



North Tyneside A Landscape and Townscape Character Description

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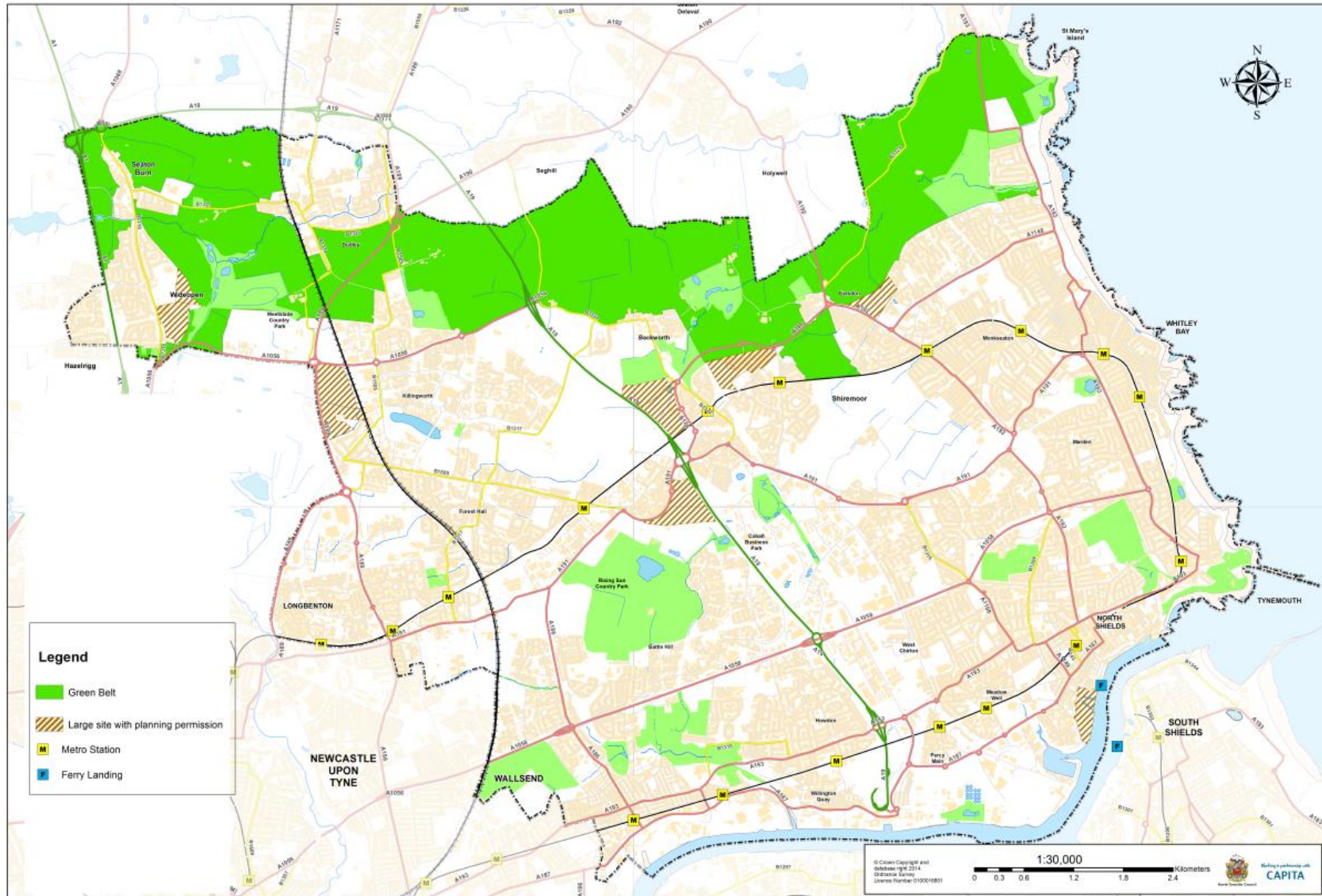
Introduction

This note considers the diversity and quality of the urban and rural landscape character of North Tyneside. The purpose of the paper is to provide a strategic outline of the current condition, density, quality and unique character of North Tyneside.

This will help inform production of the North Tyneside Local Plan, providing a source of evidence that can be referred to in developing policies for the Plan and in understanding the potential impacts of proposed development and growth on existing landscape character.

Please see Figure 1, below, for a map of the Borough.

Figure 1: North Tyneside in Context



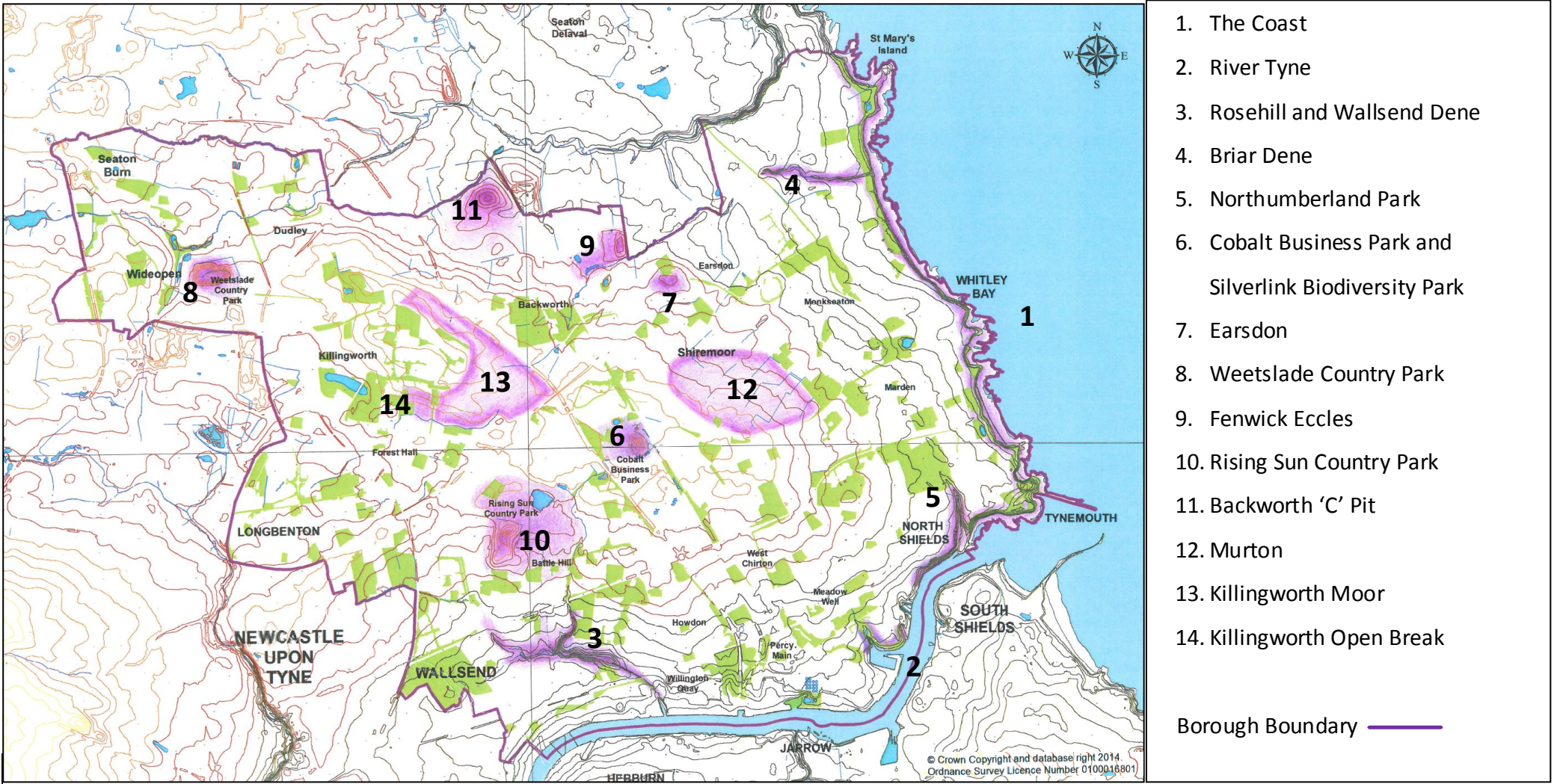
Overview of North Tyneside

The Borough of North Tyneside embraces a unique combination of contrasting urban, rural, coastal and riverside environments. It is bounded by the North Sea to the East and the River Tyne to the South; whilst Newcastle City is to the West and Northumberland to the North. North Tyneside is predominately an urban landscape which is bisected east/west by the A19 and north/south by the A1058 Coast Road.

The Borough has no single main centre. Instead, it includes the four town centres of Wallsend, North Shields, Whitley Bay and Killingworth. There is substantial out of centre retail floorspace at the Silverlink Retail Park, at the junction of the A19 and A1058, and at Royal Quays, close to the Port of Tyne. There are a number of District and Local Centres associated with residential areas.

Within the Borough are several landscapes that are of particular note; these will be flagged up in the following discussion. Figure 2, below, highlights their location.

Figure 2: Landscapes of Note



1. The Coast
 2. River Tyne
 3. Rosehill and Wallsend Dene
 4. Briar Dene
 5. Northumberland Park
 6. Cobalt Business Park and Silverlink Biodiversity Park
 7. Earsdon
 8. Weetslade Country Park
 9. Fenwick Eccles
 10. Rising Sun Country Park
 11. Backworth 'C' Pit
 12. Murton
 13. Killingworth Moor
 14. Killingworth Open Break
- Borough Boundary** ———

Coast and River

The coastline (1 on Figure 2) and River Tyne (2) are strong features, as is the fringe of the Borough which is predominately rural in character.

The River Tyne has played a key role in the history, identity and growth of the Borough and today remains an important transport and economic resource. There are many views across the river to South Tyneside and out to the North Sea. The riverside is mostly developed, with industrial, retail, leisure and residential uses.

The topography ranges from areas of flat land hugging the river bank, reclaimed from tidal mudflats in western parts to the very steep banksides at Fish Quay in the east. The river mouth is marked by the Fish Quay's four lighthouses and in the distance, the piers at Tynemouth and South Shields. At this point, Tynemouth Priory and Castle are landmarks at the headland and the feel is more coastal.

An open feeling unites the coastal section of the Borough, although the south feels more bustling than the north. This is due to the presence of the Links and the agricultural land in the very north, which lower the development density. Beaconsfield in Tynemouth also has this affect too.

Residential uses dominate along the coast and those directly adjacent to the coast are generally have a grandeur, especially at Tynemouth Village and Cullercoats. The coastline itself consists of an assortment of sandy sweeps and dunes (Tynemouth Longsands), bays (Cullercoats, King Edwards), man-made promenades (Whitley Bay) and rocky foreshores (St. Mary's). This mixture of environments makes the North Tyneside coastline one of great beauty and interest.

The open character of the coast allows significant buildings to become even more prominent and real landmarks North Tyneside. These are St. George's Church with its tall spire, the Spanish City with its white dome and the iconic St. Mary's Island and Lighthouse.

Topography

The topography of the Borough is very much dictated by the presence of a coastline and river. Figure 2 shows that ground height falls towards these, and also around the other watercourses of Wallsend Dene (3), Briar Dene (4), Holywell Dene and Pow Dene within the Victorian Northumberland Park in North Shields (5), the topography generally dipping more steeply towards these latter features, creating deep incisions full of interest and attraction. Moving away, the topography reaches a peak in the central areas of the Borough around Killingworth, Northumberland Park and Cobalt Business Park, and continues north-westwards. Cobalt Business Park (6) is a significant landscape feature in the Borough, through a combination of its high land height and the sheer scale of the Park in both the height and bulk of its buildings, the number of them and the area they cover.

A further topographical feature in the Borough of particular note is Earsdon Village (7), which sits at the peak of a hill; its original name “Erdesdun” means “hill of red earth”. This position atop the hill is very evident when looking out beyond the conservation area and looking towards the conservation area – the Church of St. Alban sitting particularly proud high above the surrounding area.

Mining legacy

The topography and physical landform of the Borough has been affected by the legacy of coal mining. Following restoration, former spoil heaps have become pastures or country parks. Weetslade Country Park (8), Fenwick Eccles (9) and Rising Sun Country Park (10), and amenity ponds and lakes have been created (for example, Killingworth Lake). The former pit heaps in particular are very evident features in the Borough; they can be seen as undeveloped green areas from far and wide. Traces of former mining activity are also evident at the former Backworth C Pit (11) which forms a large mound within undeveloped surroundings at the far northern boundary of the Borough. Former waggonways are now popular transport routes that are evident as green ribbons throughout the Borough.

Open spaces

Within the Borough there are two large areas that have largely remained free from development and whilst not providing any forms or features of particular beauty, they do provide significant breaks in the urban area. The small village of Murton, although historic in origins has not retained much in terms of historic built fabric. It has, however, retained an isolated, rural setting (12) that provides a buffer between the Village and Shiremoor, Monkseaton and North Shields. This area comprises of a series of agricultural fields, mostly bordered by hedgerows that overall form a space that feels very rural indeed. Similar is the area known as Killingworth Moor (13) that provides a large space of rural character between the A19 and the built-up areas of Killingworth and Holystone.

On a smaller scale, but of no less significance, is the open land to the south of Killingworth Village, known as the Killingworth open break (14). It forms a valuable break between the Village and the built up areas of West Moor, Forest Hall and Palmersville to the south. It also forms an important part of the setting of Killingworth Village, providing a clean undeveloped backdrop characteristic of the very early relationship the settlement once had with rural land around it. Its significance is recognised in its own unique UDP policy.

Transport infrastructure

The Borough’s transport network also has a strong influence on the character of the Borough with the Coast Road A1058 creating a strong north south barrier and the A19 creating an equally significant barrier to the east and western parts of the Borough. Meanwhile the metro loop, frequently defined by embankments or cuttings commonly creates an additional separation between character areas in North Tyneside.

For example in Wallsend, to the north of the metro line is the fine grained development character of the town centre and high density late 19th/early 20th century terraced residential development whilst to the south is characterised by late 20th early 21st century residential infill schemes and large scale commercial and heavy industrial development connected to the riverside.

Natural England National Character Areas

North Tyneside falls within two of Natural England's National Character Areas (NCAs): 13 South East Northumberland Coastal Plain (NE498) and 14 Tyne and Wear Lowlands (NE483).

The Borough displays several features recognised as typical of these NCAs:

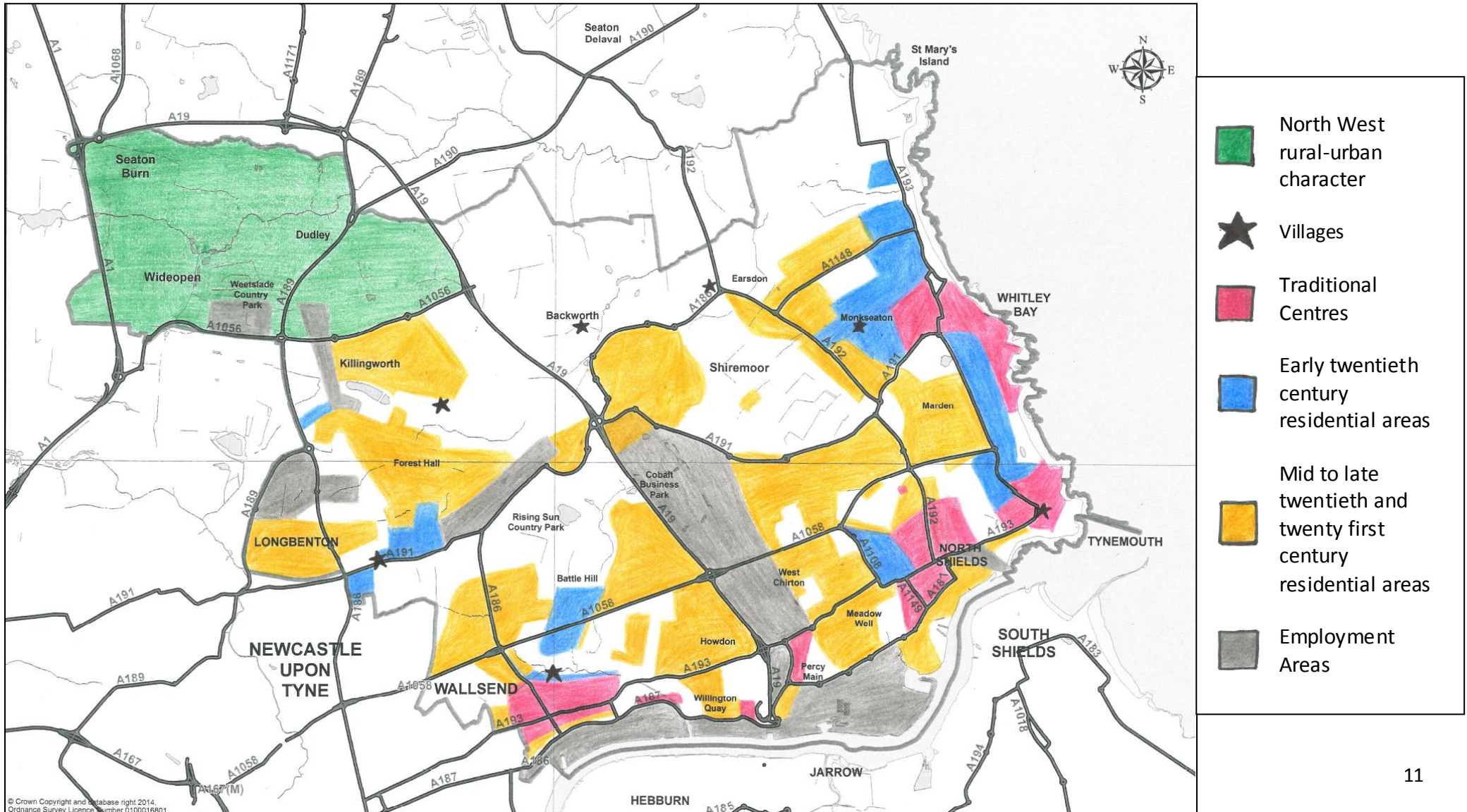
- largely urbanised,
- mining and its legacy's significant effect,
- incised by the valleys of the major rivers and their tributaries
- strong sense of landscape character created by the River Tyne and coastline¹.

¹ National Character Area Profile: 13 South East Northumberland Coastal Plain, Natural England, November 2013 and National Character Area Profile: 14 Tyne and Wear Lowlands, Natural England, September 2013

Development patterns in North Tyneside

How development has occurred over the years has also affected North Tyneside's landscape. Patterns of architecture, design and building density have created different areas with distinctive characteristics. For example, it is possible to see traditional centres expand to include more modern growth. These areas tend to merge into one another, whilst industrial areas tend to be set apart from residential sections. The different types development have been mapped in Figure 3, and explained in the discussion below.

Figure 3: Areas of Development



North West Character Area

The north west area of the Borough is quite distinct in character from the remainder. Within the north west is a collection of settlements: Camperdown, Burradon, Dudley, Annitsford, Fordley, Seaton Burn and Wideopen. Some parts of these settlements have several hundred years of history, but the areas as recognised today were primarily developed alongside the nearby collieries. Over the years, with the decline of the mining industry, and new building and regeneration projects, the areas have gained many different layers of development styles, which have left the settlements with little coherent identity. The majority of the built form now consists of typically medium density mid to late 20th century local authority and private semi-detached and detached housing, with some pockets of older development. Whilst these settlements have origins as distinct villages, their expansion and eventual merging together (Burradon and Camperdown; Dudley, Annitsford and Fordley; Seaton Burn and Wideopen) sees them more recognisable as larger settlements. However, their semi-rural locations means that they do feel detached to the main built-up area of the Borough. The historic Great North Road runs through this area but aside from occasional evidence of early settlements (Seaton Burn is where this is most obvious) and a few roadside inns, the development along the route is piecemeal and non-defining.

The mining legacy is visible through the network of waggonways that cut through the area and the former colliery sites at Weetslade. Weetslade Country Park is a site of a former colliery that has been extensively landscaped to create a hill, grassland, scrub, reedbed and woodland areas, with the highest point 95m above sea level.

Most of this area is designated as Green Belt, which here and as it moves eastwards to the coast serves as a buffer physically separating the built-up areas of North Tyneside from those in Northumberland. The Green Belt consists mainly of agricultural fields that offer open aspects, with occasional associated farm buildings. There are few densely wooded areas, two exceptions being the ribbon of woodland surrounding Holywell Dene that forms the Borough's north east boundary, and the area of woodland surrounding Seaton Burn House in the north west.

Villages

North Tyneside has several villages of medieval origin distributed around the Borough. The most prominent are Longbenton, Killingworth, Backworth, Earsdon, Monkseaton and Tynemouth; all of which are designated as conservation areas and all share very similar attributes.

As is traditional of medieval village forms, the original settlement of these villages would have developed as a cluster of buildings at an appropriate point along a main linear route. These routes were main east-west routes through the area and would have mostly consisted of homes and farms. A subsidiary row would often be developed north and/or south of and parallel to the main route. The development would be inward-looking.

The early layout of the village's cores would have been based on a series of plots stretching away from the main street, each with a building pushed to the front of the plot to face the street. Many individual buildings were built up against each other forming strings of buildings with a linear edge. Behind this would have been secondary buildings and structures in gardens or yards, including cottages, barns and gin-gangs. There would have been some spaces in the street where this pattern would not have existed, where larger homes and their grounds took up much of the land. This can be seen, for example, at Benton House in Longbenton and Killingworth Hall in Killingworth.

This development pattern remains within modern surrounding development in the villages. However, despite this survival, none of the buildings themselves date from medieval times, but there is still much historic fabric, some of which dating from the early 17th century, but mostly from Georgian and Victorian times.

All villages have seen change and growth over the centuries. Later insertions and redevelopment tend to follow layouts and densities typical of the time. Some villages, notably Killingworth and Backworth, tend to feature more 20th/21st century development than older development. Some of the villages associated with a nearby train station have grown more than others and now exist within a wider suburban area. These are Tynemouth, Monkseaton and Longbenton. Those not: Backworth, Earsdon and Killingworth, have remained much more isolated and thus have a much more traditional village feel, with mostly green, undeveloped space around them.

Also medieval in origin, but different to the other such Borough villages is the Green, Wallsend. Similarly developed along a main route and strongly introspective, this village also incorporates a village green. Despite the rapid and dense growth of the surrounding area in the 19th/20th centuries, the village green (one of only two traditional village greens in Tyne and Wear) has survived as an identifiable village core, albeit almost entirely lined by later buildings of different ages. Although the Green itself has not escaped surrounding modern development, sufficient survives of its original plan and early development for its historic importance to be recognised and protected with conservation area status.

Traditional Centres

These centres are based on areas that saw rapid development around the time of industrial revolution at the end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century. They are generally located near the coast or riverside, with Wallsend, North Shields, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay being the most notable.

As the name suggests, the retail centres remain at the core of these areas. As they cater for large sections of the borough, the shopping areas tend to be bustling and full of life. They are a combination of high street shops and smaller local firms giving variety to each area. Variety is also in the different styles of these areas, for example Wallsend's high street is interspaced with grand municipal buildings and Tynemouth's is developed from a traditional village core. Whilst popular, there are some areas which could be improved both in terms of retail offer and appearance.

Surrounding the commercial areas are rows of terraced housing, where they form a rigid grid iron pattern. Whilst the pattern continues further out, they tend to become more relaxed but still retain a high density. For example, to the north of North Shields housing tends to be built in outward facing squares, with backstreets running through them whilst in Whitley Bay streets are more varied as the streets follow the coastal headland. Throughout the terraces, street layout is occasionally broken up with allotments and small green spaces.

Development has also been shaped by the views towards the river and coast. Tynemouth has the grand crescent of Percy Gardens turning its back on the main centre and facing the coast. In North Shields, a Georgian new town runs north to south with direct views to the river at the bottom. Areas like these tend to be more spacious and greener, compared to the denser development that surrounds them.

Smaller traditional centres at Willington Quay, Percy Main and Preston also follow these patterns.

Early to mid twentieth century residential areas

Later residential areas were built as extensions to traditional centres. They share layout patterns with the earlier development, but dwellings tended to be larger with more private outdoor space.

Pockets of this later development can be found as extensions to the traditional centres of Wallsend, North Shields, Whitley Bay and Tynemouth. Battle Hill developed from Wallsend. Here development style becomes split, as north of the Coast Road tends to retain more of the grid iron pattern, compared to the south where streets are more curved. The area is still fairly densely developed and tends to be inward facing. Later development in North Shields and Whitley Bay, on the other hand, retains the grid iron pattern but each section is over a larger area. This, alongside the larger housing and more garden space, makes the streets feel larger. The extension to Tynemouth is restricted by Tynemouth Golf Course to the west

and the coast to the east. This has resulted in shorter streets and a more relaxed grid pattern.

Expansion development of this period also surrounds the villages of Longbenton and Monkseaton. Further information about these areas can be found in the *Traditional Villages* section. Both retain the grid iron pattern, but it is more relaxed in some parts of Monkseaton and can be denser in Longbenton. Streets are wide and pleasant, with trees and large gardens. The railway is also a key feature in Monkseaton, curving through the built environment in its tree lined route.

Mid to late twentieth century and twenty first century residential areas

In the mid to late 20th and early 21st century, the urban areas of the Borough grew from the traditional centres and earlier development. These areas contain a range of uses including shops, offices, open spaces and schools, but are predominately residential in nature.

Residential growth from this period is relatively low density, mostly comprising of semi-detached or detached housing, with a good amount of private garden space. Street layouts are much less uniform than earlier development. Curved streets and cul-de-sacs are prevalent, especially in the most recent development.

A large proportion of the development of this period is made up of Local Authority housing estates from the mid 20th century. They are mostly low density, although higher in density where there are flats rather than houses. These estates have been developed allowing plenty of public open space. Although all have seen some more modern development, areas such as Longbenton, Howdon and Meadowell typify such mid 20th century estates.

A unique housing development in the Borough is Killingworth Township. The township was developed in the 1960s to new town principles. It has an individual modernist design based on a castle with a central citadel (town centre), a drawbridge-style road over a lake and garths of housing radiating from a road circulating around the citadel. For most of its history, Killingworth has been subject to redevelopment, with many original buildings lost and replaced with more modern housing, and those remaining refurbished in a way that removed their unique modernist character. Despite the changes, the original development concept does survive in the main.

Although all areas of the Borough have seen 21st century development through redevelopment or infill schemes, the central area of the Borough has seen most growth in this kind of development as thus is characterised by it. This kind of housing is low density, has large rear gardens and gardens at the front that usually do not have boundary treatments, adding further to the low density feeling. The street layouts are informal with winding streets and cul-de-sacs.

Employment Areas

North Tyneside has employment areas across the Borough that specialise in different industries. These vary in size with smaller sites, such as Foxhunters in Whitley Bay, and larger areas which are discussed below.

The riverside at Wallsend has been historically an area of heavy industry as it was a major hub for ship building. Much of this character that developed through that period still remains. Today it is defined by large industrial units interspersed by significant areas of concrete hardstanding. These buildings and areas are generally screened from wider view by buffers of trees and hedges. This provides limited opportunity for access to the general public either into the area or through the River itself. The roads and paths interlinking the different sites are generally quiet as there is little reason to visit. There are many views across the river to South Tyneside.

Many of the remaining industrial areas are focused on light industry. East of the Tyne Tunnel, where the riverside widens considerably, is the Port of Tyne. This area is typified by a large storage area for car exports, the currently unused former Esso site and Howdon Sewerage Works. This area feels very open in contrast to the denser industrial areas which precede it to the west. This area also has historic significance as the locks and lock gates date from the 1800s.

Stretching north from the Tyne Tunnel is a large area of trading estates. These areas are well screened with trees and foliage, often disguising the mass of the development to a person passing by. They are filled with industrial units of a variety of sizes branching off main arterial roads. Vacant green spaces are throughout the sites, providing breaks in the built up area. The Tesco's Chimney in the Tyne Tunnel Trading Estate reflects the longevity of the area in these uses as it was part of a Ministry of Supply Factory during World War II. It is a local landmark from the Coast Road.

Many of the characteristics of this area can also be seen in the Camperdown Business Park. Again, whilst large in scale the use of vegetation sees it having a low impact on the wider landscape.

Just south of Weetslade Country Park sits a reasonably substantial industrial area. The area features some mining-associated buildings and a collection of units of varying scale. Overall the density is quite low, possibly connected to the prevalent industries here: car and caravan works and sales. This area does have the potential to be developed further as the area to the north is being marketed for further light industry, Indigo Park. At 40,000 sq ft, if developed it is likely to have an impact on this landscape.

In comparison is the northern section of the Fish Quay. This area has historically been a place of industry, as units for the fishing industry and supporting trades developed around the quay. Buildings from that time still exist and much of the dense development pattern

remains. However, some of the buildings have fallen into disrepair and the area has lost some of the bustle that it once had.

Modern office development is also a key part of the employment land. At the crossroads of the A19 and Coast Road is Cobalt Business Park. A main road directs users through the site. Although the office blocks are tall generally four stories, and are very visible from the west of the Borough the wide road and spacious buildings layouts prevents it from becoming claustrophobic. The offices also benefit from the Silverlink Park which provides a large area of communal open space.

Sandwiched between Longbenton and West Moor are Gosforth, Quorum and Balliol business parks. Together these cover a large area as they are spacious in design and set back by green space. Whilst they are in close proximity of one another they do remain separate. The A188 separates Quorum, and a greener setting separates Gosforth and Balliol.

Further Information

This document is designed to provide an overview of North Tyneside's landscape. More detailed information can be found in the following locations.

Natural Environment

Assessments have taken place of the green spaces around North Tyneside. These are:

- The Green Space Strategy
- Green Infrastructure Strategy

Historic Environment

There are 17 Conservation Areas in the Borough, with 16 having character appraisals that provide further detail on their special character and appearance. These are:

- Benton
- Camp Terrace
- Cullercoats
- Earsdon Village
- Fish Quay
- Killingworth Village
- Longbenton Village
- Monkseaton
- New Quay
- Northumberland Square
- Preston Park
- Sacred Heart Church, Wideopen
- St Mary's Island
- St Peter's
- The Green, Wallsend
- Tynemouth Village

Certain aspects of the landscape have received awards for their high standards. These have been both for green spaces and the coast.

Green Flag Award Winners

- Benton Quarry Park
- Killingworth Lakeside Park
- The Rising Sun Country Park
- Marden Quarry Park

Green Flag Community Award Winners

- Brierdene

Blue Flag Award Winners

- Tynemouth King Edwards Bay
- Tynemouth Longsands South

- Whitley Bay

Seaside Awards

- Tynemouth Longsands
- King Edwards Bay
- Whitley Bay
- Cullercoats

Capacity Assessments

The following documents determine how much land will be required in the future for housing, employment, retail and leisure. How and where these uses are developed will have an impact on the future landscape of the area.

- Employment Land Review
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Retail and Leisure Assessment