



# Cockerton Conservation Area

## Character Appraisal



November 2006

Darlington Borough Council  
Cockerton Conservation Area  
Character Appraisal

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Introduction

- 1.1 This Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared by Building Design Partnership for Darlington Borough Council.
- 1.2 The Appraisal outlines the historical development of the Cockerton Green Conservation Area and defines the special interest, character and appearance of the built and natural environment within and adjoining the area.
- 1.3 Extensive use has been made of the recently-issued draft guidance from English Heritage:
  - a. Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, August 2005;
  - b. Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, August 2005.
- 1.4 Cockerton Village (also called Cockerton Green) Conservation Area was designated on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1968 by the then County Borough of Darlington, under the Civic Amenities Act 1967.

## 2.0 Planning Policy Context

### Introduction: What is a Conservation Area?

- 2.1 A Conservation Area is an ‘area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 2.2 The Council has a duty to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers. This appraisal will therefore contribute to providing a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine applications. It will also help in defending appeals against refusals of planning applications, which could have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. This appraisal also identifies what contributes towards the special character of the area and any negative or neutral features. This provides a useful base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement if the opportunity should arise through the planning system.
- 2.3 Every effort has been taken to include or analyse those elements that are key to the special character of the area. Where buildings, structures or features have not been specifically highlighted, it does not necessarily follow that they are of no visual or historic value to the Conservation Area. The document is intended to be an overall framework and guide, within which decisions can be made on a site-specific basis.
- 2.4 This Appraisal should be read in conjunction with the following policy documents, which provide information on local and national policy relating to Conservation Areas:
  - a. National planning policy, including Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990);
  - b. Local policy, including the Darlington Borough Council Local Plan (adopted 1997).

### National Policy

- 2.5 The Appraisal has been produced in line with the following Acts and guidance:
  - a. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990):
    - i. Section 71 places the local authority under a duty to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas”;
    - ii. Section 69 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to

preserve or enhance". The designation of a Conservation Area by the Council introduces additional planning controls that are intended to ensure that any alterations do not detract from an area's character or appearance and to conserve or improve the "special interest" of an area.

- b. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) of which Section 4 relates specifically to Conservation Areas;
- c. Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990);
- d. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004);
- e. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005);
- f. Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (English Heritage, August 2005);
- g. Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (English Heritage, August 2005).

### **Local Policy**

- 2.6 The Borough of Darlington Local Plan (adopted 1997) contains a comprehensive set of conservation policies, both general and specific to the Cockerton Green Conservation Area. A summary of relevant policies is provided in Appendix A: Borough Council Conservation Policies.
- 2.7 The Tees Valley Structure Plan was prepared on behalf of the five Tees Valley local planning authorities by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit; adopted by Darlington Borough Council in 2004. It provides a strategic framework for the Local Plans prepared by the five unitary authorities, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees. Policy ENV12 states that "The character and appearance of conservation areas and listed buildings, and their settings, will be protected, maintained and enhanced. New development which preserves or, where appropriate, enhances their character will be encouraged."

### *Development Control: Effects on Owners & Residents*

- 2.8 In normal circumstances, householders have certain permitted development rights to carry out certain minor works to their properties, such as the erection of garden buildings, front porches or satellite dishes. However in a Conservation Area these rights are much reduced. For example:
  - a. The consent of the Local Planning Authority is required for the demolition of buildings, whereas in normal circumstances, only notification is required.
  - b. The removal of boundary walls, fences and gates would require permission, if over 1m fronting a highway or 2m elsewhere.
  - c. The pruning or felling of trees requires six weeks prior notification.

- d. Any alterations to front elevations may require permission.
- e. Applications for proposals that affect the character or appearance of the area are advertised in local newspapers.
- f. Any new developments (including extensions) would be expected to be in keeping with the character of the area.

## 3.0 Assessment of Special Interest

### Introduction

- 3.1 This section of the report includes an assessment of:
- a. The special interest of the Conservation Area;
  - b. Location and setting;
  - c. Historic development;
  - d. Character analysis.

### A: Summary of Special Interest

- 3.2 The former village of Cockerton is situated to the western edge of Darlington, and is named after the Cocker Beck beside which it is situated. The village green sets the context for the Conservation Area, providing an open foreground and setting for characterful rows of 17th, 18th and 19th Century cottages, a number of which are Grade II listed. The former village still retains much of its rural character.
- 3.3 The special character of the area derives principally from the layout and setting of modest houses and cottages of a variety of ages arranged around the green, framed by large numbers of mature trees. The green itself is roughly rectangular, and dissected by the road to Archdeacon Newton which cuts diagonally across it. The open nature of the green provides a distinctly rural feel, with a Grade II listed granite fountain as its centrepiece.
- 3.4 The eastern part of the Conservation Area is centred on the 1970s Woodland Road shopping parade and library which presents a more modern character to the street scene.
- 3.5 The landscape slopes gradually from the Sugar Hill play area to the north west of the Green, to Woodland Road to the south east. The road to the north of the green is raised, providing good views of the cottages to the southern side. Aside from the green there are public open spaces to the south west of the Conservation Area including the fields between Staindrop Road and Newton Lane.

### B: Location and Setting

- 3.6 Darlington is a town of almost 100,000 people. It lies adjacent to the A1(M) and approximately 15km west of Middlesbrough. Local and national railway connections join in the town centre, including the East Coast Mainline, and the nearby A1(M) provides excellent north-south road links. The River Skerne runs through the town, joining the Tees 3km to the south.



- 3.7 Cockerton is a former village and busy shopping area approximately 2km west of Darlington town centre. The A68 runs along the northern edge of the Green, on its way from the A1(M) Junction 58 to the town centre.
- 3.8 The Conservation Area boundary is defined to the east by Woodland Road, to the south by Cocker Beck, to the west by West Beck, and to the north by a line which includes all those properties with frontages to Cockerton Green (see attached plan).
- 3.9 Cocker Beck provides a green link to open countryside to the west, and through the more densely built up neighbourhoods to the east where it joins the River Skerne at Northgate.

### **C: Historic Development**

#### *Early History*

- 3.10 Archaeological records show there to have been agricultural activity in the Darlington area since the early Neolithic period. It is believed that Darlington first emerged due to its protected south-facing aspect in the Skerne Valley, and its position at the best crossing point of the river.
- 3.11 There is no evidence of Roman or pre-historic habitation prior to the early medieval period in Cockerton, although this does not preclude the possibility of remains being found .

#### *Medieval/Pre-Industrial*

- 3.12 The name of Darlington appears to pre-date the Norman Conquest, being Anglian in origin and appearing in early records as 'Derthingtun' or 'Dearnington', a reference to the river Derne (source: Cookson, 2003), whereby the Bishop of Durham acquired the 'vill' of Dearthingtun, together with its dependent townships including the village of Cockerton (source: Cookson, 2003). However, Cockerton is also recorded in 1050 in the *Historia de Sancti Cuthberto*, in which it was called Cocertun (source: [www.keystothepast.info](http://www.keystothepast.info)). At this time the village was linked to Darlington via a street called Cockyrtongate, now known as Bondgate.
- 3.13 Bishop Hatfield's survey in 1380 shows that the cottages and farmlands of Cockerton were owned by the Bishop of Durham. Villagers paid yearly tithes to the Bishop, and many worked seasonally for him. Church registers from 1594 show that people living in Cockerton were attending St Cuthbert's Church in Darlington, a sign of increasing links between the town and the surrounding villages.

#### *Post-Industrial*

- 3.14 Until the turn of the 20th Century, cockerton had its own distinct character. The Ordnance Survey map of 1856 shows the Green as the focal point of the village, with residential properties clearly laid out in early Medieval 'Anglian' form. Cockerton was incorporated into Darlington Borough on 1st April, 1915.

- 3.15 In 1825 the National School was constructed on the northern edge of the Green. It was used as an air-raid shelter during the Second World War, but following the relocation of pupils after the war the school was demolished in 1960. The site became part of the village green, with the two paths across the green today skirting what was the school footprint.
- 3.16 Cockerton Hall, a large country house, was located to the east (on what is now Woodland Road) leading to Cockerton Bridge. Records are inconclusive as to when the Hall was built. It was owned by a series of industrialists, quakers and businessmen but, following a period of disuse, it was demolished in July 1964 to make way for a garden centre. The current shopping parade was developed on the site in the 1970s, which now forms the main gateway into the area along the A68 from the centre of Darlington.
- 3.17 The 1915 plan (enclosed) shows the development of Forcett Street and development south of Cocker Beck and around Cockerton Bridge, effectively joining Cockerton to Darlington.

#### *Social History*

- 3.18 Records indicate that until the 1780s around a third of the men in the village were employed in the linen trade, principally as weavers. Darlington developed rapidly in the 19th Century, particularly between the 1860s and 80s. Maps of the time show that in the 1880s Forcett Street and other terraces were built to the north eastern edge of the village to accommodate the growing army of workers.
- 3.19 By 1919 there was a shortfall of 4,000 homes in Darlington, largely due to a large influx of rail workers. The acute housing shortage led to four sites being approved for public housing, by far the largest of which was Cockerton at 82 acres, with frontages on Newton Lane and West Auckland Road. Percy S. Worthington was appointed as architect and the first tenants selected in 1921 to move into 200 new properties. The estate was further expanded from 1928 by local building contractor Bussey and Armstrong.
- 3.20 The Green has long been a focus for community events in the village. During the 1960s the 'Feast' fair arrived in Cockerton every August on its tour of local villages, with stalls, games and competitions for young and old. Events continue to be held on the Green, particularly during the festive season and at Royal Coronations; Cockerton Scouts and St. Mary's Church hold their annual summer fairs on the Green. The two churches around the Green hold parades there at Eastertide.

#### *Boundary Changes*

- 3.21 The original boundary of the Conservation Area was established in 1971. The boundary of the Conservation Area was extended in 1990 to include parts of the original village, distinct from the surrounding urban development. The extension included Aston Terrace, and proposed a revised boundary formed by West Beck and Cocker Beck. Also included was Woodland Road and shops on West Auckland Road, so as to provide Conservation Area controls on any development which would have a visual impact on the Conservation Area. Some backyards and workshops to the north of the village green were also added, as these areas were seen as being part of the original village. The southern boundary of the village is clearly defined by rows of

burgage plots, which extend from the rear of properties all the way to Cocker Beck. The western and northern boundaries are defined by the rear of residential gardens.

### C: Character Analysis

3.22 The character of Cockerton Green is defined by a number of elements:

- a. Strong street frontages: the edges of the village green are defined by an almost continuous development of cottages, many of which are Grade II listed. The two churches (St Mary's and the Methodist Church, both built in the mid 19th Century) contribute to a varied and interesting streetscape.
- b. The Village Green: the green provides an open, rural aspect to surrounding developments. It is the focal point of the village, and its northern edge is part of the A68, the main thoroughfare.
- c. Medieval Burgage plots: many plots still survive between the southern houses of the Green and Cocker Beck to the rear. In some cases characterful 'backland' development has taken place within the burgage plots, such as Aston Terrace built in the 1890s and located directly behind the Methodist Church. Elsewhere, developments have been located within plots such as at Hill Garth ('garth' being a historic name for paddock).

3.23 The listed buildings in the Conservation Area are included in the summary table below, and are shown on the attached photosheets.

**Table: Listed Buildings**

| List Reference | Address                      | Building                        | Grade | Summary Description                            |
|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|--|
| 1/272          | Cockerton Green (North side) | No. 76 incorporating No. 74     | II    | Substantial 2-storey C18 farmhouse             |
| 1/274          | Cockerton Green (North side) | Nos. 80 & 82                    | II    | Two 2-storey late C18 cottages                 |
| 1/276          | Cockerton Green (South side) | No. 19                          | II    | Late C18 2-storey 2-window cottage             |
| 1/279          | Cockerton Green (South side) | Nos. 39 & 39a                   | II    | Long, low C17 2-storey with modern doors.      |
| 1/281          | Cockerton Green (South side) | No. 43                          | II    | Mid C18 2-storey with end chimneys             |
| 1/282          | Cockerton Green (South side) | Nos. 59 & 61                    | II    | Late C18 cottages, each 2 storeys              |
| 1/283          | Cockerton Green (South side) | Nos. 63 to 67 (odd)             | II    | Late C18 cottages, each 2 storeys              |
| 1/285          | Cockerton Green (South side) | No. 79                          | II    | Mid-late C18, 2 storey                         |
| 1/288          | Cockerton Green (South side) | No. 103                         | II    | Late C17 or early C18, 2 storey                |
| 1/289          | Cockerton Green (West end)   | Nos. 107, 109 & 109a            | II    | Late C18 or early C19 cottages, 2 storey       |
| 1/290          | Cockerton Green (West end)   | Fountain near west end of Green | II    | Circa 1900 2-tier fountain of polished granite |
| 1/410          | Darlington                   | 178-180 Woodland                | II    | Pair of early C19 cottages                     |

## Character Areas

3.24 Two areas of distinct character can be identified within the Conservation Area:

- a. The Green - fronted predominantly by 17th, 18th and 19th century cottages, a number of which are listed;
- b. Woodland Road - consisting of more modern developments and where the townscape is of a neutral quality.

### *The Green Character Area*

3.25 The western half of the Conservation Area is characterised by the Green itself. It sets the context within which all buildings are seen, and provides an open foreground from which to gain longer views of the area. Many of the cottages are listed, and with adjacent dwellings from characterful runs of 17th, 18th and 19th century two-storey cottages. Of particular interest are the south and western edges of the village green, containing the groupings of listed cottages at 39-39a, 59-69, 79, 103 and 107-109a.

3.26 On the north side of the Green are the Grade II listed buildings at 80 and 82, now owned by the 8th Darlington (Cockerton) Scout Group. The building was once the Kyoie Inn, parts of which date back to the 17th century.

3.27 The character area also has a number of buildings of local interest:

- a. The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel II (47-51 Cockerton Green) was opened in 1875 on the site of Cockerton Methodist Chapel to accommodate 330 people. It is in a neo-Gothic style, in stone with a slate roof;
- b. St Mary's Church of England, built in the mid-19th Century is set back from the road and due to its size and prominence offers a varied streetscape in relation to the more humble two storey cottages that flank it;
- c. The 'Old Chapel' (92 Cockerton Green) was built in 1873 and is now a house on the north side of the village green. The chapel was in use until 1932;
- d. Aston Terrace, which was built in 1877 within the Methodist Church burgage plot to provide a rental income for the church.

3.28 Two more modern developments have a particular impact upon the Conservation Area:

- a. Planning permission has been granted recently for the redevelopment of Westfields House, a disused residential care home built in 1973 on the site of a farm known as Ivy House. Permission has been granted for "Proposed demolition of existing residential care home and erection of a residential development comprising 38 No. apartments and 5 No. town houses." It is likely that this development will have a positive impact on the character of the western end of the Conservation Area; and;

development comprising 38 No. apartments and 5 No. town houses". It is likely that this development will have a positive impact on the character of the western end of the Conservation Area; and

- b. The 'Waterside' housing development, built in the late 1980s, is situated to the southern edge of the Conservation Area. The layout and form of the development does not reflect the character of the area, or the boundaries of the burgage plots which it overlays.

#### *Woodland Road Character Area*

3.29 The eastern end of the Conservation Area largely consists of more recent developments. Key elements are:

- a. The 1970s shopping parades: 301-323 Woodland Road dominates the street scene, although it does have a pleasant grassed frontage. On the north side, 28-36 Cockerton Green are directly opposite the listed No. 19 and impinge upon the character of the green area itself.
- b. 1a to 1f West Auckland Road, which turn the corner of Cockerton Green have been significantly altered, although they still correspond to the historic layout.
- c. Cockerton Library, which opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1976. The building is fundamentally circular in plan but with a multi-faceted façade and shallow copper roof.
- d. The Squires Court retirement flat development, situated next to the library and opposite the listed 178-180 Woodland Road. This is a recent development in a mellow red brick with a slated roof, set back from the street frontage behind some landscaping.
- e. The Ruck Engineering site (182 Woodland Road), which although located outside the Conservation Area has a negative effect on its setting and gateway entrance from the town centre.

#### *Architectural and Historic Qualities*

3.30 The distinctive architectural qualities of the Conservation Area result largely from the continuous line of buildings fronting the Green, with individual plot frontages of approximately consistent width (based on medieval plot width) and with variation in height, being mainly 2 storey, but with various eaves heights. Roofs are generally simple duo-pitch with overhanging eaves to the street frontage with varied chimneys adding further interest to the roofscape.

3.31 The frontages display a variety of facades, with the earliest buildings being of brick or render. The earliest surviving roofs are of red clay tiles with later roofs of Welsh blue slate (showing early influence of railway transport in the area). Some roof tiles are pantiled, such as 39-39a The Green.

3.32 Window openings have predominantly vertical proportions. The earliest windows are Yorkshire sliding sashes, with a variety of later windows which relate to the various dates of buildings.

3.33 There are few traditional paving or streetscape materials in evidence.

*Negative Features in the Conservation Area*

3.34 Most of the Conservation Area is of high visual quality, and the streets around the green itself present an attractive and almost continuous street scene of pre-industrial cottages. However there are some elements which have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area as summarised below:

- a. Problem buildings: Westfields House has been vacant for some time, and presents a poor frontage to the south western corner of the green, even though it is set back from the green itself. As noted above, an application has been approved for residential development. Other examples include Nora Fenby House, which presents a bland frontage to the north eastern corner of the green, and the public toilets to the immediate west of the shopping parade.
- b. Minor alterations: some residential properties have replaced their original wooden windows with uPVC double glazing unsympathetic to the character of the area.
- c. Street furniture: there are examples of poor maintenance to fencing, seating and planting boxes to the north side of Woodland Road.

## 4.0 Management Strategy

- 4.1 There are a number of planning mechanisms available, which could help to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area:
- a. The application of Article 4 Directions to restrict inappropriate alterations to the windows, doors, chimneys, roofing materials and other key features of buildings within the western section of the Conservation Area adjacent the village green;
  - b. A development brief for the 1970s shopping parade on Woodland Road, should proposals come forward for redevelopment;
  - c. The use of planning contributions (Section 106 Agreements) towards improving the quality of design, the public realm, access arrangements or parking.



1. The southern edge of the Green, including groups of listed late 17th & 18th Century cottages.



2. The varied roofline to the northern edge of the Green.



3. A focal point of the Green is the Grade II listed fountain.



4. St. Mary's Church, built in 1901 in Early English Gothic style, adds variety and scale to the street scene.



5. Aston Terrace, built in 1877 within the Methodist Church burgage plot. The seven cottages provided a rental income for the church.



6. 92 the Green; a former Chapel which is a positive feature in the street scene.





7. The south side of the village green the Grade II listed 39 and 39a which internally appears to be of wattle and daub construction.



8. The Grade II listed 107, 109 and 109a Cockerton Green.



9. The 1875 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, in 19th Century Gothic style in stone with a slate roof. Of local architectural importance.



10. Cottages fronted by the narrow southern branch of Cockerton Green (including numbers 59-67, all listed).



11. Historic streetscape showing irregular chimney arrangement (numbers 37-45, 39 and 39a Grade II listed).



12. The Grade II listed 178-180 Woodland Road, at the eastern gateway to the Conservation Area.



**13.** The 1960s shopping parade presents a modern frontage to the eastern end of the Conservation Area.



**14.** Vacant business premises do not present a positive image when arriving from the east.



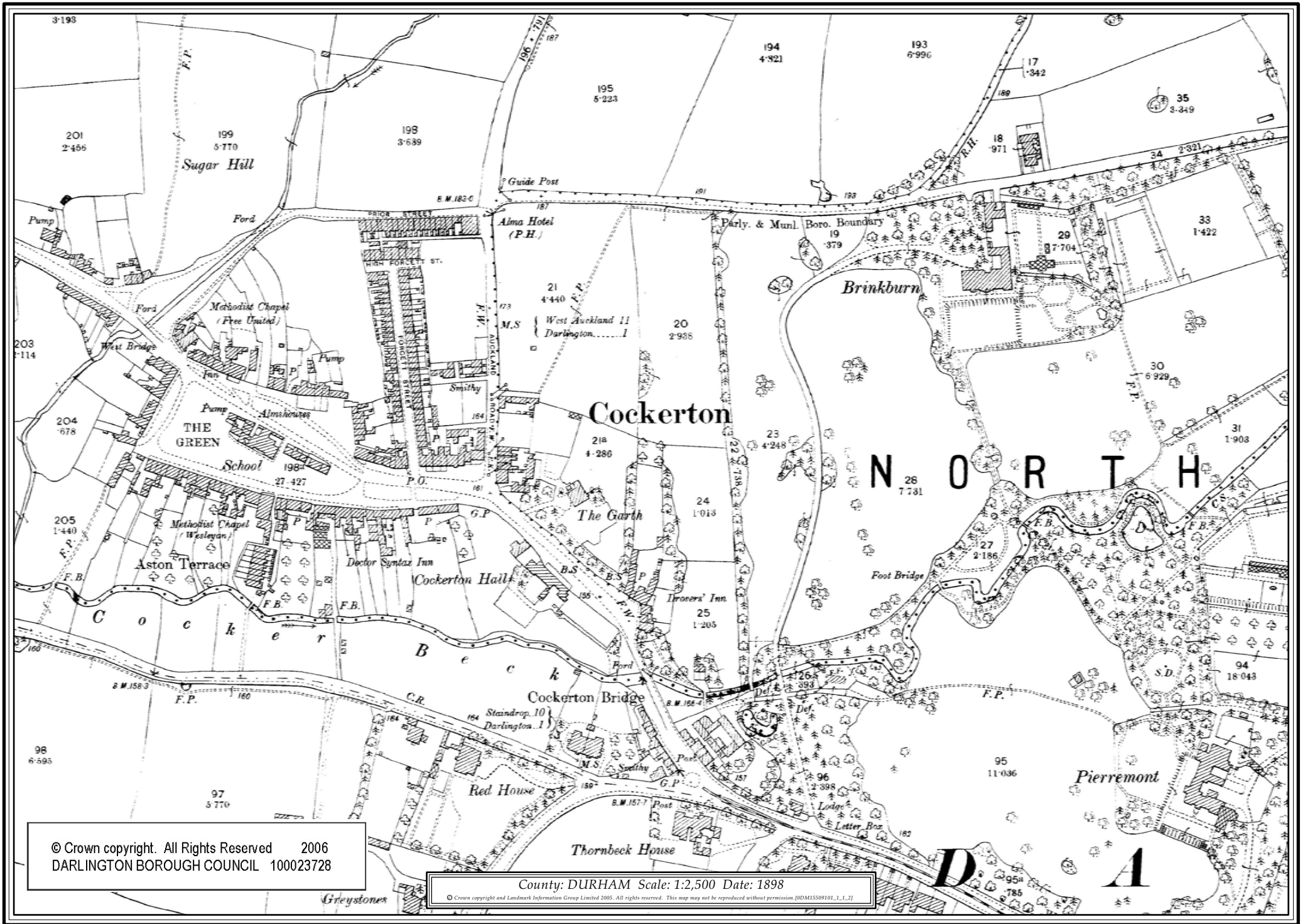
**15.** Elements of street furniture are in poor state of repair.



**16.** The modern shop frontages of 28-36 are located directly opposite the listed 19, 39 and 39a Cockerton Green



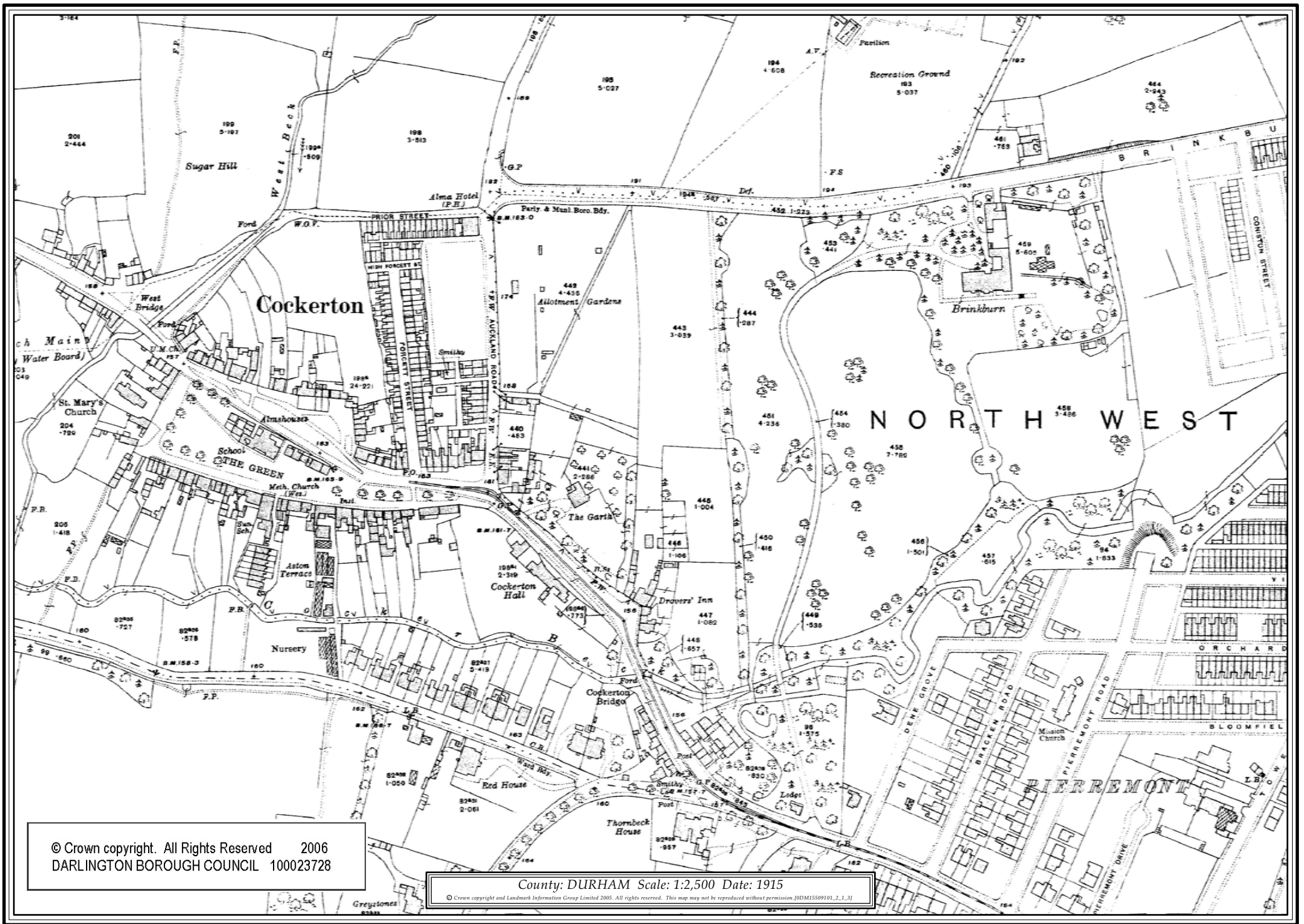
**17.** The 3-4 storey Squires Court retirement apartments, a modern development in mellow red brick set back from the street.



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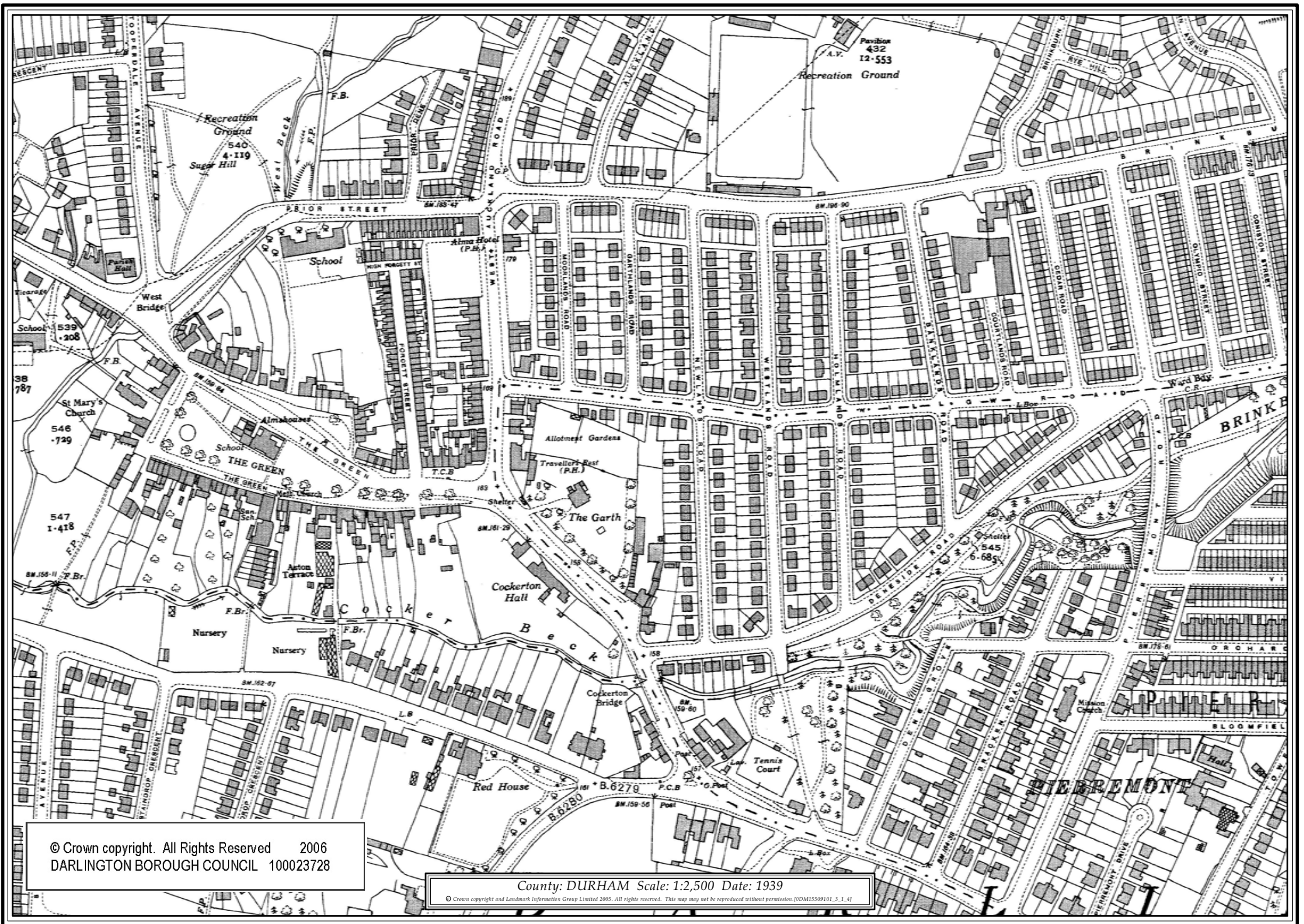
County: DURHAM Scale: 1:2,500 Date: 1898

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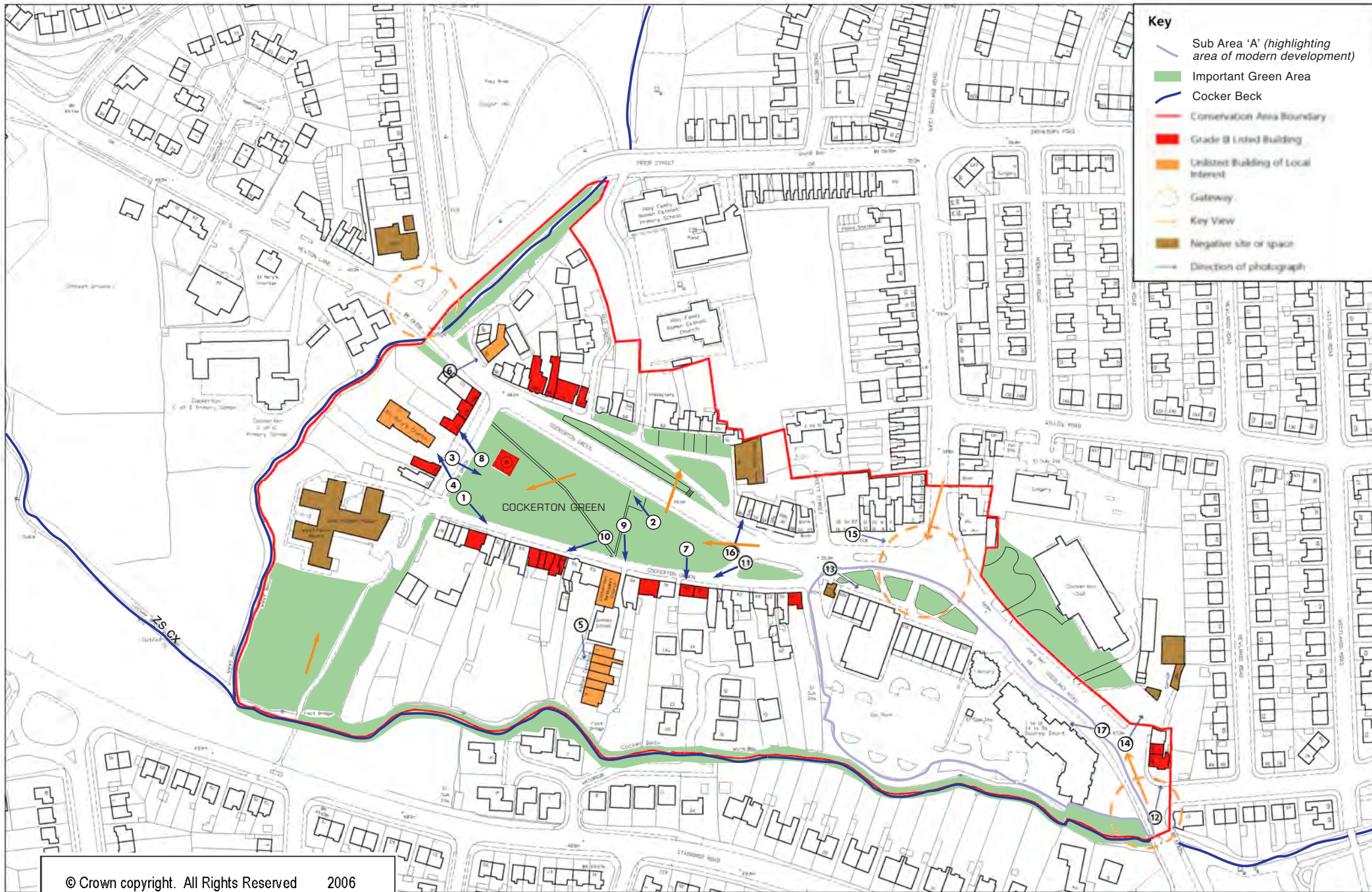
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## Appendix A: Borough Council Conservation Policies

### Introduction

- 4.2 The Borough of Darlington Local Plan (November 1997) contains a comprehensive set of conservation policies, both general and specific to the Cockerton Village Conservation Area. The general policies include:
- a. Policy E29 - a keynote policy requiring new development to respect its townscape setting and the protection of features of townscape importance.
  - b. Policy E30 and E31 - relating to the protection of listed buildings and their settings, and the control of changes to them.
  - c. Policy E32 - the Council will compile a non-statutory list of buildings of local character and townscape value.
  - d. Policy E35 and E36 - set out the Council's approach to designating and protecting Conservation Areas. The supporting text states that the Council will consider making Article 4 directions where required.
  - e. Policy E37 - states that priority for environmental improvement schemes will be given to the town centre and Conservation Areas.
  - f. Policy E38 - deals with alterations to business premises, including the replacement of shopfronts and installation of roller shutters. The Council also has Supplementary Planning Guidance on this.
  - g. Policies E39 and E41 - regulate outdoor advertising and provide special protection to Conservation Areas.
  - h. Policy E42 - street furniture should not detract from listed buildings or Conservation Areas, co-ordination will be encouraged and clutter removed.
  - i. Policy E43 - the Council will encourage appropriate new uses on vacant upper floors of commercial properties, in particular listed buildings and in Conservation Areas.

## Appendix B: Useful Information

### Bibliography

Darlington Borough Council records including designations, committee reports and planning application decision notices

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Historic Mapping sourced from Landmark Information Group

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