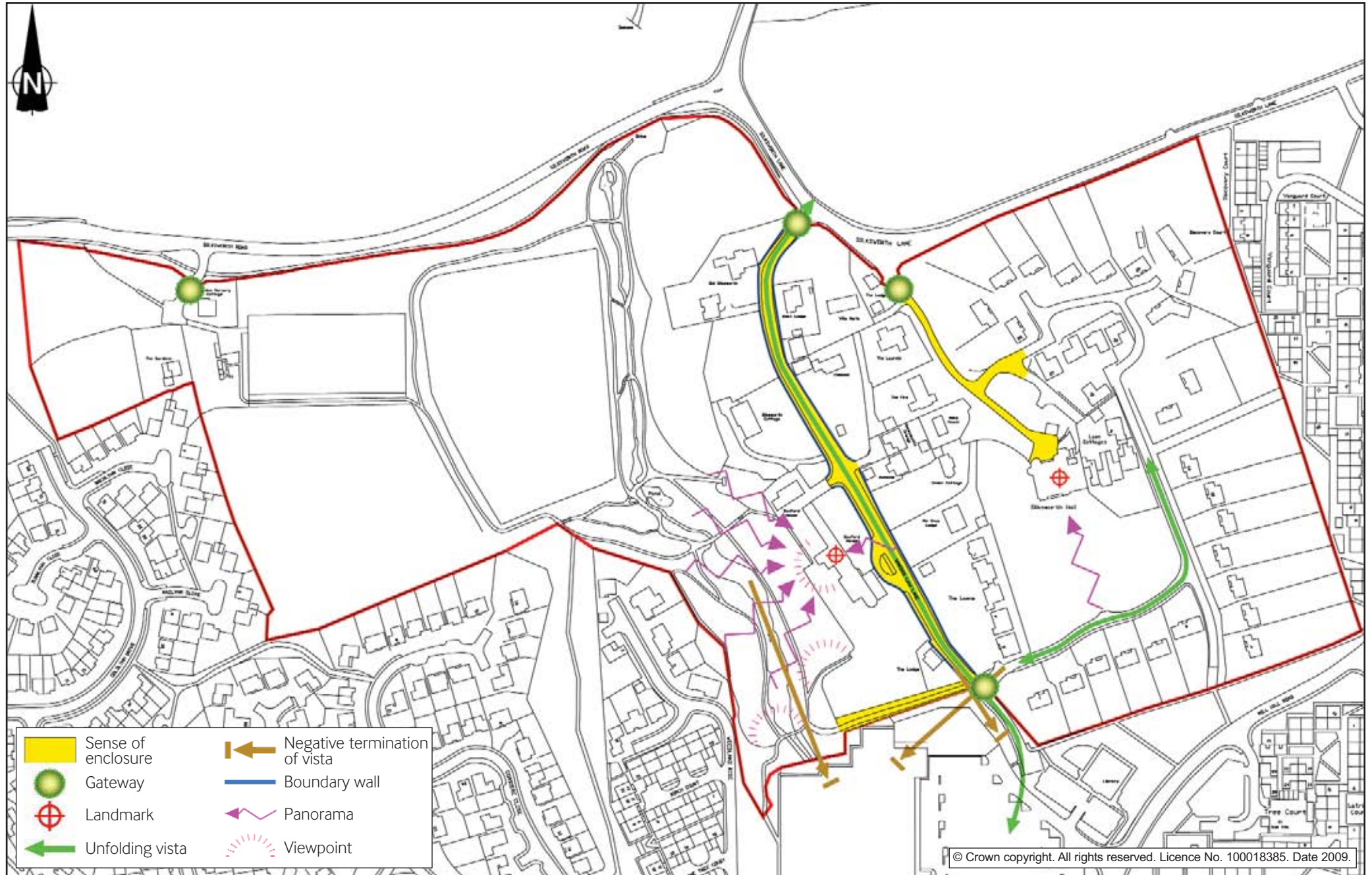


Looking south along the curve of Warden Law Lane



View from the Rockery, over the stream, to Doxford House

## Townscape analysis



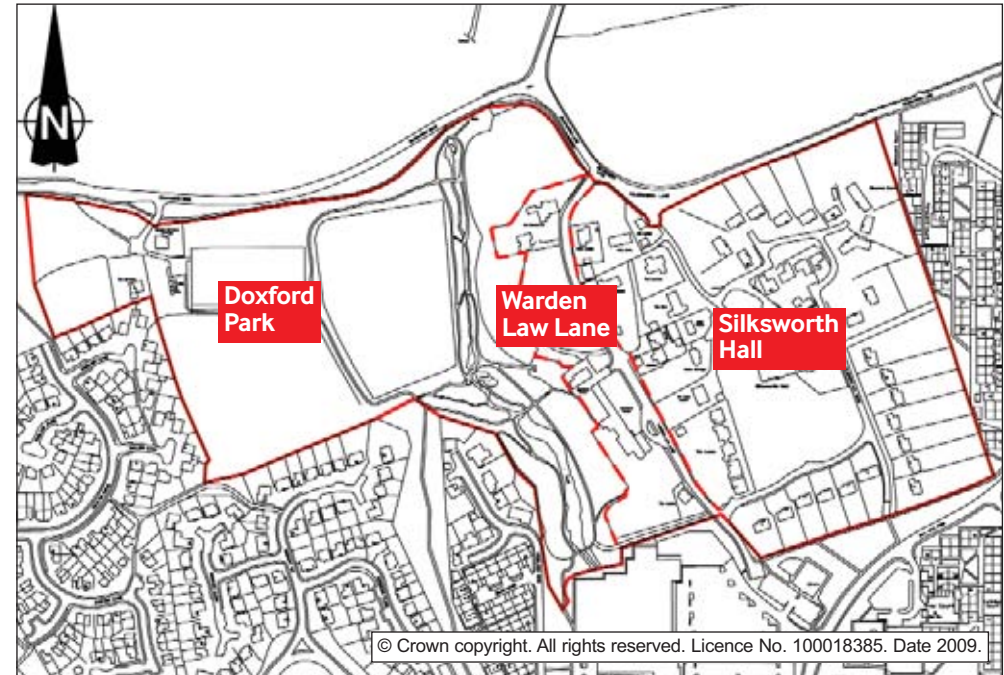
# Sub-areas introduction

## Key components of character (sub-areas)

For the purposes of a more detailed study of its character, the Conservation Area has been divided into three sub-areas that take the form of areas of broadly similar character (influenced in the most part by historical development or by building type), which combine to create the special character of the Conservation Area as a whole.

### The three sub-areas are:

- Warden Law Lane - includes a number of key historic buildings on the site of the medieval settlement of Silcesworth, including grade II\* listed Doxford House
- Doxford Park - the boundary of this sub-area is the extent of the former grounds to the House, and takes in the public park, walled garden and some ancillary estate buildings originally associated with the House
- Silksworth Hall - the former grounds to the Hall, now largely developed for residential housing, and the Hall itself



# Doxford Park sub-area

Covering nearly a hectare, which is roughly half of the Conservation Area, this sub-area takes in Doxford Park, the former gardens to Doxford House and some of the estate buildings originally associated with the House. Doxford Park is an early 20th century designed landscape with a dene feeding a pond, sloping down to a man-made cascade in the romantic renaissance style more typical of the 19th century. Elements of the park are, however, much older; there is, for example, an important example of a 'hot wall', which was used to grow fruit and vegetables for the kitchen garden and would appear to date to the early-19th century.

This sub-area is characterised by open green spaces, framed with belts of mature tree cover, and a small number of historic buildings that were built as part of the Doxford Estate.

## Key characteristics of the Doxford Park sub-area:

- Doxford Park, comprising open green space, a walled kitchen garden, mature trees and an attractive water feature - the former gardens to and contemporary setting of Doxford House
- Remnants of the kitchen garden and hot wall
- Ancillary buildings, including The Gardens and Meadow Nursery Cottage, now in public ownership and situated within the public park





## Doxford Park



Doxford Park is the former garden to Doxford House and although some of the intimate relationship between the two has been lost, excellent views of the House can still be had across the open spaces of the park. The House is oriented towards the Park, although its main entrance is now to Warden Law Lane, and the grounds were designed to be viewed from the House, as well as to be enjoyed from within.

The northern entrance to the park, by the West Lodge, still features some of the estate walls, along with a swathe of mature trees. To the north of the park there are open fields and the walled garden; the southern part of the park can still be discerned as the landscaped gardens of the House.



The Park retains the appearance of designed gardens

## Walled kitchen garden

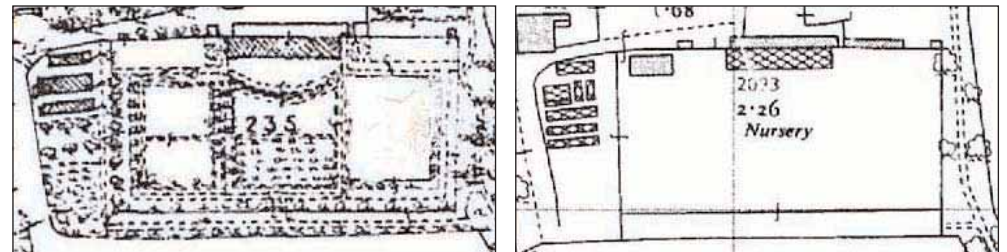
First drawn on an 1842 tithe map, to the very north of the park, next to the car park, is a walled kitchen garden, which still features an excellent example of a 19th century brick "hot wall"; a structure containing flues to heat the wall in order to cultivate exotic fruit, including Charles Doxford's preferred breakfast fruit of melons. This enabled 19th century gardeners to cultivate tender fruits that were native to warmer climes, such as peaches, apricots and figs. These hot walls were heated by boilers, located to the rear of the greenhouses, which heated a series of hot water pipes that distributed the heat evenly across the walls.



Aerial image of the walled kitchen garden, viewed from the east

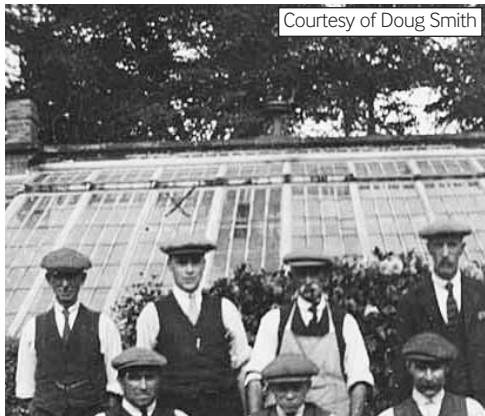
Walled kitchen gardens were typical features of large country houses and a number survive in the Tyne and Wear region, but this is the only one known of within the Sunderland area; it is particularly encouraging that it is, in part, still formally laid out.

Early maps show that within and adjacent to the walled garden were a number of glass houses; these were shown on the 1856 OS and were still in evidence on the 1956 OS. In addition to the glasshouses for growing, there was also a mushroom house, various stores and a potting shed.



Above left: extract from the 1856 OS, showing the walled garden. The hatched areas are the glasshouses. Above right: extract from the 1956 OS showing some of the glasshouses still in existence.

Typical of the time, the kitchen garden is located a good distance from the House and is well screened; despite growing flowers and attractive fruits, kitchen gardens were considered to be part of the services and therefore not something to be seen as part of landscaped gardens. Today such gardens are considered to be a thing of beauty and interest, and are much prized by gardeners and historians as they can tell us a lot about life on such estates. Also in this part of the gardens were the laundry, stores, workers' cottages and, most unpleasant of all, a slaughter house.

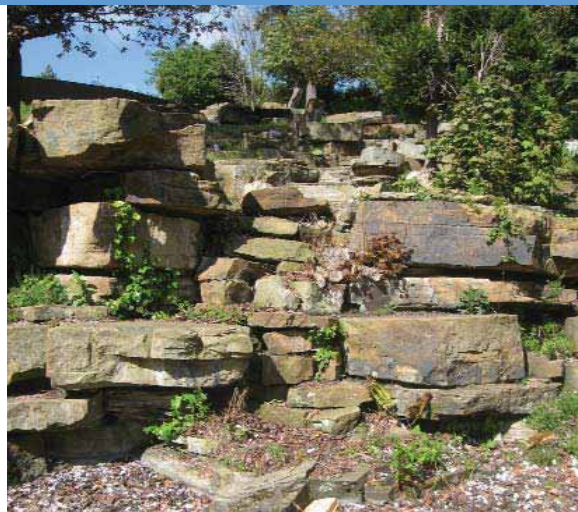


Above left: gardeners at Silksworth House in around 1930, posing in front of one of the long glasshouses.  
Above right: part of the walled garden today.



## Water features

The gardens slope away from the House, into a gentle valley, at the base of which runs a long, narrow lake. On the western side of the lake is a small cave-like structure, which was created to house the pump for the cascade, designed and installed by Charles Doxford. The cascade was designed to be seen from the House - specifically from Charles' bedroom - and ran down across a rockery (right), creating an image of rustic charm, despite its artificiality.



Sadly, today the water no longer flows and many of the cascade pools are completely devoid of water; this situation is addressed in the Management Strategy on page 39.



Above left: one of the lower cascades in full flow in the early 20th century. Above right: one of the empty cascade pools today.



## Estate Buildings

At the northern entrance to the park stand Meadow Nursery Cottage and 'The Gardens', both built as part of the Doxford estate. 'The Gardens', which is currently in extremely poor condition, could be an attractive residence or park office (see page 38). Meadow Nursery Lodge, which was derelict until fairly recently, has been renovated and is now used as offices. Elsewhere in the gardens there is an old ice house - a brick larder with the remains of iron shelves for preserving food.



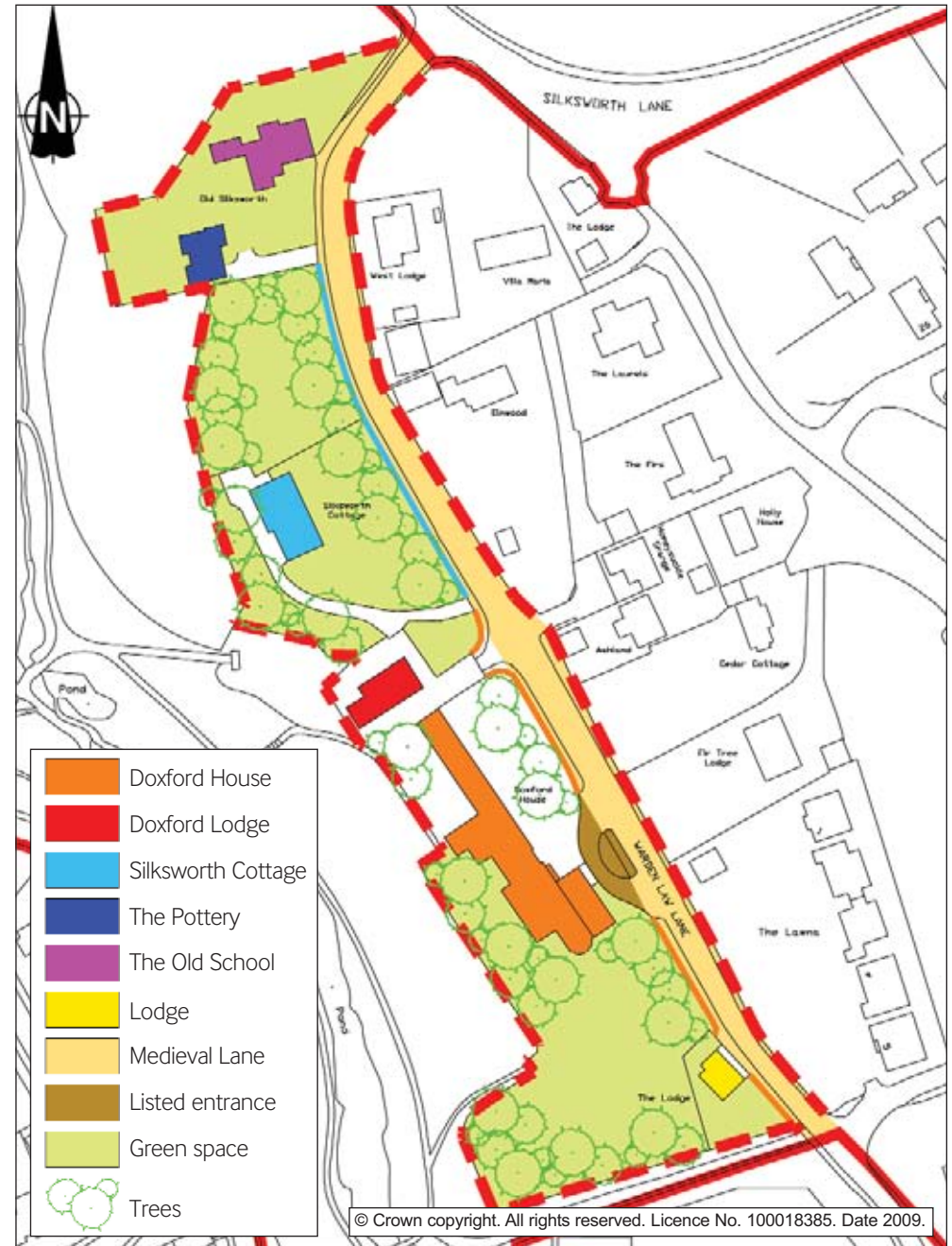
'The Gardens', sadly derelict, but of considerable historic interest.

# Warden Law Lane sub-area

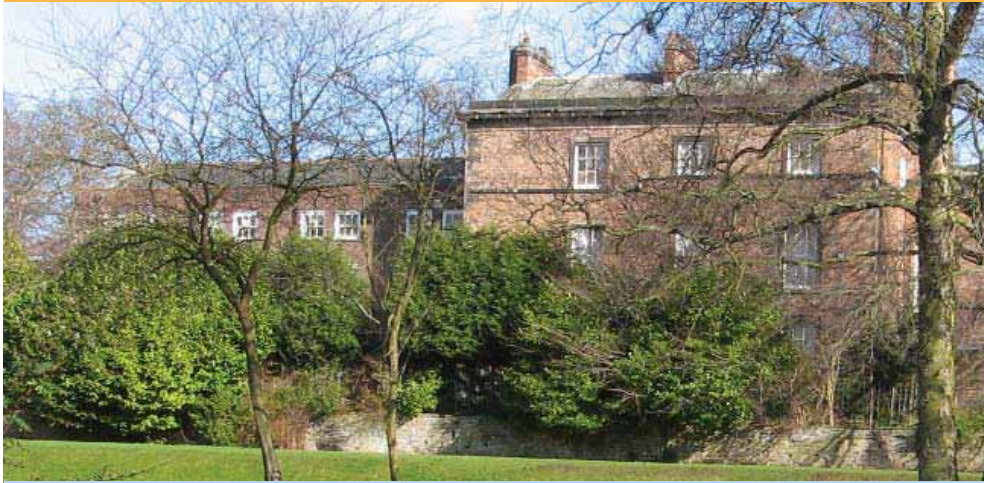
Warden Law Lane is the central focal point of the village, separating the two main estates of Doxford House and Silksworth Hall. The lane was also the central feature of the medieval settlement, with a row of houses to the west and the Hall to the east. The long, leafy lane is flanked on either side by an extremely attractive stone wall, which has strong townscape value. A gentle curve in the lane gradually reveals additional views of the area, widening in places, for example providing access to the forecourt of Doxford House.

## Key characteristics of the Warden Law Lane sub-area:

- Warden Law Lane, a medieval route to Warden Law, has retained its rustic character, although is now bluntly terminated by a large modern supermarket
- Doxford House, grade II\* listed house and former estate buildings, including stables and lodges
- High limestone boundary walls have strong townscape impact
- The Old School House, an attractive historic building at the northern gateway to the Conservation Area
- Silksworth Cottage, a grade II listed former farmhouse
- The Pottery, an attractive contemporary house to the rear of the old school
- Tall mature trees significantly influence the light and shade of the lane, and provide an attractive green setting for the historic buildings
- Well maintained open spaces of private gardens, enclosed by stone walls
- Location of medieval settlement of Silcesworth



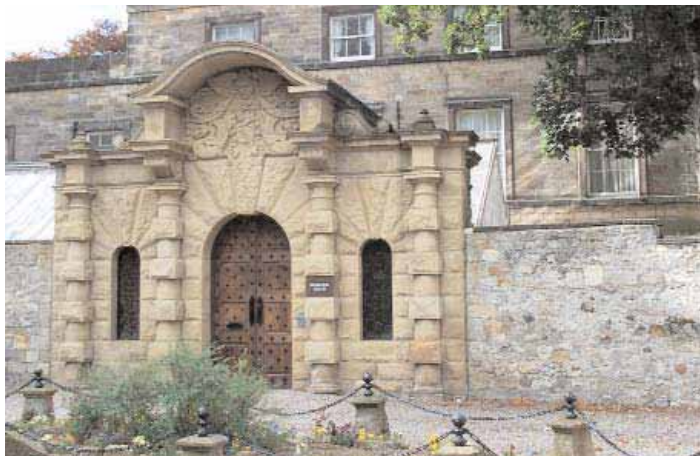
## Doxford House



Doxford House as viewed from Doxford Park, to the south

Known as Silksworth House until the 1960s when it was renamed, Doxford House is a grade II\* listed building. Built in the 1750s by William Johnson on land that had previously been acquired from the Silksworth Hall estate, the house has undergone numerous alterations over the past 250 years. In fact, it is supposed that there is little of the original structure remaining, other than the core brick building and some early moulded plaster ceilings. The evolution of the building has seen various wings added, most of which were then later removed by successive owners.

The Beckwiths, who owned the House from the 1830s to the 1890s, made numerous alterations, many of which were later removed, but did include the formalisation of the entrance feature on Warden Law Lane. At the time it was built it was linked to the House by a long hall, which was later replaced with the

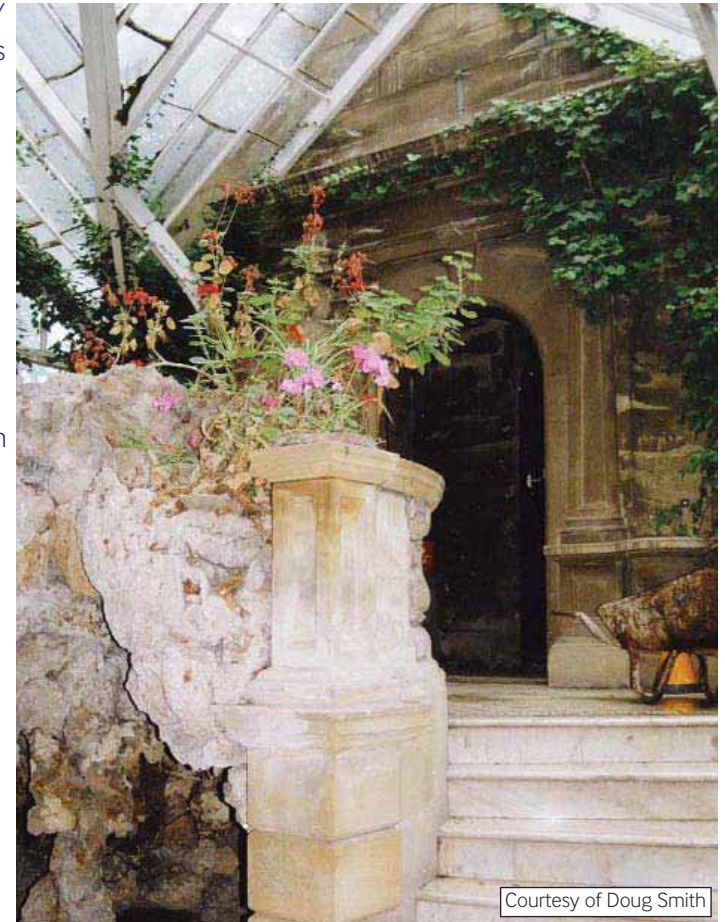


The Warden Law Lane entrance to Doxford House

current winter gardens (see below). The rounded double entrance doors, with their elaborate yellow sandstone surround, feature the coat of arms of the Beckwith family and the face of a mythical ancestor, claimed to be a supporter of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings. The entrance is built in the renaissance style, with Tuscan pilasters, and presents an unusual and quite enigmatic face of the building to Warden Law Lane.

The Beckwiths are credited with the introduction of various pieces of French art - the French tapestry hanging in the main hallway today may well be one of the pieces that the Beckwiths brought back from one of their many trips to Paris. Of particular note is

the quirky conservatory/winter garden that fronts onto Warden Law Lane. The winter garden is a unique iron and timber framed conservatory containing decorative stonework; probably an artificial stone such as Pulhamite replicating tufa (a naturally occurring calcium deposit, usually found on hillsides/cliffs or in caves) and stalactites. The room appears to have been inspired by the Victorian passion for romantic, idealised notions of landscape and legend; two curved marble staircases lead down from the main entrance into the conservatory, around a stone grotto and small pool.



Courtesy of Doug Smith

The curved marble staircase in the 'grotto' at Doxford House.



Courtesy of Doug Smith

The Warden Law Lane entrance to Doxford House

Charles Doxford bought the House some years later - much of his contribution was to the gardens (see page 20). Charles' daughter Aline left the House and gardens to the Sunderland Corporation, whereupon they were renamed Doxford House and Doxford Park. The Park was, and remains, a public park. The House became student accommodation for Sunderland Polytechnic (now Sunderland University) and has since been used as a residential centre for the Lazarus Trust, who undertook significant restoration works to the building. The House is now in private ownership.



Courtesy of Doug Smith

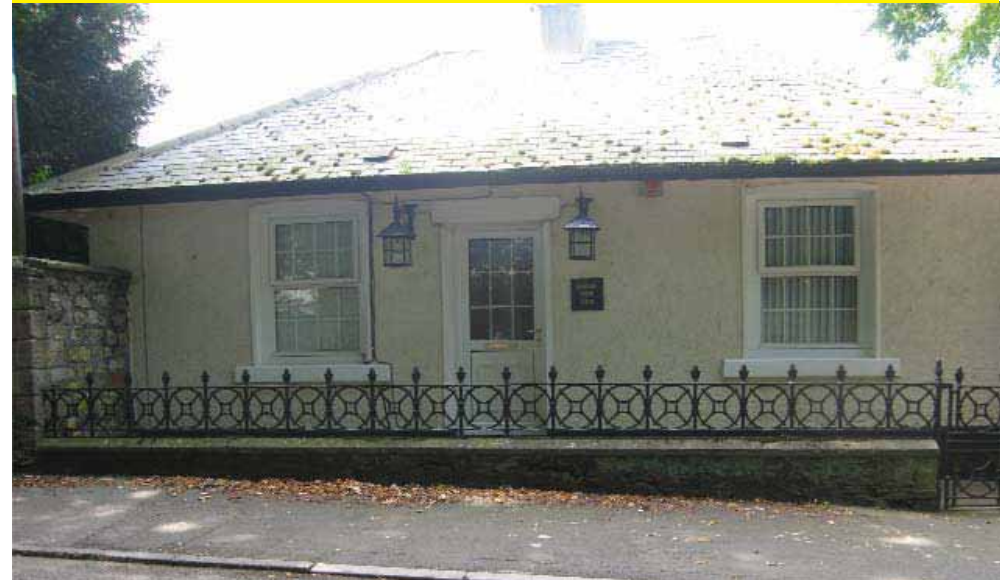
The main staircase in Doxford House

## Doxford House Lodge

The former stables to Doxford House were recently converted into a house, illustrating the potential for incorporating good contemporary design and high quality materials into restoration schemes. The Lodge falls within the curtilage of Doxford House, so although it is now separated from the House in terms of ownership and access it is, nonetheless, also listed at grade II\*.



## The Lodge



To the south of the House stands The Lodge, an attractive private residence with excellent cast iron railings to the front. There are also a number of ancillary buildings attached to the House which have been converted into offices.

## Silksworth Cottage



Silksworth Cottage is a grade II listed private house to the west of Warden Law Lane, set in a large garden. Probably built in around 1800, in stone rubble with a Welsh slate roof, it would appear from a Tithe Award that in 1840 this building was a farmhouse. The boundary wall to the Cottage is listed separately, also at grade II.

## Old School House

Built in 1852 by Mr. E Robinson, owner of Silksworth Hall, this simple stone building was used as a Church of England school until 1967. Pupils attended the school from the nearby Silksworth Colliery, but also from as far afield as East and Middle Herrington. For twenty years the school was also used as a church. Now a private house, the old school has undergone a number of fairly sympathetic alterations and features a new boundary wall and railing with a distinctive ink pot and quill detail reflecting the building's former use.



## Warden Law Lane

Characterised by gentle curves and high boundary walls, this medieval lane has a distinctively rustic feel. Tall mature tree cover makes a significant contribution to the character of the lane, influencing the interplay of light and shade along the street.

## Walls



The limestone boundary walls that flank the lane dominate the streetscene in a positive fashion and contribute significantly to the character of the area. The walls have been altered in places, which detracts somewhat from their appearance, but overall they are an excellent feature. Discreet openings in the wall lead into the private houses and gardens on the lane, or through the quaint wooden gate into Silksworth Cottage. At Doxford House the lane widens, opening out into a formal forecourt with listed lamps and chains. By the entrance to The Pottery there is a charming traditional red post box, set into the wall.

Detailed guidance on the maintenance and repair of these walls can be found in the Management Strategy, on page 43.



Above left: gate into Silksworth Cottage; above right: the post box

# Silksworth Hall sub-area

This sub-area covers the extent of the former grounds to Silksworth Hall which, although now much diminished through infill residential development, is still discernable on aerial photographs due to the boundary of mature trees. The Hall as it stands today is an early 20th century building, but there has been a Hall in the grounds for at least 500 years. It is thought that a Tudor Manor may once have stood on the same site, which would suggest that the site has been developed since at least the 1500s, if not earlier. The land was, in medieval times, the seat of Silksworth Manor and may, therefore, have been occupied for many hundreds of years.

In addition to the Hall there is a lodge house to the north of Silksworth Hall Drive, which appears to be of mid 19th century origin, although much altered.

Infill residential development characterises much of the sub-area, ranging in age from the 1950s to the late 1970s, and is generally set in sizeable gardens.

## Key characteristics of the Silksworth Hall sub-area:

- Silksworth Hall, an Edwardian house on the site of various earlier Halls and the former seat of Silksworth Manor
- Former extent of the fine landscaped grounds of the Hall
- Remnants of the Silksworth Hall estate in the form of lodge houses and mature trees identifying the boundary of the grounds
- Mid-late 20th century infill residential development has obscured the original layout of the estate and greatly diminished its significance



## Silksworth Hall



Silksworth Hall is a grade II listed Edwardian house, built in the Jacobean style by Robert Doxford in 1905. The site was the manorial seat of Silksworth for many hundreds of years, and has probably been occupied for at least 500 years by the various holders of the manor (see historical development on page 6).

The current Hall stands in the grounds of at least two earlier Halls; Robert Doxford acquired the previous Hall in the late 19th century and is thought to have lived in the old Hall while the new one was built; Robert's own photographs show the two alongside each other. During the subsequent demolition works the remains of a Tudor mansion was uncovered (right).



Tudor remains at Silksworth Hall

Courtesy of Doug Smith

Other than Doxford's photographs there is little documentary evidence as to what the previous Halls looked like, other than plan views on historic maps, which appear to show the Hall in different locations and with varying footprints; the changes in footprint may of course indicate extensions rather than wholesale replacements, so it is difficult to establish an accurate history of the site from the plans. If any of the earlier Halls had survived, even in ruined form, then the site is likely to have rivalled that of Washington Old Hall in terms of architectural and historical interest. As it is, the potential archaeological interest of the site remains extremely significant, with the possibility of evidence of human settlement in the area dating back many hundreds of years.

## Silksworth Hall Grounds



Courtesy of Doug Smith

Silksworth Hall in 1905, shortly after the previous Hall was demolished

The approach to the Hall is still made along the narrow, heavily landscaped driveway from Silksworth Lane, the historical access to the Hall. The current Hall was designed to sit slightly elevated within its grounds, south-facing, overlooking extensive landscaped gardens. The principal rooms of the Hall are all oriented to provide desirable vistas across the gardens which, while significantly diminished in size, remain an extremely attractive feature of the area.

In the early 1970s, the gardens to Silksworth Hall were recorded by the council as being among the finest collections of tree specimens in the country. While many of these trees remain, the grounds have largely been carved up and sold off for private housing. Silksworth Hall still stands in a fairly substantial garden, but the original grandeur of the estate (which opened to the public periodically in the mid 20th century) is sadly now diminished.



Silksworth Hall and grounds from the air today



## The Lawns



The Lawns is a development of private housing to the west of Silksworth Hall, parallel to Warden Law Lane but largely screened from view by the high boundary wall to the Lane and the dense mature tree belt.

## Silksworth Hall Drive

The development of Silksworth Hall Drive in the 1970s essentially destroyed a large part of the fine garden of Silksworth Hall. The council initially refused planning permission for the creation of this estate, but lost on appeal. The result is a substantial area of housing that is of high value, but is architecturally undistinguished, built in the mock-Georgian style, popular in its day. Nonetheless, the houses are all built in sizeable garden spaces, which add considerably to the character and appearance of the area, and the valued tree canopy of the original grounds to the Hall remains largely intact. The density of the layout therefore has less of a negative impact than it might otherwise.

Although modern developments on Silksworth Hall Drive do not reflect either the style or materials of the historic elements of the Conservation Area, their front boundary walls are a particularly attractive and unifying feature that is characteristic of the Conservation Area as a whole. Local residents have been led to believe that parts of Sunderland Old Town Hall, demolished in the early 1970s, were reclaimed and used to build the boundary walls. There would certainly appear to be credence in these claims; the crest (below) is that of the old Sunderland Town, and also the crest of a Sunderland Freemason' Lodge.



Left: Silksworth Hall Drive. Right: detail of boundary treatment featuring the coat of arms of Sunderland Town.

## Lodge houses to the Hall

To the north of the Hall lie The Lodge and West Lodge. Built in a similar style to each other, with quirky rooflines and interesting arts and crafts detailing, these houses appear to date from the late 19th century, and therefore pre-date the current Hall. Although much altered, the Lodges both retain a degree of historical and architectural interest.

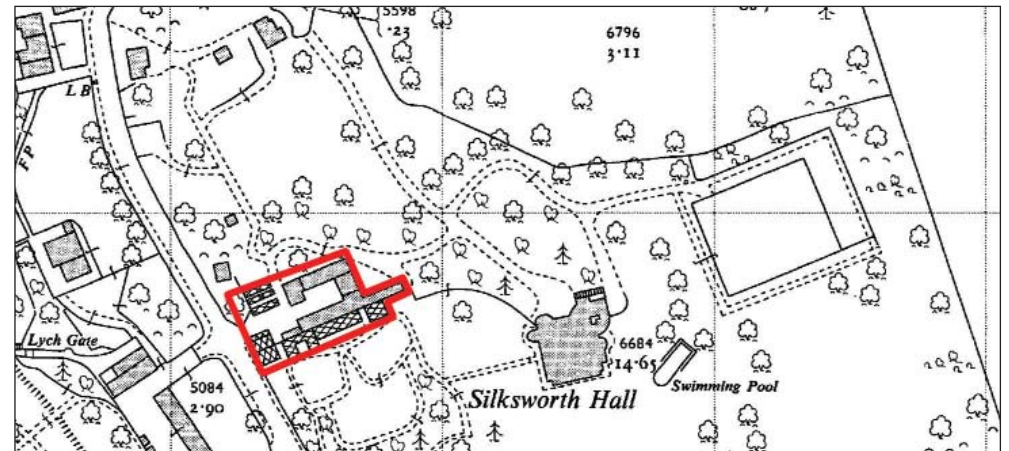


The Lodge, Silksworth Hall Drive

## North west of the Hall

To the north west of the Hall and east of Warden Law Lane, infill housing development (much of which was built in the 1960s and 1970s) has an ad hoc feel to its layout. Houses are built in the style of "villas", with large garden spaces and private driveways. Many of the houses benefit from a sense of seclusion, despite their proximity to each other, largely due to the heavy tree cover in the area.

The site of some of these houses is the original location of the outbuildings to the Hall (see map below), which probably included stables and coach houses.



Courtyard arrangement to the west of the Hall on the 1956 OS (outlined in red), now replaced with housing. Note also the numerous glass houses, shown on the plan as hatched areas.

# Current issues and possible solutions

The historic and architectural interest and integrity of Silksworth Hall Conservation Area are potentially at risk of degradation through, for example, the unsympathetic alteration of residential properties. As with most attractive historic locations, the Conservation Area is a desirable place to live and has in the past been seen as a desirable area in which to develop property; this may continue to give rise to development pressure in future. Modern infill housing developments have, in particular, impacted on the character of the Conservation Area. The protection of significant open spaces and other key landscape features is also an important issue, given their contribution to the fundamental character of the area. There is, however, a range of possible options to address these issues: these are outlined below. The Management Strategy in Part Two of this document considers in more detail many of the following issues and establishes a series of objectives and proposals for the future management of the Conservation Area.

## Boundary review

### Issue

- Boundaries of Conservation Areas should include all elements that contribute to the special character of an area. In the past some boundaries were, in English Heritage's view, drawn too tightly. As such, a boundary review is recommended as part of a character appraisal. Silksworth Hall Conservation Area was designated in 1970, so a review is particularly appropriate as the setting of the area has changed considerably in the past 40 years.

### Solutions

- The existing boundary of the Conservation Area remains broadly justifiable, with no clear reason to alter it. The boundaries to the west and east are still clearly defined by the boundaries of the grounds to Doxford House and Silksworth Hall. To the east and south, these boundaries have been strongly reinforced by dense residential development adjacent to the Conservation Area from the 1970s onwards. To the north, the boundary of Silksworth Lane remains unchanged.
- The extent of infill development in the former grounds of Silksworth Hall might, possibly, be viewed as grounds for a reduction in the size of the Conservation Area.

The significance of the former grounds to the Hall, however, and the retention of a vast number of mature trees that were originally planted as part of the landscaped estate provide a strong historical and visual justification to leave the boundaries as originally designated.

- In conclusion, the clarity with which the boundaries of the Conservation Area can be determined, both on the ground and from the air, strongly suggests that there is no compelling reason to alter them.

## Doxford Park

### Issues

- Doxford Park is owned and maintained by the council. The overall layout of the park remains largely the same as it was when Charles Doxford owned the House, and while this general layout must be retained, the park could nonetheless benefit from some improvements. Some park furniture, for example, has become shabby and would benefit from coordinated improvement/replacement as necessary.
- The abundance of trees and other greenery is a significant maintenance issue for the council and requires careful on-going management (see following section on mature trees). Unmanaged trees may also end up impeding some of the designed views within the park, including those to and from Doxford House.



- Water levels in the park dropped many years ago, the cascade hasn't operated in a very long time and through-flow is no longer achieved in the stream that runs along the base of the valley.
- The walled kitchen garden is an important feature of the park and must be preserved into the future. The walled area is not fully utilised as a garden space (it is partially used as a council depot) and the glasshouses that were once a part of the kitchen garden have been demolished. The hot walls are in reasonable condition, but are damaged in some areas and would benefit from improvements or consolidation.



- There are a number of access routes into the park, none of which do justice to the quality of the park; the footpath from the southern end of Warden Law Lane is particularly poor and would benefit from improvements.

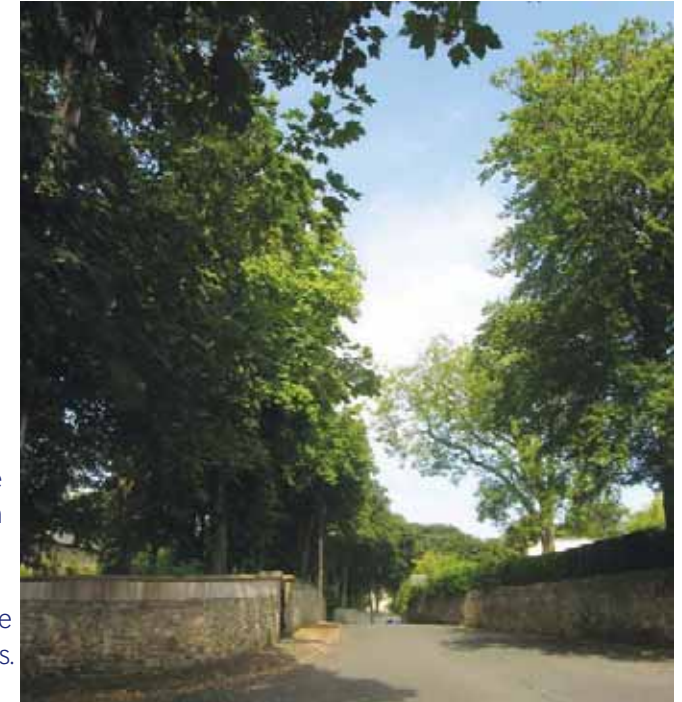
## Solutions

- The council's Landscape and Reclamation Team are working on proposals to make general improvements to the park and the features/facilities within it, including the walled garden and the cascade. These broad proposals are outlined in more detail on page 37 of the Management Strategy.
- The council is responsible for the trees in the park; as such it monitors and manages the green canopy and undertakes appropriate replanting schemes when and where it becomes necessary.

## Mature trees

### Issues

- As previously identified, mature trees make an enormously positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and must continue to be afforded the highest possible levels of protection.
- Given the maturity of the trees in the Conservation Area there is, however, a risk of their coming under threat from disease and becoming dangerous. Unauthorised felling is also a threat.
- The dense tree canopy that characterises Doxford Park and the wider Conservation Area can also raise issues of safety and the risk of crime.



Mature trees on Warden Law Lane

### Solutions

- The council is also responsible for a large number of trees of townscape significance outside of Doxford Park and will continue to manage these in the same sensitive manner as those in the park.
- The council can consider placing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on specific trees that are deemed worthy of individual protection; the majority of mature trees in the Conservation Area (except those in the park) are already protected by a TPO.
- Management of the tree canopy should also take into account safety considerations and the need to allow for natural surveillance of heavily wooded spaces and routes.
- Local landowners are responsible for trees on their own land, and are encouraged to maintain their green cover to a high standard.
- If a tree requires removal then the council will usually require a suitable replacement to be planted in a location to be agreed.

## Open space

### Issues

- Open space, both public and private, is vital to the character of the Conservation Area. Modern development has, in the past, encroached upon the open spaces of the Conservation Area: the large gardens associated with the Hall have diminished in size significantly with the development of infill housing. All remaining garden spaces may experience further development pressure in the future, or may become neglected, both of which are likely to threaten the character and appearance of the area and should, therefore, be resisted.

### Solutions

- The council can, through the planning system, protect areas of open space from development. This is strengthened in the Character Appraisal and Management Strategy by identifying spaces important to the character and appearance of the conservation area as 'significant green spaces' to be protected from development (see map on page 3).
- Green spaces in private ownership, including even the smallest gardens, also make a key contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Owners are encouraged to continue to maintain these spaces to a high standard, and the council will continue to resist development pressure in garden spaces.

## Boundary treatments

### Issues

- The random limestone walls on Warden Law Lane are a key characteristic of the Conservation Area, but are only protected from insensitive repair in certain areas, where the wall is Listed. Parts of the walls are at risk of partial or total demolition, or of being detrimentally altered, either through poor, ill-informed repair, or through a lack of maintenance. This includes the low stone boundary walls to the modern houses on Silksworth Hall Drive, which have a unifying effect within the rest of the Conservation Area.
- Other boundary treatments in the Conservation Area add little to its essential character and would benefit from replacement or improvement.

### Solution

- Guidance on the sensitive repair and maintenance of limestone walls is provided on page 43 of the Management Strategy.



This section of wall on Warden Law Lane has had the original coping replaced, part of which is missing, and features some inappropriate cement pointing

## Building maintenance and alteration

### Issues

- Buildings in conservation areas are sometimes seen to be suffering the symptoms of a general lack of maintenance, which can lead to the degradation of historic fabric and features. Some owners are, unfortunately, reluctant to devote the necessary resources to maintain their premises to a standard befitting their architectural or historic importance, or that of their surroundings. It is notable, however, that there are currently few buildings in Silksworth Hall Conservation Area that appear to be suffering from a lack of maintenance. This is a reflection of the value and pride residents place on the location in which they live and is an admirable characteristic of the Conservation Area.
- Vacant historic buildings are of particular concern, as their vacancy can have a significantly detrimental effect upon both the historic fabric of the building in question, and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole.
- Relatively minor alterations to buildings can, over time, have a significant effect on the street scene and overall quality, character and appearance of an area. Many modern alterations, such as the replacement of timber sliding sash windows with uPVC alternatives, appear harsh and are damaging to the historic fabric.

- Important historic features to protect in the Conservation Area include original doors and doorcases, original windows, natural slate roofs, chimney stacks and pots, cast iron rainwater goods and traditional boundary enclosures.

### Solutions

- In the first instance, regular maintenance should be carried out to prevent or at least delay the need for repairs. Repairs should only be undertaken where considered strictly necessary to slow down the process of decay without damaging the character of the building. A guide on how to assess the maintenance needs of historic buildings is available from the council's conservation team.
- Where repairs are considered, a traditional approach should be adopted, replacing decayed material on a like-for-like basis. In certain circumstances, the fabric may be beyond repair and the replacement of features necessary. It is imperative, however, that the unnecessary loss of historic fabric is avoided. In some cases original windows have been replaced when they could have been more appropriately repaired. The discreet insertion of modern draught seals can greatly enhance the performance of sash windows in respect of heat retention and ease of use. There are local contractors that can undertake such work far more cheaply than the cost of replacement.
- The council will continue to work with the owners of vacant buildings in order to find a sustainable long-term use for them, with a view to preserving and enhancing the buildings and their grounds.

### New development

#### Issues

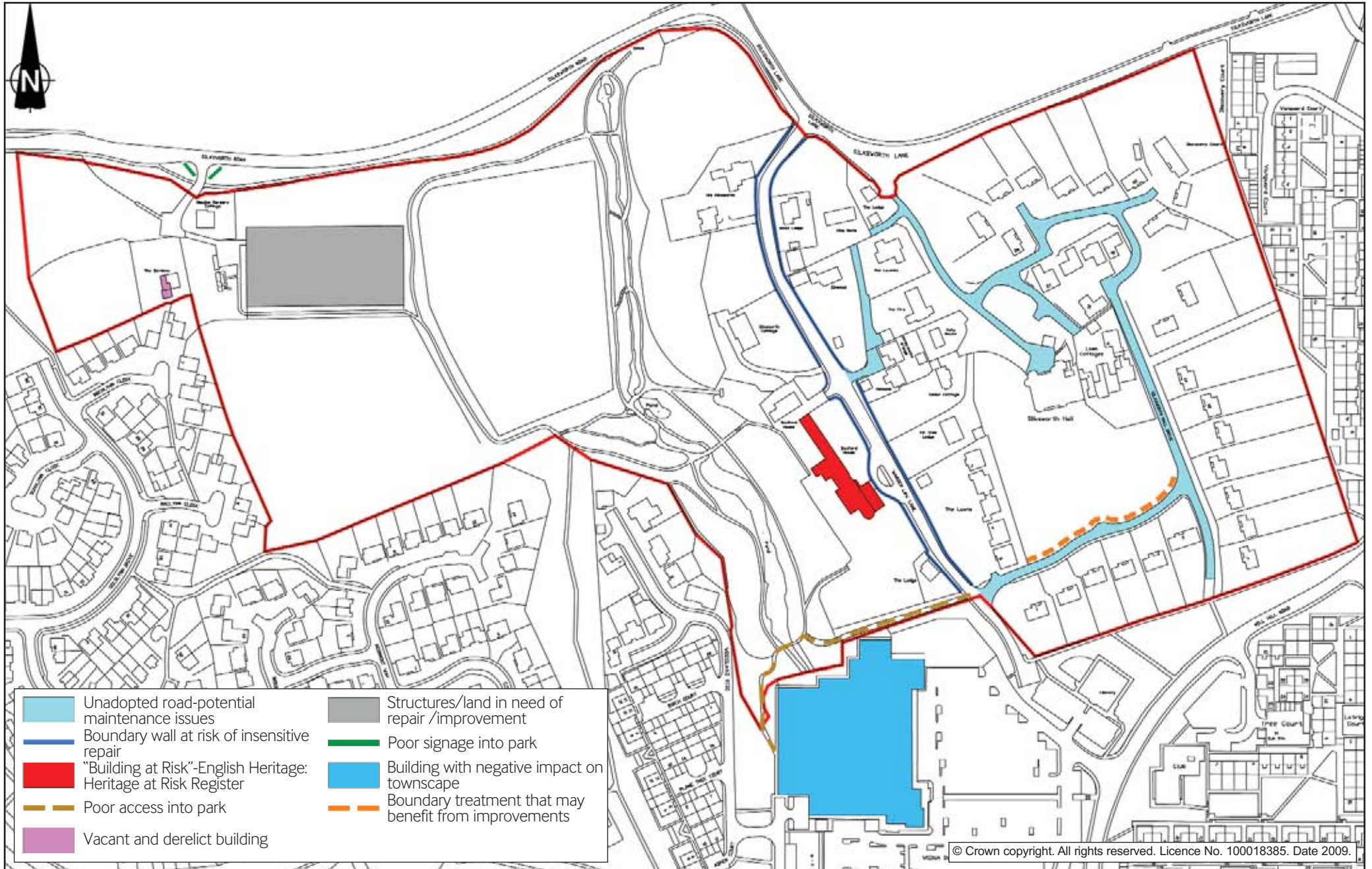
- New development can pose a significant threat to the historic environment. The character of Silksworth Hall Conservation Area has particularly suffered from the effects of modern housing developments, especially in the former grounds of the Hall where several infill developments sit uneasily within the original layout and character of the area. The Conservation Area now has no appropriate space for new development, as most gap and infill sites have already been utilised. Nonetheless, it is a possibility that applications will be made to redevelop existing buildings or develop currently unused spaces/large gardens.
- New development adjacent to conservation areas can also have a significantly negative impact upon their character and appearance. Although the east, south and west sides of the Conservation Area have been developed in the past, the northern end remains green open space and makes a contribution to the character of the

area; it would be detrimental to the setting of the Conservation Area if this land were to be developed.

### Solutions

- New development may make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, but not if it involves the loss of historic buildings or open spaces of significance. A building or feature that is contemporary to Silksworth Hall Conservation Area's key periods of development (early 20th century or older) will, therefore, contribute to the Conservation Area's special interest and hence proposals to demolish will be resisted in accordance with UDP policy. The townscape map on page 33 identifies those buildings and spaces which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and will not normally be considered by the council as appropriate for redevelopment.
- The Management Strategy provides general design advice for new developments in the area, to be applied in specific cases by the conservation team.
- The open space to the north of the Conservation Area is identified in the UDP as leisure land, and is therefore to be protected from development.

## Issues and solutions



## Townscape contribution







# Part Two - Management Strategy



# Management Strategy

Part One of this study has identified and appraised the special characteristics and features of the Silksworth Hall Conservation Area. Part Two, the 'Management Strategy', addresses in more detail the issues raised in the appraisal. It establishes a number of management objectives and proposals to facilitate the more sensitive and proactive management of the Conservation Area, thus ensuring that its special interest is better preserved and enhanced into the future. Measures through which the objectives and proposals may be achieved are discussed and an agenda is established that will be pursued as resources allow, to secure the future conservation of the Conservation Area. Its primary objective may therefore be expressed as follows:

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 1: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the Silksworth Hall Conservation Area is preserved and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations and for the enrichment of the city's built heritage**

## Management objectives and proposals

The Primary Objective sets out the overarching vision of the Management Strategy - the sustained conservation of the heritage assets that make up the Silksworth Hall Conservation Area. The following strategy will be divided into Management Objectives which establish a broad vision, followed by specific Management Proposals which are the means by which the objective may be achieved and will be pursued as resources allow. The proposals seek to address the key issues which threaten the integrity of the Conservation Area. These proposals form the basis of a mid-to-long term strategy for the future management of the Conservation Area and are summarised in the final section of the study, which also discusses the factors that will affect their implementation and the envisaged timescales involved.

N.B. The Management Strategy has been devised as planning guidance to assist the council in preserving and enhancing the 'special architectural and historic interest' of the Conservation Area. It is not a management plan for the area in a wider sense. For example, it does not consider social issues in the area such as crime and antisocial behaviour. Such issues are outside the scope of this document.

# Management objectives and proposals: Doxford Park

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 1:** To ensure the preservation and enhancement of Doxford Park as a public park and late 19th/ early 20th century designed landscape

**PROPOSAL 1a:** The council will continue to maintain and manage the park, its open spaces, planting and mature tree cover



Doxford Park is fundamental to the character of the Conservation Area; comprising almost half of the Conservation Area it makes a hugely significant contribution to its essential character, provides the historic setting of Doxford House and other buildings, and is an important local leisure resource. The council is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the park, which includes management of the tree canopy, general planting, and maintaining public facilities such as the car park and toilets. The council will continue to maintain the park to the highest possible standard, undertaking improvement works where possible (see below).

**PROPOSAL 1b:** The council will investigate the possibility of obtaining funding in order to undertake improvement works in the park

The council's Landscape Team has drafted a series of proposals to make improvements to the park and continues to investigate potential avenues of funding to implement such works. More comprehensive proposals, such as those outlined below, would only be undertaken in conjunction with the local community and as a result of consultation with local amenity groups, in particular the Friends of Doxford Park. The following proposals do, however, give an indication of the council's aspirations for the park, largely from a conservation perspective. Note that the walled garden and water features are dealt with separately in Proposals 1c and 1d. The indicative map on page 39 illustrates some of the council's proposals for the park.

## Planting

The park was originally a designed landscape, created by gardeners as the setting of Doxford House. Any future planting schemes, particularly on the slope opposite Doxford House, should ideally be undertaken using plant species that would have been typical of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to reflect the period the garden was originally laid out.

The rockery (below), to the west of the park opposite Doxford House, is also part of the cascade designed by Charles Doxford. Whether or not the flowing water can be reinstated in this location, the rockery could be planted up with alpine species in the style popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the rockery was first formed.



## Furniture

The park was made public in the 1960s when Doxford House was bequeathed to Sunderland Corporation by Aline Doxford; before this time the park was the private garden to the House and it is unclear as to whether there was any seating in the garden. With the exception of seating in the walled garden, existing benches and litter bins in the park are in poor condition and fail to contribute positively to the special character of the park. Unless evidence of early furniture comes to light it will be preferable to introduce a new coordinated range of high quality seating, signage and litter bins, where necessary. Care should be taken, however, to avoid cluttering of such items throughout the park.

## Children's play

There are currently no formal children's play facilities within Doxford Park; while such a feature would clearly not have been a part of the traditional garden setting, the introduction of play facilities is likely to increase use and popularity of the park and help to ensure its sustainability as a public amenity space.

## Other facilities

Existing facilities within the park are limited; the toilet block (below) is an unattractive structure and appears to be permanently closed. The council could make provision within the park for toilets and improved car parking space. Additionally a plant nursery, café and indoor/outdoor teaching space might be appropriate inclusions: the restoration and conversion of the currently derelict 'The Gardens' cottage at the entrance to the park could provide the accommodation for a number of facilities and secure the preservation of an historic property that was once ancillary to the House.



Above: the now apparently disused toilet block to the north-west of the park is of very poor appearance and detracts from the park's special interest.

**PROPOSAL 1c:** The council will seek to prepare a schedule of repairs to consolidate the hot wall and kitchen garden and investigate the possibility of restoring this unique feature to its original form in the future

As identified in the character appraisal, the walled kitchen garden is of significant historic and architectural interest, and should be preserved and enhanced. Unfortunately, the wall is in a generally poor condition, having deteriorated over a number of years. It is evident from visual inspection that some basic repairs are required to consolidate the structure and stem any further erosion, including the removal of plant growth, re-pointing and possibly cleaning areas of the brickwork, and the re-laying of any loose bricks.



The south wall, in particular, is currently covered by a considerable amount of plant cover (including some growth in cracks in the mortar): while this gives the wall a very attractive appearance, it is likely to be causing damage to the fabric of the wall and may be undermining its structural stability. The condition of the walls should therefore be fully investigated through a structural survey to inform the preparation of a more detailed specification of repair works to ensure its sustainability into the future.

More comprehensive works, including the reinstatement of missing brickwork, would be desirable in the longer term in the interest of restoring to its original form a unique and highly significant feature of the Conservation Area. An archaeological appraisal of the walled kitchen garden would inform the restoration works, including establishing definitively the original method of heating.

Ideally, the whole of the walled garden should be returned to use as a kitchen garden. Historic maps indicate that there were originally glasshouses connected to the walled garden - some within the walls and some adjacent. Proposals to fully reinstate the kitchen garden might include the creation of a modern interpretation of the glasshouses, perhaps incorporating visitor facilities within them such as a café and garden shop. Interpretation material should be provided on site, providing visitors with information as to how the walls worked and what would have been grown in the kitchen garden. This

information would, preferably, be linked to a growing project, perhaps undertaken with a local school, expanding upon the current use of the garden (see also Proposal 1g below).



Above: the western half of the walled garden is currently used as a maintenance depot. The white section of the wall indicates the location of a structure, probably a glass house.

**PROPOSAL 1d: The council will investigate the possibility of restoring the park's water features, including reinstating the flow of water through the cascade and cascade pools**

The water feature in the valley is a key component of the character of the park. It would appear from map evidence that the Beckwiths utilised the small stream that ran through the grounds to the House and created a small lake. Charles Doxford later created the cascade and cascade pools (now empty, right). The council has obtained funding to investigate the condition of the lake with a view to its general refurbishment. There would appear to be little opportunity to restore the lake to its original condition having lost the major water source, but it may be possible to control the water quality by mechanical means, either through water circulation or oxygenation. Unfortunately there is no real possibility of restoring the cascade due to the problem of water shortage. Options are currently being studied towards using the cascade as a rock or alpine garden - this would be dependent on future funding.



**PROPOSAL 1e: The council will encourage the restoration and re-use of ancillary estate buildings within the park**



The two remaining ancillary estate buildings within the park are 'The Gardens' (left) and Meadow Nursery Cottage. The Gardens, owned by the council, is currently standing derelict and has recently suffered fire damage. The council is seeking to repair the shell of the building and refurbish its interior, and is exploring potential users that would return the building into beneficial usage and

secure its future. Uses that may be considered include a mess room for park staff, and offices and meeting room space with potential opportunities for use by local or charitable community organisations. Meadow Nursery Cottage has been returned to use, having stood empty for some time, although the use is not related to the park.

**PROPOSAL 1f: The council will investigate measures to improve the quality, appearance and perceived safety of access routes into and through the park**

The approach from Warden Law Lane is currently not of a standard appropriate to any public park, let alone an historic garden in a conservation area. The path and its general environs are extremely poor and require significant improvement. The boundary treatment, which consists of metal security fencing and patchy timber boarding, is extremely unattractive and fails to make any kind of positive impression upon the visitor. The path is enclosed and provides no natural surveillance, resulting in a distinctly unpleasant experience; this is further compounded by the negative impact at the southern end of the park of the large blank gable of the adjacent supermarket building.



Above left: the footpath from Warden Law Lane; above right: the arch through the southern wall of the kitchen garden

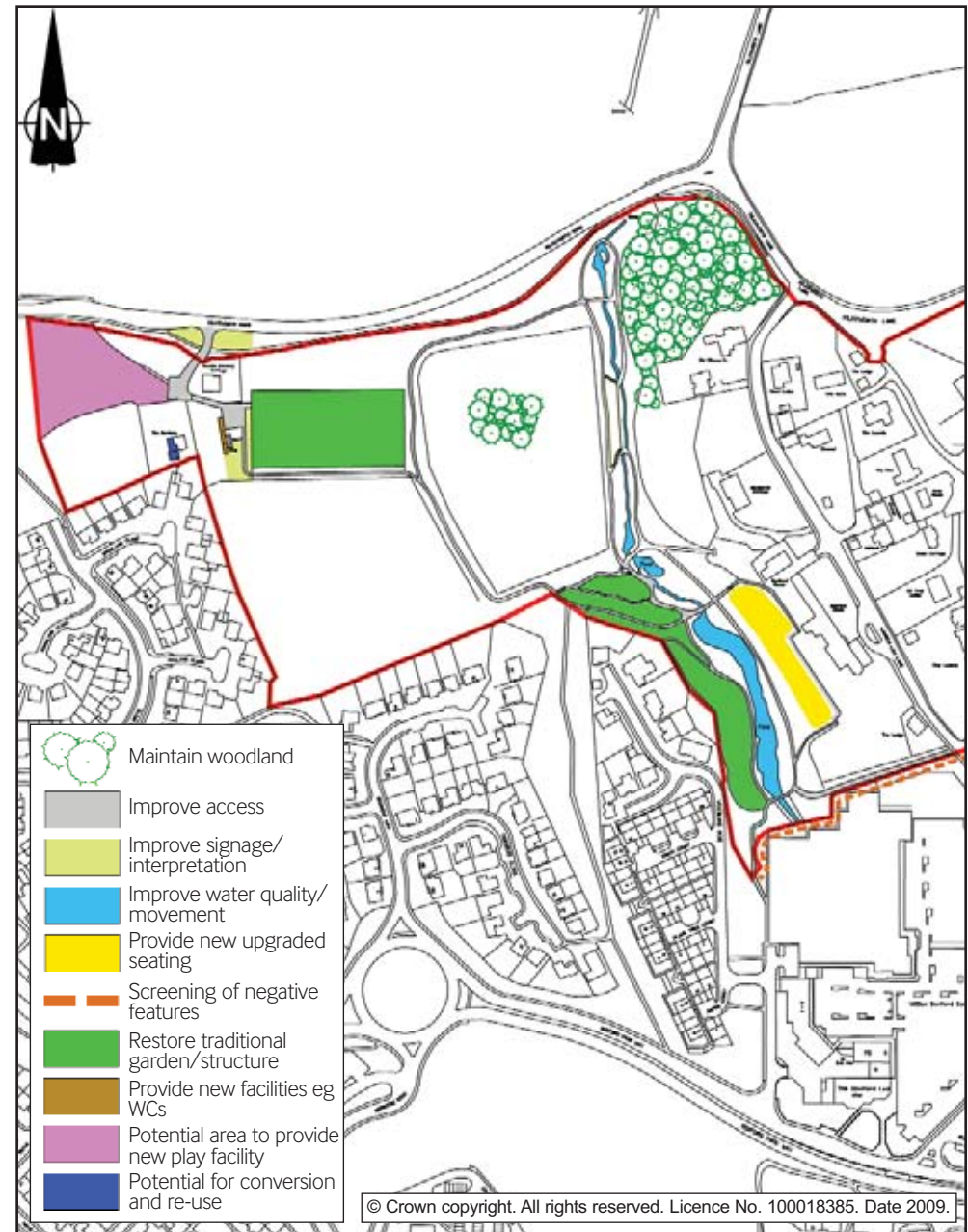
To the north-west, the access into the park is completely different; a wide opening from the road into a small car park creates a far more appealing impression, although this too would benefit from improvements. Signage is poor, as is the car parking provision. Once visitors move through the parking area, however, the park proper is accessed through an attractive (but sadly vandalised) brick arch on the southern wall of the kitchen garden.

Enhancing access routes into the park - for example by improving surfaces and boundary treatments - should encourage patronage of the park and reflect the special heritage significance of the park.

**PROPOSAL 1g: The council will support the production and installation of historical interpretation material within the park, particularly within the walled kitchen garden**

Given the rich history of the park, there is a wealth of information that should be tapped into and made available for visitors to the park to access. This may take various forms, the most obvious of which would be information boards that explain how the gardens relate to the House, their earlier layouts, how the kitchen garden operated and was planted up, what the ancillary buildings were used for (including those now demolished), and possibly including old photographs and local anecdotal evidence as to the park's past. All of this information is likely to significantly enrich the visitor experience and is available from local people and heritage groups, who should be consulted on and involved in the production of such interpretative material.

### Indicative management proposals: Doxford Park



# Management objectives and proposals: open space

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 2: To secure the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area's other significant open spaces**

**PROPOSAL 2a: The council will encourage the maintenance of all open spaces within the Conservation Area, both public and privately owned**

The council is responsible for a number of open spaces within the Conservation Area, in addition to the park, which is covered in management objective 1. The council will continue to manage these spaces to a high standard, with particular reference to the tree canopy (see proposal 2c, below).

Owners and occupiers of properties in the Conservation Area are encouraged to continue to manage their garden spaces to a good standard for the contribution they make to the landscape character and appearance of the area.

**PROPOSAL 2b: No additional infill development will be permitted within the gardens and other open spaces of the Conservation Area**

In order to preserve the landscape settings of both the historic buildings and more recent development, retain as much evidence as possible of the historic settlement pattern and protect the established and distinctive character of the Conservation Area, no further development should occur in open spaces, including gardens, within the Conservation Area.

The council recognises that a significant level of infill development has already taken place within the former grounds to Silksworth Hall, to the detriment of its setting. Any further development will further diminish the traditional landscape setting of the Conservation Area, and this is considered to be unacceptable.

Any further development in the garden spaces of the Conservation Area will significantly reduce the attractive setting they provide to the historic houses, as well as evidence of the original settlement pattern. As a consequence, the distinctive character and

appearance of the Conservation Area would be severely diminished. It is important that these garden spaces are protected from development. This is in accordance with Supplementary Planning Guidance 6 (Backland Development) of the adopted Sunderland UDP, as well as policies B4 and B6, relating specifically to conservation areas and policy B10 which relates to the setting of Listed Buildings.

In addition to open spaces within the Conservation Area, there is a large piece of land to the north of the Conservation Area, which includes Foxhole Wood. This has, for centuries, provided the landscape setting for Silksworth, and is the only significant piece of land adjacent to the Conservation Area that has not been developed. This land is identified in the UDP as open/leisure space and hence is protected from future development. This position is strongly supported from a conservation perspective, in order to preserve the last vestige of the area's traditional landscape setting.



Above: Foxhole Wood and associated open space to the north of the Conservation Area

**PROPOSAL 2c: The council will continue to carefully manage mature trees to ensure that a desirable tree canopy is sustained throughout the Conservation Area.**

As identified in the character appraisal, mature trees contribute significantly to the special interest of the Conservation Area and the canopy is fundamental to its special character. As such, it is important that the council continues to afford this feature protection, whilst also managing the canopy to prevent trees from becoming too large or potentially dangerous.

All trees in conservation areas enjoy a measure of protection, in that notice must be given to the local planning authority before works can be carried out to them (this includes lopping as well as felling). Local landowners are responsible for trees on their own land, and are encouraged to maintain them to a good standard.

Many trees in the Silksworth Hall Conservation Area (particularly within the former grounds of the Hall) are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and are thus afforded a higher level of protection. Many of the trees on private land in the area are also subject to TPOs. The map, right, identifies all trees subject to TPOs in the Conservation Area.

Tree Preservation Orders are usually made to protect trees which make a significant contribution to the amenity of an area, and they may be made when it is felt that a tree may be under threat. TPOs make it an offence to cut down, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree without first getting permission from the council. It is generally the case that offenders are heavily fined and also required to bear the cost of planting suitable replacements.



Plan illustrating the location of Tree Preservation Orders in Silksworth Hall Conservation Area - green dots are individual protected trees, green shaded areas are protected copses.



# Management objectives and proposals: boundary treatments

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 3:** To secure the preservation and sympathetic repair and restoration of historic boundary treatments in the Conservation Area

**PROPOSAL 3a:** The council will provide guidance on the maintenance and repair of limestone walls to ensure that their distinctiveness is appropriately conserved



The limestone boundary walls that run along both sides of Warden Law Lane are identified in the preceding character appraisal as being of significant historic and townscape value. Although the walls are not Listed in their entirety, they should be treated as though they are. All works to the walls should be undertaken in a sensitive manner, with advice from a specialist stone mason and officers from the council's conservation team. Works to those sections of the wall that are Listed are likely to require Listed Building Consent; note that it is a criminal offence to undertake unauthorised works to Listed Buildings. In order to ensure that the traditional stone walls to either side of Warden Law Lane are preserved and enhanced for future generations, the council will continue to provide advice and guidance on the repair and maintenance of the walls. The following section outlines the principles of traditional stone wall construction and gives advice on maintaining and repairing such structures.

## Mortar repairs

The walls on Warden Law Lane are a traditional random rubble construction, with stones of irregular sizes and shapes, with a lime mortar between the stones.

Much of the original lime mortar has been replaced over the years with a cement-based mortar, which is inappropriate and damaging to the stone. There are several advantages to using a lime mortar:

- Lime mortar is “softer” than the limestone around it, meaning that rainwater can enter the mortar and travel through it, rather than into the stone. This means that, over time, the mortar decays rather than the stone
- Because cement mortars are “stronger” than lime, rainwater finds it incredibly difficult to penetrate the mortar and instead enters the stone work. This can result in the rate of decay of the stone being accelerated, leaving the mortar standing proud (e.g. below)
- The lime in lime mortars is a form of calcium carbonate, the same basic component as limestone. This means that if you put a lime mortar next to limestone and add water (i.e. rainwater) then minor chemical reactions can occur naturally which effectively result in the mortar and the stone “self-repairing” where small cracks or fissures appear, giving the structure a degree of flexibility where cement would simply crack
- Lime mortars are naturally better matched to the surrounding stone in terms of appearance, particularly where attractive sands and gravels (aggregates) are included in the mortar



Above: the effects of using too “strong” a mortar - the stone face has eroded behind the level of the surrounding mortar joints, which are left standing proud of the stone

As lime mortars are “soft”, they were never intended to last forever. As such, it may be necessary to repoint areas of mortar from time to time, but only when the mortar has weathered back to a depth equivalent to the width of the joint, or where it has become very loose. Repointing should always be undertaken with lime mortar, to a specification agreed by the conservation team. Cement-based mortar will not be acceptable. Where cement mortar has already been used, it may be beneficial to carefully remove it, but in many cases it may preferable to wait until the mortar works itself loose, as removal can cause damage to the stone work. A trial area should be removed to establish the degree of damage it will cause, and only hand tools should be used to rake out the existing mortar.



Left: although the post box is a charming and attractive feature of the wall on Warden Law Lane, the way it has been inserted into the wall has resulted in an unsightly area of poorly finished cement mortar, which may also be causing some damage to the surrounding stonework. Note the greenish discolouration on the stone to the bottom left of the post box; this is probably evidence of dampness due to water entering the stone, rather than the adjacent mortar.

## Stone repairs

Limestone weathers naturally and some erosion on the face of the stones indicates their age and often adds considerably to their character and appearance, particularly on boundary walls. Provided that the weathering has not begun to undermine the stability of the structure, there is no reason to replace or repair the stones and remove the patina of age. Where stone repairs have become unavoidable, the works should be specified by an experienced stone mason and care must be taken to find as close a match for the stone as possible in terms of both appearance and geological composition.

Where the original coping stones which cap the walls have been lost, owners are encouraged to reinstate these to the original design.

## Maintenance

General maintenance of traditional stone walls is essential in order to ensure their long-term survival. Owners should check them regularly for significant cracks, stone erosion and loose mortar. Where mature trees grow close to the walls owners should check whether roots could begin to destabilise the structures - if this is the case then advice must be sought from the council's conservation and development control teams having regard for the preservation of both the wall and the tree.

**PROPOSAL 3b: The council will resist all future proposals to create new openings in historic boundary walls**

The boundary walls on Warden Law Lane make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Although there are a number of historic openings in the wall, some of which are of significant character in their own right (such as the gate to Silksworth Cottage), it would be extremely detrimental to the character of the lane if any further openings are created. This proposal is further supported by proposal 2b, which states there is to be no new development in existing garden spaces, hence there should be no requirement to create additional openings in the future.

**PROPOSAL 3c: The council will encourage and, where possible facilitate, the improvement/ protection of other boundary treatments in the Conservation Area**

In addition to the historic stone walls on Warden Law Lane and the walled garden in Doxford Park (see proposal 1c), the Conservation Area features a variety of boundary enclosures. There are some examples of attractive boundaries which should be protected, such as the cast iron railings to the Lodge on Warden Law Lane and low stone walls on Silksworth Hall Drive. There are also examples of boundaries that use poor quality materials and fail to reflect the historic character of the area, such as the southern boundary of Silksworth Hall which features timber posts and wire. Security fencing to Doxford Park should be removed and replaced with a more appropriate, high quality design.



Above: cast iron railings to the Lodge, Warden Law Lane

# Management objectives and proposals: building maintenance and alterations

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 4:** To ensure that individual buildings continue to make a strong positive contribution to the Conservation Area's special character and interest

**PROPOSAL 4a:** The council will continue to support the owners and managers of key buildings in the Conservation Area, offering design guidance with a view to "informed conservation"

Such key buildings include Doxford House, Doxford House Lodge, Silksworth Hall, Silksworth Cottage and the various ancillary lodge buildings, and are all (listed or otherwise) significant for the contribution they make to the fundamental character of the area. It is imperative that all of these buildings and their settings continue to be protected and sensitively managed and conserved in order to preserve their special qualities. The council's conservation team will offer design guidance to encourage (and where necessary require) owners to take special care in conserving their properties to appropriate conservation standards.

**PROPOSAL 4b:** The council will approach owners of properties that become vacant and/or in poor condition to require/encourage appropriate maintenance and improvement works as necessary

Simple maintenance works, such as repainting facades and window frames, can make a dramatic positive contribution to the character and integrity of historic buildings. Regular maintenance can also prevent more severe defects or repair needs from emerging in the longer term, which can be very costly to address when compared to the minimal cost of on-going remedial works such as painting. This applies equally to both historic and more recent buildings in the Conservation Area.

The council has the power to serve Urgent Works Notices on properties which deteriorate to such a state that works are urgently needed for the preservation of the building. Such notices require the owner to undertake a specified range of works normally to make the building watertight and weatherproof. Fortunately, the condition of properties in the Conservation Area is generally very good, reflecting the quality of the area and its desirability as a place to live; hence, this course of action is unlikely to occur.

Doxford House is, however, currently vacant and is on the English Heritage "Heritage at Risk Register 2009" as it is a grade II\* listed building. (The HAR Register only contains grade I and II\* buildings). Listed Building Consent has been granted for the sensitive conversion of Doxford House into apartments with a new extension to replace the existing poor quality 1970's addition, but planning permission is yet to be obtained and it is uncertain whether there is still a desire to implement this scheme, especially in the current economic conditions. In the meantime, the building is at risk of further deterioration which could further threaten the viability of a scheme to return it to beneficial use. The owners are therefore encouraged to adopt a regular maintenance programme in the interim period prior to building works to protect the integrity of the listed building. Such works may include the clearing of debris from the gutters and works to ensure the building remains wind and water tight, for instance renewing any broken panes of glass and re-fixing displaced roof slates. Discreet security measures may also be necessary to safeguard the building from vandalism and breakages.



Doxford House October 2009. The building is vacant and deteriorating with doors boarded-up and window panes cracked or missing.

**PROPOSAL 4c: The council will continue to provide design guidance to owners of residential properties in the Conservation Area for both major and minor alterations**

Relatively minor alterations to buildings can, over time, have a significant effect on the street scene and overall quality of the character and appearance of an area. Many modern alterations, such as the replacement of timber sliding sash windows with uPVC alternatives, appear harsh and will damage the historic fabric.

Original timber windows should not be replaced unless absolutely necessary. In most cases they can be successfully upgraded in-situ by a joiner, bringing energy efficiency up to the requirements for historic buildings in part-L of the Building Regulations, at a fraction of the cost of replacement. There is also a strong argument to suggest that timber windows are a far more sustainable option than plastic - uPVC windows require a relatively high energy input in the creation stages, involving the use of chemicals and hydrocarbons that are potentially harmful to the environment, whereas timber can be repaired easily and can be obtained from sustainable sources. Plastic windows also have a relatively short life: they cannot be repaired in the same way as timber and cannot be satisfactorily painted when, with time, they begin to discolour. Furthermore uPVC cannot be recycled when it is at the end of its useful life, unlike timber, which is biodegradable.

In addition, the visual characteristics of uPVC units are quite different to the traditional appearance of wooden windows. Their shiny texture, method of opening, proportions of glazing bars and general lack of detailing all give a very different visual effect to typical wooden sash windows. As a result, uPVC windows appear out of context in historic buildings and are generally harmful to the historic character of the Conservation Area. Likewise, artificial roof slates do not reflect the traditional appearance of natural slate.

In view of the above and in the interests of conserving the special historic interest of the Conservation Area, the council will always encourage (and, where possible, require) the use of appropriate traditional materials when carrying out repair and alteration works.

# Management proposals and objectives: archaeology

**MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 5:** To ensure that the underlying archaeology of the Conservation Area is preserved and, where possible, recorded

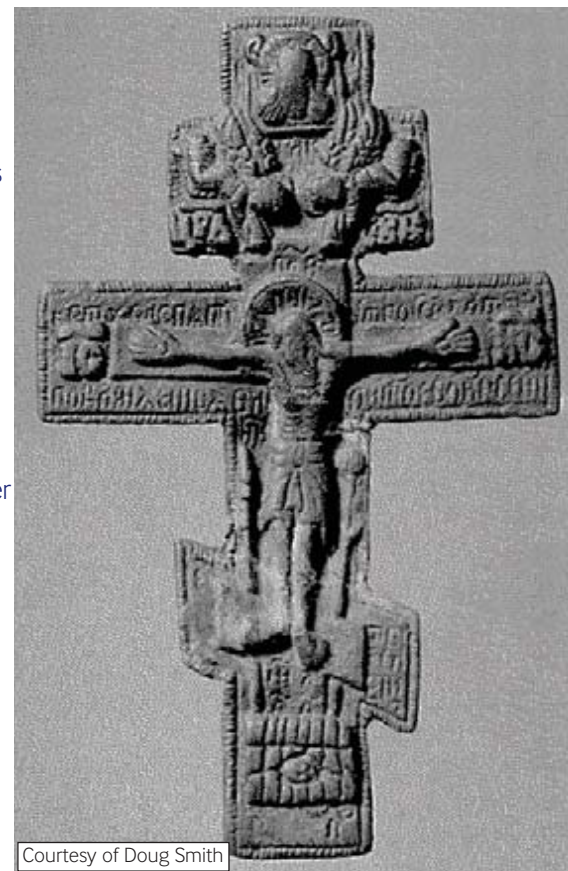
**PROPOSAL 5a:** The council will work in conjunction with the Tyne and Wear County Archaeologist to utilise all opportunities to preserve, explore and record archaeological evidence in the Conservation Area

Any proposed ground works in the Silksworth Hall Conservation Area are likely to involve the disturbance of archaeological evidence of the area's history. As such, early consultation with the County Archaeologist is paramount. The County Archaeologist will provide an initial appraisal of the likelihood that archaeologically sensitive deposits may be present which need to be considered for any specific planning application; this is estimated from existing records, including historical accounts, and reports of archaeological work in the vicinity, in conjunction with a number of sources which suggest the nature of deposits on the site, like bore-hole logs and cellar surveys. This is presented in a standard format, known as a "desk top assessment". If the assessment concludes that archaeological deposits may be present, archaeological evaluation trenching may be recommended as a second phase of work. If archaeological deposits are found in those preliminary trenches, further open area excavation would potentially be required to fully record the remains before development commences. The County Archaeologist will also give advice on the steps that may need to be taken at each stage of the planning process. Previous archaeological finds and other historical evidence can be found on the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record; this is a comprehensive record that is compiled and maintained by the County Archaeologist and can be viewed online at [www.twsitelines.info](http://www.twsitelines.info). A summary of HER records can be found in the appendix.

In many cases the small scale of the disturbance associated with a development, or the low probability that archaeological remains will have once existed, or survived on the site, will mean that a much lower level of observation and recording is required. Known as a "watching brief", this is the time-tabled attendance of a suitably qualified archaeologist employed by the developer at the point when digging is underway. Any archaeological deposits encountered will be quickly recorded and any finds collected, without undue disruption to the construction work. Again, the County Archaeologist will provide the specification for the watching brief.

## Unexpected Archaeological Finds:

The Government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 16 "Archaeology and Planning" provides advice on the rare circumstance when exceptional and unpredicted remains are encountered while development is in progress. There are powers at the discretion of both the Secretary of State, and the Planning Authority to intervene to ensure that nationally important remains are protected. The developer can insure against any resultant loss, and would, if all appropriate steps have been taken, be entitled to compensation. In most cases, it has proved possible to achieve a satisfactory conclusion through voluntary negotiation. The best insurance is to take the appropriate steps (assessment, evaluation etc) at the right time.



Courtesy of Doug Smith

Above: a Russian cross found in the old Priest's well to the south of the Conservation Area (on the site now occupied by the supermarket car park), believed to be a religious antiquity belonging to Lady Beckwith, a Catholic convert

## Building recording

Where buildings form a component of the archaeological resource, prior to renovation, conversion or demolition it may be appropriate to undertake "building recording". This is not restricted to Listed Buildings, which are selected mainly on architectural criteria. Many outwardly unprepossessing structures are important in forming a link with past communities and industries, and will merit recording by qualified archaeologists or building historians to an agreed specification which will reflect the importance of the structure and detail the most suitable recording methodology (for example photographic survey, elevation recording etc).

## Management Strategy: Summary of Objectives

Proposals	Timescale Short (1-3 yrs) Mid-long (3-10 yrs)	Financial sources/ implications	Recommended action
<b>1. Doxford Park</b>			
1a Maintain and manage	Continuous	Public funding/ ongoing maintenance budget	Ongoing
1b Funding for improvements	Continuous	Public funding required	Investigate funding sources/establish community dialogue
1c Walled kitchen garden	Mid-long term	Public funding required	Consult and investigate
1d Water feature	Short term	Public funding required	Consult and investigate
1e Estate buildings	Mid-long term	Public/partnership funding	Consult and investigate
1f Access	Mid-long term	Public/partnership funding	Consult and investigate
1g Interpretation	Short term	Public funding required	Investigate funding sources/establish community dialogue
<b>2. Open space</b>			
2a Open green space	Continuous	Ongoing maintenance budget	Continue careful management
2b Private gardens	Continuous	Private investment	Encourage maintenance/ management
2c Trees	Continuous	Ongoing maintenance budget/private investment	Continue careful management
<b>3. Boundaries</b>			
3a Repair of historic walls	Continuous	Private investment	Provide guidance and encourage maintenance
3b Protection of walls	Continuous	None	Control and guidance
3c Other boundaries	Continuous	Private investment	Control and guidance
<b>4. Individual buildings</b>			
4a Informed conservation	Continuous	Private investment	Provide guidance, control through planning system where appropriate
4b Vacant properties	Mid-long term	Public fuding/private investment	Investigate, control through planning system
4c Design guidance	Continuous	None	Control and guidance
<b>5. Archaeology</b>			
5a Preserve and record finds	Continuous	Private investment	Control and guidance

## Implementation of management objectives

Whilst the council can effectively manage and improve aspects of the Conservation Area and satisfy certain management objectives and proposals through direct physical measures, its development control function and providing advice and guidance, the implementation of several proposals will be dependant on factors outside its direct control.

### Financial implications

Many of the proposals will require significant public and/or private investment to facilitate their implementation. For example, the implementation of the proposed works in Doxford Park, public realm improvements, or other environmental enhancement works will require considerable public investment. Such funding is difficult to secure, especially in the current financial climate with the council facing increasing budgeting constraints from Central Government. There is currently no such funding identified for Silksworth Hall Conservation Area.

### Further work required

Further and more detailed work will, in addition to securing funding, be required to bring forward certain objectives. In particular, further research and design work will be needed to inform any further environmental improvements.

### Envisaged timescales

The timescales indicated in the table for the implementation of the management objectives are deliberately vague due to the uncertainty surrounding the factors they are dependant upon. Some of the objectives may not be achieved in the next 10 years, whilst others might be implemented sooner than envisaged. In the final analysis, the availability of financial support will be the key factor in expediting many proposals. Several items are, however, matters of the ongoing management and regulation of change, rather than substantial capital works.

# Appendix 1 - UDP policies

## Conservation Areas

B4 All development within and adjacent to Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance. To this end the council will issue planning/design guidance for the various areas from time to time.

B6 The council will preserve and enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas; measures will include:-

- (i) Encouraging the retention of existing buildings and the improvement of features, open spaces, historic street patterns and plot boundaries;
- (ii) Encouraging the retention of existing mature trees;
- (iii) Introducing controls over the display of advertisements;
- (iv) Seeking, where appropriate, to control development by the use of Article 4 Directions;
- (v) Giving special attention to the preservation of important views into and out of the area;
- (vi) Restoring highways and verges by use of appropriate materials and planting, encouraging utility companies to respect such works;
- (vii) Reducing the impact of traffic where possible by diversion and traffic calming measures; and
- (viii) Promoting environmental improvement and enhancement programmes.

B7 Applications for demolition of unlisted buildings in a conservation area will be determined by the extent to which the integrity, character and appearance of the area is affected, taking into account any replacement proposals. Where unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, the criteria in Policy B8 which concern the demolition of listed buildings will apply.

## Listed Buildings

B8 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings. Demolition in whole or substantive part will only be given consent when all other avenues for retention (including preservation or enhancement in charitable or community ownership) have been explored and found not to be feasible or it is considered that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition. Consent will only then be given when planning permission for an acceptable replacement development has been granted, which will also be subject to conditions requiring the letting of a contract prior to demolition.

B10 The City Council will seek to ensure that development proposals in the vicinity of listed buildings do not adversely affect their character or setting.

## Archaeology

B11 The City Council will promote measures to protect the archaeological heritage of Sunderland and ensure that any remains discovered will either be physically preserved or recorded.

B12 There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of scheduled ancient monuments and other nationally important archaeological sites. Planning permission for development which would have an adverse effect on their site or setting will be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevail.

B13 The City Council will seek to safeguard sites of local archaeological significance. When development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, the council will seek to ensure mitigation of damage through preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. Where the physical preservation of remains in the original situation is not feasible, excavation for the purpose of recording will be required.

B14 Where development proposals affect sites of known or potential archaeological importance, the city council will require an archaeological assessment/evaluation to be submitted as part of the planning application. Planning permission will not be granted without adequate assessment of the nature, extent and significance of the remains present and the degree to which the proposed development is likely to affect them.

B15 Where major developments involve large-scale ground disturbance in currently undeveloped areas, the city council will determine whether, and to what extent, an archaeological assessment is required.

B16 Where any historic sites and monuments are discovered provision will be made for an appropriate level of assessment, recording and preservation (in advance of or if necessary during construction) commensurate with the importance of the find.

B17 The City Council will undertake and encourage schemes for the management, interpretation and promotion of important features including:-

- (i) Listed buildings;
- (ii) Ancient monuments;
- (iii) Conservation areas; and
- (iv) The urban riverside.

Measures will include the provision of information boards and plaques, appropriate signposting and improvements to access.

## Appendix 2 - Tyne and Wear HER

Site	Evidence	Description
<b>Prehistoric burial</b>	Find	On Thursday 5th June, 1879 some workmen found a stone coffin on land between the estates of Mr. Chapman, of Silksworth Hall, and Mr. Beckwith of Silksworth House. The coffin was found to contain "human remains, together with antique weapons".
<b>Steeple Hill barrow</b>	Levelled Earthwork	In February, 1876, the small natural mound of sand and gravel, with small barrow on top, called Steeple Hill, was removed. Inside it was a cist which contained a contracted skeleton, and two Food Vessels, in one of which was a cremation. Nearby was a second skeleton. The area is now covered by allotments.
<b>Polished axe, Doxford Park</b>	Find	A large, coarse sandstone axe was found at Doxford Park in a 'load of earth' during road making 1972 and retained by the finder. The object is described as follows: length 134 mm, max width 46 mm, max thickness 34 mm. Broad blade, slightly chipped. The axe does not appear to fall into any known group of sandstone axes in north England and south Scotland.
<b>Silksworth medieval Village</b>	Documentary evidence	The earliest reference to "Silcesworth" is thought to be in c. 930, when it was listed as one of the appendages of South Wearmouth in King Athelstan's gift to the see of Durham. It was in the possession of Bishop Flambard at the end of the 11th century, but in perhaps the 13th century was given to the priory of Durham. It consists today of a north-south street bounded on the west by 18th-19th century stone houses, some with large gardens. Tithe Award shows that one of these was a farm in 1840. In the mid 19th century there were only 2 houses on the east side, one being Silksworth Hall. This was rebuilt in the early 20th century but by the later 20th century was empty.
<b>Sand pit</b>	Documentary evidence	Historic Ordnance Survey map evidence shows a Sand Pit at this location.
<b>Doxford House garden (Doxford Park)</b>	Structure	Silksworth House garden is now a public park. Estate walls remain. The house and garden are now separated by a wall. A grassed embankment runs behind the house, sloping down to a long narrow pond. The pond is a central feature to the layout of the paths which lead to an area where a dene is formed by the stream

		feeding the pond. To the north is a kitchen garden (HER 5230). The walk to the kitchen garden is via a beech avenue. Silksworth or Doxford House is probably late 18th century or early 19th century. Christopher Maling lived briefly at the house. The remains of a fountain survive in the pond.
<b>Walled Garden, Doxford Park</b>	Structure	Kitchen garden within Doxford Park with superb brick walls. Some were used as hot walls for growing fruit. Many flues are visible due to the deterioration of the structure.
<b>Icehouse, Doxford Park</b>	Structure	Fiona Green identifies the cave-like structure on the west side of the pond as an icehouse (NZ 3739 5283), however this was apparently built by Charles D. Doxford (d. 1935) to house the generator that drove the cascade from the top of the rocks into the pond beneath. A more likely candidate for an icehouse or perhaps a game larder is the semi-subterranean brick structure with stone retaining walls, built into the bank to the immediate north-east of the pond. It retains some galvanized iron shelving.
<b>Silksworth Hall Hotel, Silksworth Hall Road</b>	Extant building (grade II listed)	House, later hotel. c1900. Bright red brick with sandstone ashlar dressings. Slate roof with terracotta ridge copings and finials and brick chimneys. 2 storeys. Jacobean style. Central bay recessed with ashlar loggia of keyed arches on Ionic pilasters supporting entablature. Balustrades above and below arches. Parapet above has SILKSWORTH HALL on frieze. Flanking semicircular projections have stone mullioned windows and hemispherical roofs. Central gable has bargeboards with dragon finial. High octagonal chimneys. Oriel bow window and Jacobean ashlar blind arcade. Rear elevation has first floor balcony.
<b>Doxford House, Warden Law Lane</b>	Extant building (grade II* listed)	Formerly known as Silksworth House. Large house, now student's hall of residence, with conservatory and forebuilding attached. Probably c1820 with c1900 alterations. Ashlar front and forebuilding, rear brick with ashlar dressings, conservatory cast-iron and glass. 3 storeys. Front has c1900 mullioned and transomed ground floor windows and door surround to double doors in conservatory. Upper windows are sashes with fine glazing bars in plain stone surrounds. Left return



		has renewed French windows on ground floor. Forebuilding - Italian renaissance style with heavily rusticated pilasters to high central round-headed double door with studded panels. Similar round-arched openings in flanking bays have wrought-iron grilles. Half columns of Tuscan detail support entablature on large scroll brackets. Door keystone rises to richly-carved tympanum with rich mantling resembling heraldic device of Collingwood family. Interior - open-well stair with turned balusters. Hall has high quality chimney-piece and overmantel with low relief Greek detail. Common room has mahogany chimney-piece and ceramic overmantel. Some panelling. Conservatory has stone imperial stair to forebuilding, with stone balustrade and cherub lampholder on newel. Elaborate cast-iron brackets to roof. House wall within conservatory has reinforced artificial stone grotto attached, with cavities and cusped bowls, stalagmites and stalactites of the same material
<b>Garden wall and piers, Warden Law Lane</b>	Extant building (grade II listed)	Serpentine walls from forebuilding to Doxford House continue along Warden Law Lane on east side of garden and grounds of house, to lodge at the south, and to gate piers to the rear entrance at the north. C19 altered c1900. Rubble walls with ashlar coping. Square ashlar piers with low pyramidal coping with wrought-iron lamp holders on brackets.
<b>Lamp standard and dwarf piers, Warden Law Lane</b>	Extant building (grade II listed)	Lamp standard, dwarf piers and chains to Forecourt of Doxford House forebuilding. C1900. Stone piers, cast-iron lamp standard and wrought-iron chains enclose a semicircular plot opposite the forebuilding. Bulbous rusticated base supports elaborately moulded lamp standard with large lantern, pyramidal top and spike finial. Tapered square piers with prominent cornices have iron ball finials through which chained with large spikes are slotted.
<b>Silksworth Cottage, Warden Law Lane</b>	Extant building (grade II listed)	House. Probably late C18. Rubble stone with large quoins and ashlar dressings. Welsh slate roof. 2 storeys. Half-glazed door under stone pedimented hood on brackets. Plain stone surrounds to renewed ground floor windows and to first floor sashes. Corniced brick chimneys.

<b>Garden wall, Silksworth Cottage, Warden Law Lane</b>	Extant building (grade II listed)	Garden wall to east of Silksworth Cottage. C1800. Rubble with flat stone coping. High wall along front of property has brick segmental arch over boarded door in front of house. Square rubble piers at south end.
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All records taken from the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record. These records are not exhaustive and the council policies regarding archaeology must be adhered to in all cases, whether there is existing evidence of archaeological interest or not.

# Appendix 3 - References

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For further details and copies in large print and other languages please contact:

Conservation Team  
Office of the Chief Executive  
Civic Centre  
Sunderland  
SR2 7DN

Tel: (0191) 5611515  
Fax: (0191) 5537893  
e-mail: [implementation@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:implementation@sunderland.gov.uk)

[www.sunderland.gov.uk/characterappraisals](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/characterappraisals)  
[www.sunderland.gov.uk/conservation](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/conservation)  
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