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Heritage Statement for: Land at Church Lane, Whitburn, South Tyneside

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HERITAGE STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Structure of this Report

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany the planning application for the development of 5 dwellings on the land allocated for housing, accessed off Church Lane in Whitburn, South Tyneside. The purpose of this report is to assess the impact of the submitted proposal on the significance of the heritage asset; Whitburn Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings or locally identified significant structures and in accordance with para 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

This Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings and Design and Access Statement, by Fitz Architects and the suite of supporting documents which accompany the planning application, including the Archaeological Assessment by the Archaeological Practice Ltd which consulted the Historic Environment Record.

Description of the existing Site and Surroundings



Photograph 1 - within the site looking west

Whitburn village is located close to the north sea coast, about 3 miles north of Sunderland, within South Tyneside. The subject site lies to the south of the main through road within Whitburn (B1299) and is accessed from the end of Church lane via a small existing former roadway to the east, see Site Location Plan extract below. The site is bounded by Cornthwaite Park to the south, the Cricket ground to the east, The Close to the west and former Whitburn Hall, now demolished and replaced with a major residential apartment building to the north.

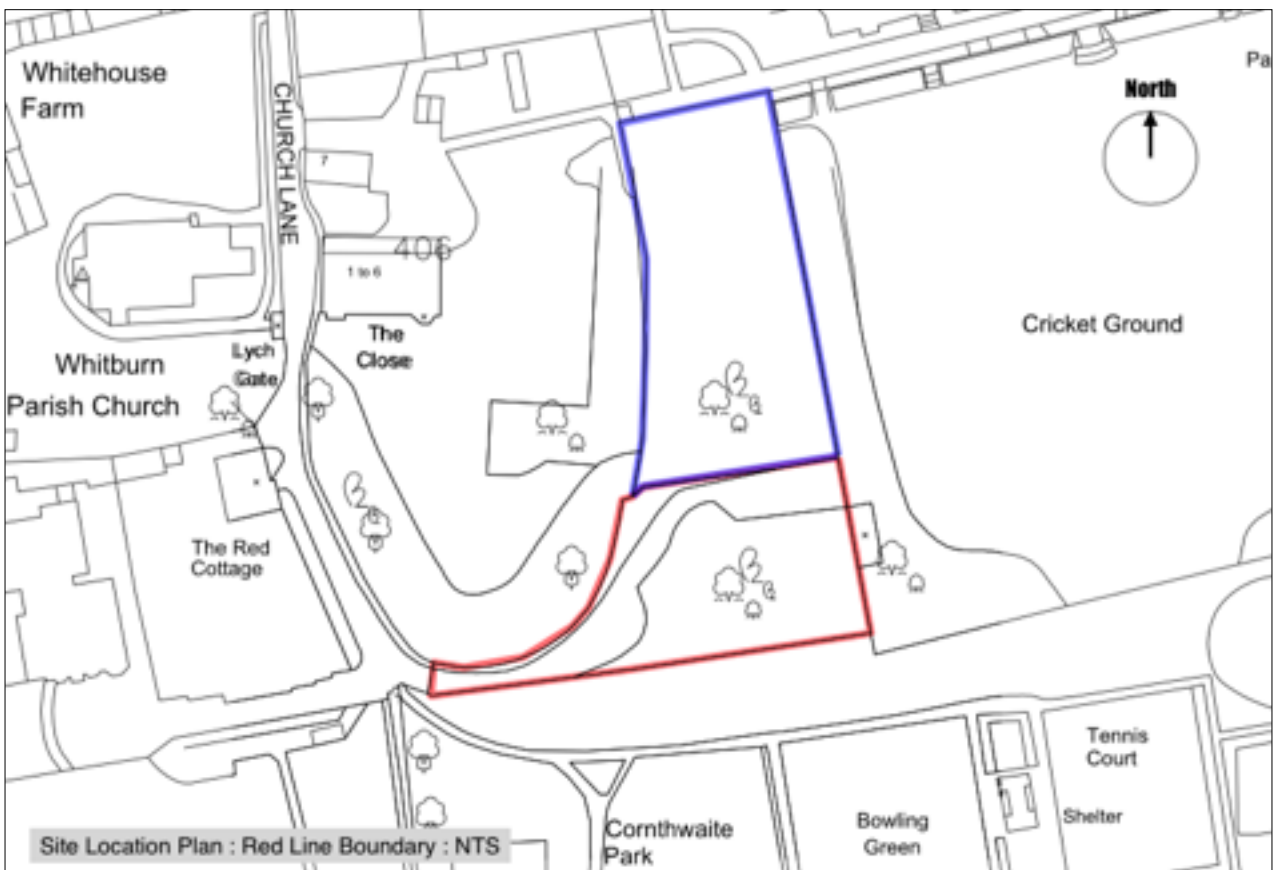
The site itself is bounded by old walls constructed of local stone to the south, east and west. To the north along an east west alignment is a stone wall with dressed oval openings and an earlier section of wall containing triangular shaped vent openings and a former doorway. This wall, which is in a very poor state of repair, forms the northern boundary of the application site. Within the proposed development area there is a raised area of scrub land and an area of hardstanding around the northern boundary of the site. To the north,

a narrower finger of land extends between the Close boundary wall and the Cricket ground. Along a north south axis are a series of pillars with dressed stone caps. This part of the site is wooded and does not form part of the planning application site.

The site and surrounding area was visited on the 3rd January 2015. The weather was sunny, with good visibility. The site visit comprised a walk across the site and the area surrounding the site, including a walk around the village of Whitburn.



Photograph 2 - within the site looking south



The Submitted Proposal

The submitted proposal is for 5 new dwellings in terrace form within the southern section of the site, with private gardens facing onto Cornthwaite Park. The rear will be a series of simple timber structures with green roofs designed to provide a dry location for cars. The structures will not have sides, but supported on simple posts to better reveal the historic wall to the north. The existing wall will be repaired using the existing material on site and any new to match the existing. The current submission has been amended from the previous submission:

- The number of dwellings has been reduced from six to five;
- The footprint, scale and massing have also been reduced. The previous footprint for 6 dwellings was 545 sqm. The new revised proposal for 5 dwellings is 425 sqm. This is a reduction of 120 sqm floor area to the footprint of the building. (The previously approved residential scheme on the site consisted of 3 apartments and 2 dwellings in one building that had a footprint area of 415sqm);
- The distance between the historic tithe barn wall and the north elevation has increased to 14m minimum to 16m max (west to east);
- The distance between the wall to the cricket club and the east elevation has increased to 2.6m;
- The distance between the park boundary wall and the south elevation has increased. The rear gardens have increased to 8 - 9m in length with garden areas between 70sqm to 100sqm;
- Timber carport canopies with green roofs raised to allow improved views of the existing historic stone wall;
- The south elevation to Cornthwaite Park has been redesigned in accordance with the STMBC urban designer's comments. More glass has been added at ground floor level which creates a unique internal space and emphasises the additional external stonework at the upper level;
- Trees to be retained are shown on the submitted report and plan by All About Trees Ltd; and,
- The landscape design has been revised to incorporate these changes;

Planning History

The subject site has previously had been granted planning permission for a scheme in 2006 which comprised 3 apartments and 2 dwellings within one building. Planning permission for this proposal has now expired. In 2014 a scheme was put forward by Fitz Architects for 6 separate units. The design of the new build, encouraged through the pre-application process, was to put forward a scheme of 'high quality contemporary housing built in a terrace but articulated to resemble distinct separate units' (South Tyneside Council). The Council have encouraged terrace form as individual units spread across the site would be contrary to the

general character of the built form in this part of the Conservation Area, which is typically large buildings set within grounds. An application (ST/0517/14/FUL) was submitted in 2014. The Historic Building's Officer (HBO) commented on the submitted scheme stating that 'high quality contemporary design in the Conservation Areas is supported' and that the submitted proposal was considered high quality (9th October 2014) and acknowledged the proven record of Fitz Architects in other parts of Tyne and Wear. The HBO raised queries in regard the the loss of trees and the proximity of the building to the park boundary line. This application was withdrawn pending further clarification.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework

In March 2012 the government published guidance for all applications in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In this document there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development unless policies within the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. At paragraph 17 the core planning principles are set out and these principles underpin decision making. One of these core principles is to 'conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'.

In considering changes to the historic environment, paragraph 131 states that account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring.

Paragraph 137 states that LPA's should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance and better reveal their significance.

National Planning Policy Guidance

This is the Government's guidance on interpreting the National Planning Policy Framework. The guidance gives advice on topics such as interpreting significance. Significance is defined as the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest.

South Tyneside Development Management Policies December 2011

Policy DM6 of the DMP states that '*we will support development proposals that protect, preserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character and heritage, visual appearance and contextual importance of our heritage assets and their settings*'. This includes the historic settlement cores, distinctive open spaces and boundary walls for Whitburn. The supporting text states that development proposals must be designed to convey sensitive consideration of their surroundings, enhance their local setting and reinforce local identity, having particular regard to scale, proportions, alignment, form, use of materials and architectural detailing.

South Tyneside LDF - Site Specific Allocations April 2012

Under Policy SA9 Living in South Tyneside - New Housing Opportunities the land at Church Lane is allocated for 5 dwellings.

Whitburn Conservation Area Appraisal

Whitburn Conservation Area was designated in 1973. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Whitburn was written in 2006. Within the appraisal the village is summarised as being a rich collection of mainly 18th and 19th century buildings of great architectural character and charm with a deep green setting and abundant mature trees. Front street is dominated by high quality dwellings and open spaces help define the development pattern of the village. Local magnesian and redbrick walls make striking additions to the street scene.

In respect of form, the appraisal refers to the predominant building type as being detached or terraced houses with a pitched roof, at 2 -3 storey's. The dominant historic houses are described as 'well informed architect-designed buildings including a wide range of eclectic Victorian dwellings'. The range of different styles described within the Appraisal from Gothic revivalism to Arts and Crafts reinforces the varied styles with the underlying theme of the use of high quality materials and attention to detail. Terraces built in one (Nos.73-83 North Guards) are referred to as important to the character of the Conservation Area.

The subject site is mentioned in the appraisal as previously having an ancient Tithe Barn which was destroyed by a bomb in WWII. Then a house was built on the site, Church Lane House, which was demolished following a fire in the early 2000's. The Appraisal states that new development to replace it should be high in quality, and retain boundary walls and trees.

Key characteristics of the Conservation Area are noted to be limestone and brick boundary walls, medieval street pattern and a fine balance of 18th and 19th Century houses, some of eclectic design. The subject site is included within the key issues as likely to come forward for re-development. The historic structures and spaces within the grounds of the former Whitburn Hall are considered to have enhancement potential.

South Tyneside LDF - SPD 12 - Whitburn Conservation Area Management Plan 2007

The aim of the management plan is to set out objectives for protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area. This document identifies the individual character areas of the Conservation Area, together with buildings and structures which are locally listed or form significant boundary walls which make a valued contribution to the character of the area.

The subject site falls into Character Area 1 which is formed by the historic core centred on Front Street and Church Lane and the open spaces to the south. The statement of significance refers to the historic boundary walls making an important contribution to the character of the area and important architectural features of the demolished Whitburn Hall (some of which are believed to fall within the boundary of the subject site). The key issues and vulnerabilities of the site include the physical condition of historic fabric and to monitor where repair may be necessary. As part of this the actions that relate to the subject site include seeking to re-instate historic boundary walls and ensure repairs or reinstatement works are carried out appropriately.

SIGNIFICANCE

Understanding Significance

In order to understand the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset the key is to understand the significance of the asset by understanding its history of development. Annex 2 of NPPF sets out the definition of significance. It states that it is the 'value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage assets physical presence, but also from its setting.'

English Heritage state in its guidance notes Conservation Principles (2008) that the significance of a place embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage values that people associate with it. These values tend to grow over time as understanding deepens and evolves. In making the assessment consideration should be given to the inter-related heritage values which may be attached to a place. (p. 27) These range from evidential to historical, aesthetic through to communal values which derive from people's identification with the place. An assessment of the significance and the impact of the proposal on the significance is set out in the text below.

English Heritage have also produced additional guidance setting out methodologies for assessing historic areas. Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments in a Planning and Development Context has also been used as part of the methodology use in assessing the significance of the Conservation Area.

Building in Context (2001), published by CABE and EH also provides guidance in respect of getting the right development in the historic environment. English Heritage Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets 2011 has also been consulted.

In gathering evidence to assess the significance a number of sources have been consulted including the Historic Environment Record, The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, and online sources such as South Tyneside Council website and Images of England.

Assessment of Significance: Whitburn Conservation Area

The significance of Whitburn Conservation Area can be derived from a number of different but interconnected values based on the evidence on site and through research. They are considered to be:

- historical value
- aesthetic value,
- communal value

The importance of these values are derived from the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and wider cartographic and desk based research undertaken into the history of the village.

Historical Value - Whitburn village is medieval in settlement pattern and the first written evidence of the village is in the Boldon Book of 1183. The name 'Whitburn' maybe derived from 'whitberne' which means a freshwater stream or burn. Another interpretation is 'Kwit-Berne' which is an Anglo Saxon word for tithe barn, which was located on the subject site.

The early village was remote and developed introspectively to protect it and livestock from border raids. As the village expanded, its location close to the sea meant that much of the village initially relied on fishing and salvage from wrecks as well as farming for income. However from the 1850's the population increased and attracted wealthy industrialists, each of whom added their own particular style on the village. The church was a key building together with some of the buildings including The Rectory (now the Close) on Church Lane, The Red Cottage built for Thomas Barnes the brick maker and Whitburn Hall (now demolished).



The subject site originally formed part of the farm and was a storage area for produce and livestock. A long barn appears to occupy the site in 1817 which by 1854 appears to have been joined by additions and another barn close the southern boundary wall. In 1854 the map shows there is access around the north of the long barn with a smaller building to the south. The garden to the north belongs to the Rectory.



A Tithe barn which stood on the subject site until the 1940's was of considerable age, but it was lost during a bombing raid in the Second World War. Tithe barns are normally associated with the church - a tithe was one tenth of the produce that

was usually given to the church. Its position close to the church and former rectory reinforces this relationship and purpose. Early maps mark the area as 'the Rector's Farmyard'. There appears, from the 1817 maps, to have been other agricultural buildings that linked to the older Tithe Barn. However, after the war all links with the agricultural use were either lost or demolished and a residential dwelling was built in its place in the 1950's. The existing walls that enclose the site allude to earlier features, perhaps relating to earlier buildings area clearly of important historic and aesthetic value. The walls are currently in various states of disrepair

By 1896 the maps shows the boundaries have changed ownership and the land to the north of the subject site has now become part of the landscaped Whitburn Hall estate, owned by the Williamson Family. The Hall dominated the village for 400 years before it was demolished in 1980. The former long barn has become a shorter barn tucked into the NE corner of the site. It is possible that the east - west wall is altered around this time by the Whitburn Hall estate to incorporate the decorative oval shaped openings within the wall with dressed surrounds when a woodland walk was designed within the grounds. This would then provide glimpse and framed views through from the estate to the land beyond. This would be consistent with other decorative features in the grounds of the estate which survive today.

By 1959 the map extract of the site shows that the barn has gone and Church Lane House built on the site which was itself later demolished. An aerial photograph of Church Lane House together with the east west wall that runs across the site is contained within Appendix A of this report.



The historical value of the site is considered to be of medium to high value, although its early links to the church have and agriculture have been lost, this is consistent with the development of the village as a whole. Various buildings of different forms and uses have occupied the site over the last 200 years.

Aesthetic value - Whitburn is a classic 'village green' type, commonly found across the former County Durham, and also evident elsewhere in the North East. Thomas Sharp, in his book 'Anatomy of the Village'¹, refers to County Durham as being particularly rich in these types of village. Their form created out of the necessity of defence where cattle and sheep could be driven in times of border raiding. The central elongated green areas later developed an important market and trading function. Pevsner describes the village of Whitburn as 'uncommonly attractive'², he states that from the sea front looking NW it appears embedded in trees.

The built form of the village is very typical of north eastern villages with a strong predominance of local stone and slate buildings, some rendered and later with brick and slate. Houses line the B1299 in a mix of terrace form, linked to each other with vennels or ginnels which lead to the rear of the buildings, and separate individual buildings. To the south of the B1299 the character changes, as noted within the appraisal and there is a predominance of individual buildings set within larger grounds

In terms of building design, there are some unusual, eclectic and bespoke designs of high quality buildings which stand out. Among those close to the subject site is the Red Cottage, designed for Thomas Barnes, the owner of a brick factory. In the design of his building, he wanted an example of every type of brick made by his company within the building. Consequently the building is decorative, highly ornate and unique. Whitburn House and Lodge also stand out as mock Tudor dwellings with timber and render along with the Limes, a large Victorian Mansion. Georgian town houses and Victorian homes nestle in together, with the common theme of being buildings of unique or interesting design but of high quality. Photographs of these buildings are within Appendix B at the end of this report.



Whitburn Parish Church forms the centre piece of the village, being slightly raised, its 75 ft square tower topped with a spire is a dominant feature in views into and within the village. The former Rectory, now divided into flats and known as the Close, is a large imposing building set within its own grounds.

¹ Anatomy of the Village, Thomas Sharp, 1946

² Buildings of England: County Durham - N Pevsner 1983

Currently the aesthetic value of the site is considered to be very low due to its deteriorating condition, but the quality of the built environment around the site is considered to be high with key buildings which form key interest within the village.

Communal Value - To the visitor, the village of Whitburn is a much cared for and neatly presented village. Cornthwaite Park is well maintained with an enclosed children's play area and mature planted borders. The subject site, however, is in a poor state with shrubs and weeds. The site is relatively secluded and as a consequence has become subject to vandalism with debris and litter scattered across the site. Although the village more generally is considered to be of high communal value, the subject site does not make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and at present is in stark contrast to the rest of the village.

The communal value attached to the site is considered to be low and at odds within a village that appears to attach a high value to communal parts of the village.



CONCLUSION

In assessing what is significant about the Conservation Area, a number of themes have emerged. These are principally:

- High quality design;
- Bespoke design;
- High quality materials;
- Mature tree cover;
- Setting of large buildings in own grounds to the south of the Conservation Area;
- Ribbon development around the central green and road to the north of the Conservation Area;
- Agricultural and maritime links were important parts of village life, but are less evident now.

Assessment of the impact of the proposal on Significance

The subject site has an important role in understanding the significance of the Conservation Area, although much of its earlier agricultural use has been lost in later changes and alterations. The very origins of the name

of the village may relate to this site. The site has played a role in supporting the village church and the wider village over the last 200 years. Evidence of former buildings and uses which may relate to the tithe barn, the later house or indeed to Whitburn Hall before it was demolished are all key parts of evidence that help to understand what makes this part of the Conservation Area special. In recent times, and for some considerable time, the subject site has been abandoned, in part due to the loss of both Whitburn Hall and the change in ownership of the land and the demolition of the later house on the site. In this respect, proposals for development are considered that they will enhance the significance of the Conservation Area through the careful and appropriate repair of the surrounding walls, in particular the historic and decorative northern boundary wall (refer to specifications for the repair of the wall Fitz Architects submitted with this application) and the use of the site and consequent maintenance consistent with the rest of the village.

In terms of the impact of the proposed new development on the significance of the Conservation Area, the principle of 5 new units on the site is established through Policy SA9 which allocates 5 units on the site, therefore the design of the new building is very important. The Architects have undertaken detailed pre-application discussions with the Council and the Historic Building Officer on all aspects of the proposal and in particular, design. The objective has been to develop a scheme of high quality contemporary housing that takes the form of one building, rather than individual units, to replicate the character of this particular part of the Conservation Area, as set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal Character Area 1. It is considered that an important part of what makes the Conservation Area at Whitburn significant is the mix of traditional buildings, which includes terraces, with the bespoke, eclectic style which cannot be attributed to one form of predominance within the village, but is an essential part of the character. It is these buildings in particular, that make such a valuable contribution to the Conservation Area because they are unique.

The footprint of the proposed new development of 5 units is constrained by the existing trees and walls within the site. It is considered that the existing mature trees that lie to the north make a valuable contribution to amenity in terms of screening and setting of the village and it is important to retain these. The walls, some of which are in poor condition, will be repaired and maintained in consultation with the Council as they are considered to be an important part of the history of the site, in particular the north east section of wall which the County Archaeologist considers comprises the remains of the former Tithe barn, including the triangular vents and former doorway. Therefore a gap between the building footprint and the boundary walls is necessary both for maintenance and repair as well as protection during the construction phase. It is considered that a proposal that is set away from the historic walls will better reveal the boundary walls. The submitted proposal retains the distinct shape of the original boundary that was established in the 1817 map, without the need to break it up for individual properties.

The design of the proposed 5 new dwellings is characteristic of contemporary design and this is explained in greater detail in the Design and Access Statement. The proposal, when considered in the round, takes into account a range of 21st Century issues, including to mitigate the effects of climate change. In developing the advice provided by the Council at pre-application stage, the proposal has been designed to be a modern interpretation of the terrace form familiar to the village and the North East. The traditional roof pitch has been

articulated to incorporate a light well to take advantage of the evening sun setting in the west. The mono pitch roof design not only allows evening light to filter through it also breaks up what could otherwise be a large and dominating roof feature adding interest to this elevation. The south facing orientation of the buildings will maximise gains from the passive solar energy to increase its energy efficiency along with the well insulated building envelope.

Each unit will be accessed separately with garden space to the south, setting the built form back from the Cornthwaite Park boundary. The proposed materials are proposed to be high quality. The character of the local area is reflected in the use of render, (as found along the main street and the Close) natural stone, as is predominant in boundary walls within the area. The survey of existing trees to be retained and new trees to be planted by All About Trees is submitted with this application together with the landscape proposals with the aim to further soften the southern boundary and to compliment the existing planting within Cornthwaite Park.

Policy Considerations

Para 131 of the NPPF states that LPA's should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset. The impact of the proposal is considered to be positive and therefore will at least sustain and is considered to enhance the significance of the Conservation Area. The elements that make up the significance of the Conservation Area, such as individual design and high quality materials are considered to be reflected in the submitted design. The proposed contemporary design, follows advice already provided by the Council and continues the tradition of bespoke, high quality designed buildings that is long established within Whitburn. Just as Thomas Barnes wanted to use every type of brick produced in his factory for his show piece Red Cottage, the appearance of the proposed building uses knowledge gained about good architecture, high quality durable materials that reflect local distinctiveness and increase energy efficiency are issues that are pertinent to the 21st Century. In contrast to the decorative and embellished Victorian Red Cottage, the proposed building lines are minimal, and crisp with glazing to allow greater inter visibility and light. The submitted proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with para 131 of the NPPF.

Para 137 encourages LPA's to look for opportunities for new development to better reveal the significance of the heritage asset. Para 138 states that not all elements of a Conservation area contribute to its significance and it is considered that the visual appearance of this site, as it currently stands, detracts from the Conservation Area and is noted in the Appraisal and Management Plan to be a key action area. However, the historic significance of this site is considered very high. Valuable undesignated heritage assets within the site, which relate to former Whitburn Hall, are rapidly deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and on going vandalism. This proposal has included within its remit to ensure that the historic walls and boundaries within the site are repaired to avoid losing it altogether. In addition passive surveillance provided by the new dwellings will minimise the risk of future vandalism to these important assets. It is therefore considered, that through pre-application discussions with the Council together with the stated proposal to carefully and appropriately repair the boundary walls, together with the niches, doorway's and other evidence of previous activity found within the wall, that the significance and importance of this part of the Conservation Area will be

better revealed and safer to access. The submitted proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Para 137

In terms of design, para 56 of the NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Para 58 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history of an area whilst not discouraging appropriate innovation. It is considered that the submitted proposal achieves this by the design of terrace housing (as encouraged by South Tyneside Council), which continues the theme of the appearance of large individual buildings set in generous plots as is generally found in the part of the Conservation Area. Given its proximity to Cornthwaite Park individual roof articulation has helped to reduce the massing of the building, which is also reduced by the natural screening provided by existing planting within Cornthwaite Park. The submitted proposal is therefore considered to also be in accordance with para 58 of the NPPF.

SUMMARY

In the context of the historic environment, the submitted proposal is considered to be in accordance with relevant National and Local planning policy as set out above. Moreover, this proposal also supports an objective of the Conservation Area Management Plan, that is to address the enhancement potential presented by repairing the historic wall formerly part of the Whitburn Hall estate and the remaining evidence of the former Tithe Barn. This proposals also meets the criteria set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

APPENDIX A

Aerial Photograph of Church Lane House, now demolished.



East- West Wall complete with Oval shaped openings

APPENDIX B

Examples of built form within Whitburn



APPENDIX C

Photographs of the Site



Within the site looking east



From Cornthwaite Park, looking north into the site