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1 Introduction

1.1 This Conservation Area Management Plan for Bickington follows on from the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the village that was adopted in December 2010.

1.2 The management plan document will act as a reference and guide for all those who make decisions which may impact on the special character of Bickington – the Council, property owners, tenants, businesses, planners, developers, designers, and statutory undertakers and service providers.

1.3 The policy context for this management plan is set out in the Planning Acts – particularly the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended October 2008 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended April 2008.

1.4 The special character of Bickington is identified in the preceding character appraisal. It is the purpose of this document to lay down what actions will be taken in the future to safeguard and enhance that character. Part of this process is to inform and advise local residents and businesses so that they better understand how their actions can affect the historic character of the area.

1.5 It is of fundamental importance that owners and contractors recognise that their actions can, and do, have a significant impact on the character and appearance of Bickington. Good decisions and sympathetic works do take more thought and can often cost more; but the rewards are great and will be appreciated in years to come by future generations. All actions, good and bad, form part of the legacy we leave.

2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Coherent linear development of traditional and historic properties.	Area split by the main road and roadside parking.	Enhancement of the existing car park.	Loss of traditional features such as joinery details and roof coverings.
Mixed periods of housing construction along the road frontage, with a consistency of materials and scale.	Heavy traffic flows through the area.		Potential for infill development, and development on greenfield land, a threat if inappropriately designed.
Access to nearby long distance footpaths and cycle routes.	The open space of the car park is unattractive.		Loss of chimneys.
Good local provision for parking at North Lane car park.			Requirements for highways and junction improvements.
Most roofs have a natural slate covering.			
References to the agricultural past and origin of the settlement survive.			

3 Archaeology

3.1 No formal archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the Bickington Conservation Area and as such the knowledge of the early development of the settlement is limited.

3.2 It is anticipated that the historic settlement core will hold the highest potential for the presence and survival of archaeological evidence associated with development of the settlement of Bickington. Given the setting of the village, with bronze age funerary monuments in the local area, and a bronze axehead having been found just 270 metres from the conservation area to the North East, there is a good likelihood of archaeological remains surviving within and around the settlement.

3.3 Where work and development is subject to the planning process it will be considered within the context of PPS5 and may be subject to relevant conditions such as a period of professional quality archaeological investigation and recording.

3.4 When work not requiring consent is being carried out by private owners they should be aware of historic features; such as artifacts and wall footings to changes in colour of the earth. If anything is found people are encouraged to contact the Council for advice. Significant finds ought to be recorded to add to our understanding of the history of Bickington and its development over time, and even relatively small finds that could at first glance be considered insignificant can add to our understanding of the town's history.

3.5 Statutory undertakers doing trench work ought to seek advice before starting and agree a watching brief where appropriate – for example, if cable undergrounding is carried out within the conservation area or when new service runs are being installed.

4 Roofscape

4.1 The roofscape is a prominent part of the conservation area, as a result of the landscape setting of the town, the main road falling away particularly to the west. The car park in Bickington also provides an elevated vantage point from which the roofscape is prominent. The appraisal identifies several external key views in which the roofscape plays its part, but it is not possible to identify every important view within the appraisal and the roofscape is generally of importance throughout the conservation area.

4.2 Other features such as chimneys, ridges and rainwater goods, add further interest to the roofscape in the town. The main roofing material is slate, often imported from Wales although some examples from Devon and Cornwall (Delabole).

Chimneys

4.3 Loss of chimneys is nearly always detrimental to the character of the roofscape and can interfere with the pattern of the streetscene. Indeed chimneys form a major element of the streetscape, particularly the remaining lateral stacks found in North Lane and at its junction with Bickington Road.

4.4 It is seldom necessary to remove a chimney and ought to be resisted, with repair in-situ often being a less costly option. Removal of a chimney should be avoided unless there are extenuating circumstances such as serious structural concerns that have been professionally identified. The buildings within the village have retained their chimneys, but the potential threat of their removal should not be ignored.

4.5 Alterations damage the distinctive character of chimneys by the application of smooth, crisp render that hides stonework, and brick, or flattens an uneven surface. Removal of drip slates and historic pots also detracts from the character of the area and should be avoided wherever possible.

Rainwater Goods

4.6 There is a good degree of survival of historic cast iron rainwater goods within the conservation area. These are typically of traditional profiles, being half round or ogee. These rainwater goods add to the historic character of their buildings and enrich the streetscape, and have the added advantage that they can be painted to be in keeping with the building's wider colour scheme.

4.7 In some cases rainwater goods carry decorative features and embellishments and these are largely impossible to replicate in modern materials.

4.8 Correctly maintained cast iron rainwater goods can have a functional life in excess of 100 years, and when replacement is needed there are still suppliers of traditional gutter profiles available. With improved modern paints maintenance periods can stretch to several years. Lightweight cast aluminium rainwater goods may also be suitable for use on some buildings.

4.9 Plastic is in many ways an inferior modern product for use as rainwater goods, because it can be affected by exposure to sunlight and become brittle relatively quickly. Although plastic rainwater goods can last for over 25 years it is unlikely that an entire gutter system will last this long without some sections splitting and requiring replacement.

4.10 Plastic rainwater goods do not accept paint well and are available in a limited range of colours; typically fading of the plastic occurs within the first 5-10 years where exposed to direct sunlight. Modern box profile rainwater goods do not fit well with historic buildings as traditional guttering was never produced in these forms.

Slate As A Roof Covering

4.11 The dominant roofing material within the conservation area is natural slate, much of which arrived by sea from Wales.

4.12 A much wider variety of slate is now available in the UK, including slate imported from Spain, South America and China. Some of these imported slates may be suitable for roofing on new buildings or buildings not in prominent locations but their use on prominent historic roofs should be avoided as they have a noticeably different appearance, especially when wet. The implications of fuel miles of imported materials also favours more locally sourced slates.

4.13 New slate should be fixed to roofs using nails, as this is the traditional method. By using the correct double lap, wind lift can be avoided and so is not justification for the use of clips. With some imported slates the recommended use of clips is to disguise the fact that the slate is of poor quality and will split if holed for nailing. As such, slate from a source that recommends the use of clip fixings should be looked at cautiously.

4.14 It should be remembered that slate is a highly durable natural material and it is highly unlikely that an entire roof needs to be re-covered. In most cases slates slip because their nails have exceeded their functional life and the slates can be salvaged and re-attached with new nails. Roofs that feature rag slate, or slate in diminishing courses are particularly important and are also particularly vulnerable.

4.15 Opportunistic and unscrupulous contractors will offer owners of such buildings an amazingly cheap price to re-roof in artificial or imported slate, knowing that the rag or random slate they reclaim can be sold on or re-used on much more lucrative work elsewhere.

Turnerised Coatings

4.16 None of the roofs within the conservation area have yet received this temporary repair treatment, evolved from a process of treatment with waterproof bituminous coatings applied over hessian, in a process called 'turnerisation'. This process was first developed in the 1880's and the process is still carried out with some refinements having been developed over the years.

4.17 The nature of this type of repair is a short term one as the coating softens in hot weather and becomes brittle in very cold weather, and after 10 years, or in some cases less, the coating begins to fail. This means that either the process must be repeated and an additional coat of the treatment applied at further cost, or the roof must be repaired in some other way.

4.18 The major drawback of the process is that once applied it is difficult and costly to remove. A repair of a slate roof may be more expensive but will last significantly longer (easily 80+ years) and the majority of the slates can often be reused after this period, with only the timber batons and nails needing replacement. After turnerisation it is almost always the case that all of the slates must be discarded, leading to a much higher cost as a complete set of new slates must then be purchased.

4.19 Property surveyors will be only too aware that the presence of turnerised coatings will potentially have future cost implications for owners as the coating implies that the roof covering itself was defective and the repair has only a limited lifespan as well as damaging the prospect of recycling the existing roofing materials. As such turnerisation may also have a negative impact on resale value of properties. It is a good sign that this treatment is not present in the Bickington Conservation Area, and it is important this remains the case.

5 Walls

5.1 The majority of buildings within Bickington are rendered externally, although there are a number of exposed rubble stone agricultural buildings along North Lane and Bickington Road. There are also small groups of exposed brick buildings, although these are small in number. This leads to a largely consistent streetscape, punctuated by reminders of the rural origins of the settlement.

Repointing

5.2 Repointing of historic masonry is a process that needs to be carried out over the period of a building's history. The major risk this poses to historic buildings is when an ill-informed owner or contractor elects to use modern Portland cement to repoint historic masonry.

5.3 Traditional buildings were designed to be porous, the thickness of their walls ensured that the inner surface would not get wet and that when dry weather returned the wall could dry out again. As the traditional lime mortar was softer than the surrounding brick much of the evaporation of moisture occurred through the mortar joints. In this way the mortar itself was sacrificial, slowly weathering away and eventually needing to be replaced by the process of repointing.

5.4 When modern cement is used the method of moisture transfer is altered. The Portland cement is harder and impermeable and as such moisture transfer is forced to occur through the face of the brick, eventually causing the decay of the brick itself. Portland cement is also brittle and inflexible and while lime mortar will allow a degree of movement within the building fabric, cement will crack at the slightest movement allowing moisture to further penetrate into the building.

Rendering

5.5 The majority of the buildings within the Bickington Conservation Area are rendered and as such care and alteration of rendered finishes has the potential to have a large impact on the appearance of the area.

5.6 Render was traditionally applied to buildings for a variety of reasons, either to cover up a poor quality building material which was visually unpleasant, or to protect a particularly porous building material, such as cob, against damp ingress. Equally during the early 19th Century, wars with France had led to the high cost of building materials, and using poor quality stone or brick and using render to give a more aesthetically pleasing result became common.

5.7 Traditionally render was lime based, in the same way that mortars were lime based. Re-rendering a building in modern cement based renders or applying modern barrier paints can cause similar problems to repointing in modern cement mortars by changing the way in which moisture moves around the fabric of the building.

5.8 Movement within a building almost invariably leads to cracking of the hard but brittle cement render allowing moisture to get in through the cracks. The impervious nature of the cement render will trap this moisture within the wall and force it deeper into the building causing internal damp problems and the potential for damage to the fabric through the transfer of soluble salts from the cement itself.

5.9 Unrendered buildings should not typically be rendered for purely aesthetic reasons. Instead render should be applied only where there would be a technical advantage to doing so and when this is necessary materials must be compatible with the construction of the building. For historic buildings this invariably means using lime based materials.

Polychrome Decoration

5.10 A small number of the brick built buildings within Bickington feature 'structural polychromy', that is to say that their materials have a variety of colours and these materials are used to create a decorative design feature, or to highlight architectural features, such as window openings. Town Meadow and Green Meadows are good examples featuring this decorative construction method.

5.11 The greatest threat to this architectural feature comes from painting or rendering over the building. The rendering over or painting of buildings displaying polychrome decoration should be avoided wherever possible and only considered where the fabric of the building is decaying to the point at which a protective layer of render is required to safeguard the building.

5.12 Once a building has been externally rendered or had a decorative scheme painted over, it is difficult, expensive and time consuming to effectively reverse these interventions and return the building to its original appearance.

6 Joinery

6.1 Historic joinery can add significantly to the character of an area and the extent of its survival is typically representative of the proportion of Listed Buildings in an area, but is also dependent upon the value that people place on the historic value of their town. Like most places Bickington has retained a degree of historic joinery which sits alongside sensitive replacements as well as unsympathetic, poorly detailed modern joinery. The majority of properties along Bickington Road and North Lane have retained traditional joinery to some degree, typically as windows or doors, and this lends positively to the character of the area.

6.2 At present the replacement of windows and doors is not controlled on unlisted buildings in use as private dwelling houses. Buildings in other uses, including apartments and commercial premises require planning permission for alteration and replacement of windows and doors. North Devon Council will consider Article 4(2) directions to prevent harmful alterations to dwelling houses in the future. It is always preferable for owners to recognise that sensitive maintenance adds value to their own property and contributes to the sense of place.

6.3 Historic joinery ought to be seen as antique furniture that changes hands as part of a larger deal and can easily be overlooked. It only takes one inconsiderate owner to destroy the historic appearance of a building by ill-considered renovation; with property changing hands as frequently as it does today there is a steady stream of buildings whose luck has run out. There are few people who would throw a 200 year old chair or table in a skip – their potential value is usually appreciated – yet it happens to windows and doors regularly. These artifacts are a finite resource that embodies the craftsmanship of earlier generations and records the materials and techniques they used.

6.4 Unless badly neglected over a long period of time, traditional joinery is rarely beyond repair. In many cases the timber used was so well sourced and seasoned that it is far more durable than any modern alternative. If repair is not possible, replica replacement is the next best thing; though replacement requires the use of primary resources and energy that makes it a less sustainable option. The use of imported hardwood from unsustainable sources ought to be avoided and uPVC has significant ecological issues associated with its production process and later disposal. From a sustainability standpoint timber windows made from managed sources of timber are more environmentally sound than uPVC which does not decompose in landfill and produces chlorine based by-products and gases during manufacture.

6.5 There is no product that is maintenance free. Timber needs painting every few years, but each time the result looks fresh and new. After a hundred years or more sash cords or hinges may need renewal; this is quite easily done and gives the unit a

new lease of life. When modern opening mechanisms or double glazed units breakdown the answer is replacement of the whole unit – hence the piles of uPVC windows accumulating at recycling centres in the absence of satisfactory means of disposal.

Windows

6.6 The size, type and design of the windows in an historic building reveal much about its age or development, its use and the status of its occupants in the past. Humbler buildings often have casement windows that vary in design according to age, use and local custom. Sash windows also vary in size and detail according to age and use. The enduring popularity of sash windows reflects their versatility in providing controlled ventilation.

6.7 Historic glass survives in some windows, such as those facing the road at The Homestead, and should be retained where possible. However, installing modern glass that has been treated to give it the appearance of historic glass is not considered appropriate.

6.8 When new windows are needed there are a number of issues to consider:

- Proportion and subdivision – The glazing pattern of the original windows ought to be retained, (or restored if lost), as that is a critical part of the whole building. It indicates the size of glass available or affordable at the time of construction.
- Mode of opening – The introduction of top hung or tilt-and-turn opening lights is always visually jarring and harmful to the historic character. Overlapping ‘storm-seal’ type details are an entirely modern introduction and are unnecessary if flush fitting units are properly made. Spring loaded sashes are an inferior replacement mechanism compared with properly weighted double-hung sashes.
- Glazing – Traditional glazing bar profiles, properly jointed and glazed with putty, (or glazing compound), rather than beading, will give a genuine appearance.
- Thermal insulation – Double glazing cannot always be achieved within traditional multiple pane designs without bars being either much too thick or false. Beading is nearly always added which further detracts from the appearance. Attempting to introduce double glazing into a traditional design usually means a small air gap that hugely reduces the insulation properties anyway. The use of shutters and/or insulated curtains can greatly reduce heat loss without the need for window replacement.
- Draught-proofing – The majority of heat loss from historic windows is often through draughts caused by ill-fitting frames, this often comes about due to years of poor maintenance. Draft proofing systems are available that can be fitted to existing windows in situ and can be highly effective in reducing draughts and heat loss.
- Sound insulation – Cutting down noise is often given as a reason for replacing existing windows with double glazed units. However, tests have shown that secondary glazing is actually more effective at reducing transmitted noise. It is

often less costly than fitting double glazed units and also allows for the historic windows to be retained.

- Sills – Traditional sills should be retained unless beyond repair, when they should be replaced with matching sills in terms of both materials and details.

6.9 The concept that uPVC replacement windows last forever and require no maintenance is quickly becoming apparent as deceptive. Many companies specialising in uPVC window maintenance, and specialist paints and 'protective coatings' for uPVC, are beginning to appear and their success is indicative of the fact that these windows do in-fact require maintenance and all the costs that go along with it.

6.10 The piles of old uPVC windows appearing at recycling centres also puts paid to the concept that they can be expected to last forever. Usually components, such as rubber seals, locks and hinges fail first and are often impossible to replace, instead the only option is to discard the window and buy new.

6.11 It is worth noting that the uPVC itself is very difficult to recycle, as a thermosetting polymer it cannot be 'melted down' only ground up and used to bulk out new plastics. The reason these windows sit at recycling centres is primarily to have their metal components stripped and recycled.

Doors

6.12 Doors can add to the character of the streetscene in much the same way, and similarly there are examples of surviving historic doors within Bickington. It is worth remembering that a little time and money spent on periodic maintenance and painting can allow a good quality historic hardwood door to remain serviceable for many years.

6.13 It should also be remembered that traditional timber doors may hold 'door furniture' such as knockers, knobs, letterboxes and hinges which are still serviceable even when the door itself has been allowed to decay beyond salvaging. If a replacement timber door is sourced these older pieces of door furniture can be re-used on the new door. By their nature uPVC doors come with letterboxes, hinges and handles ready fitted, often moulded as part of the unit and the sensitive, and sustainable, re-use of historic features is not possible.

6.14 Where a door is accompanied by a doorcase or other associated architectural features it is often the case that the door was designed as part of the unit and replacement by a door of different design will detract from the appearance and character of the building as a whole. Even when not accompanied by doorcases the replacement of a well designed historic door with a standardised modern unit will be detrimental to the character of the building, and thus the wider streetscape.

7 Infill Development

7.1 Bickington has relatively few gap sites which would lend themselves to infill development, although there are several large vacant sites which could see development of this nature and areas of open land behind properties which could accommodate 'backland development'.

7.2 Areas along Northfield Lane are the only sites likely to attract any significant degree of development, and it is important that any development here retains the rural agricultural character dominant within this section of the settlement.

7.3 The relatively dense terraced frontages along Bickington Road preclude the potential for any degree of infill development here, although a small number of properties do exist set back within larger plots where infill development is possible.

7.4 North Devon Council has guidance on Infill Development in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document which sets out the potential benefits weighed against the potential harm of such development and the manner in which the appropriateness of infill development will be assessed. The SPD also outlines the additional requirements which infill development within conservation areas must meet.

8 Management Aims

Aim	Lead Agency	Timescale
Use the character appraisal & management plan as material considerations in determining planning applications within and adjoining the Bickington Conservation Area.	NDC	Ongoing
Use adopted SPD and planning policies to prevent inappropriate infill development that would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.	NDC	Ongoing
Investigate the options and practicalities of Article 4(2) directions to control unsympathetic alterations.	NDC	6 months
Implementation of the above if considered practical and appropriate.	NDC	9 months