

# Conservation Area Appraisal



**Pittington Hallgarth**

December 2009



# INDEX

|          |  |          |
|----------|--|----------|
|          | <b>PREFACE</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>1</b> | <b>GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>   |          |
| 1.1      | Introduction   | 4        |
| 1.2      | Origins and Development  | 4        |
| 1.3      | Basic Character  | 11       |
| 1.4      | Buildings within the CA  | 11       |
| 1.5      | Archaeological Sites   | 13       |
| 1.6      | Views, landscapes, trees &<br>open spaces                                  | 12       |
| 1.8      | Boundaries   | 15       |
| 1.9      | Public realm, surfaces & street<br>furniture                               | 15       |
| <b>2</b> | <b>A CLOSED LOOK AT THE<br/>PITTINGTON HALLGARTH<br/>CONSERVATION AREA</b> |          |
| 2.1      | The principle approach &<br>church area                                    | 17       |
| 2.2      | Hallgarth Manor Hotel  | 22       |
| 2.3      | The area to the south east of<br>Hallgarth Manor Hotel                     | 25       |
| <b>3</b> | <b>MANAGEMENT OF THE<br/>CONSERVATION AREA</b>                             |          |
| 3.1      | Managing change  | 28       |
| 3.2      | Changes to the Conservation<br>area boundary                               | 28       |
| 3.3      | Condition of the CA  | 28       |
| 3.4      | The planning system  | 29       |
|          | <b>APPENDIX A</b>  |          |
|          | Written description of the CA<br>Boundary                                  | 32       |

## PREFACE

### CONSERVATION AREAS AND CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

A **conservation area** is an area that is predominately historic in character and is special or attractive enough to warrant protection through the planning process. The historic centre of Durham or Barnard Castle are obvious examples as are many traditional villages in the County, such as Pittington Hallgarth.

Durham County Council, as the local planning authority, has a statutory duty to preserve and enhance the special character of a conservation area. It seeks to achieve this through designating them, reviewing them, producing appraisals and management plans and considering the character of a conservation area in the planning process.

A **conservation area appraisal and management plan** is a document that states what it is about a place that merits it being a conservation area and suggests courses of action to maintain and enhance its character. It does so by exploring the development of an area and how that is reflected in the present; in its buildings, street layouts, natural areas and archaeology. It works on the principle that once the special character of an area is understood then it is easier to assess and formulate development proposals and to ensure that they are sympathetic and contribute to the character of the area. Its target audience is anyone with an interest in a conservation area, be it as a resident, property owner, developer, planner or local historian.

### **The Pittington Hallgarth Appraisal and Management plan**

is the latest in a line of appraisals covering the 14 conservation areas within the City of Durham District. It is split into three sections. Section 1 'General Character' gives an overview of the area's history and character. Section 2 'A Closer Look at the Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area' provides an in-depth look in the form of a walk around the conservation area. Section 3 'Management of the Conservation Area' details the planning policy background, provides planning guidance and suggests areas for enhancement.

### PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This document was subject to a period of public consultation running from 9<sup>th</sup> March to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. The local Durham County Council Member, the Parish council and residents of the conservation area received a copy of the draft document, a one page summary and a feedback form. This was then followed up by talk given to Pittington Parish Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

Five written responses were received. These all felt that the appraisal summarised the character of the area well and the attention paid to the village was welcomed. Various clarifications were sought and further historical information given, which have been absorbed into the final draft. One boundary amendment was suggested and this is discussed with section 3.2. The purpose of the talk to Pittington Parish Council was to better explain the purpose of the conservation area and the appraisal document.

# 1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Parish of Pittington consists of the neighbouring villages of Low Pittington and High Pittington. High Pittington, the larger of the two villages, includes the small and detached hamlet of Hallgarth. Hallgarth is the focus of the conservation area.

Pittington Hallgarth lies 3.5 miles NE of Durham at the foot of the magnesian limestone escarpment. It is located on a low but pronounced spur overlooking a vale between Pittington, Littleton and Sherburn.

The conservation area was designated in 1981. It is a small conservation area focussed on two main buildings: the Church of St Laurence and Hallgarth Manor Hotel. In addition there are a small number of houses and converted farm buildings. Consequently the main land use in the conservation area is residential.

Underlining the character of the conservation area are its roots as a manor for the Prior of Durham, from which it slowly evolved largely untouched by the mining industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 1.2 ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

The original Parish of Pittington contained Sherburn, Shadforth and Ludworth. In the mid C19 the Parish was sub-divided due to the vastly increased population that came with the growth of the mining industry.

Originally Pittington was divided into two settlements; the village of North Pittington (now Low Pittington) and Pittington Hallgarth which was a manorial centre of the Prior of Durham. High Pittington developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a mining village.

There is evidence of settlement at Pittington from over 6000 years ago. A number of simple flint tools of the type used by the hunter-gatherer people of the Mesolithic age have been discovered in the parish. It is thought that they had no permanent settlement, and instead they moved through the landscape to find the best source of food according to the season.

Despite these very early discoveries little else is known about Pittington in prehistory. Although the first farmers started clearing their fields in the Neolithic period (4000- 2500BC), there are no remains of these early farms. Indeed, there is no evidence from the following Bronze Age, or Iron Age. The Roman period is only represented by a few coins found near the Manor Hotel. This

does not mean that no-one lived in Pittington at this period, just that none of the early settlements or burials have been found.

It is in the Anglo-Saxon period that Pittington emerges as a settlement. The name Pittington is Old English for the 'farm of Pitta's people'. Pitta may have been the name of the Anglo-Saxon or Northumbrian leader who originally founded Pittington village.

It is probable that Pittington Hallgarth formed part of the land contained within the original endowment of the Priory of Durham Cathedral in the 10<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> century. A stone sundial incorporated into the Church is thought to date from this time suggesting an early church and associated settlement.

The earliest section of the present Church of St Laurence has been dated to around 1100. In 1216 a chantry chapel to the Virgin Mary was founded and in 1258 the Priory established a manor house near to the Church.

Historic records state that the manor house was the centre of a farming estate. In 1550 the site was described as comprising two back courts and a front court. The front court contained by the manorial hall, whilst the back courts contained various

agricultural and service buildings. Surviving monastic records show considerable building activity with works to over thirty buildings or parts of buildings mentioned.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1530s) the main buildings appear to have been dismantled, which partly remain as a number of low earthworks within the plot between the entrance to the church and Chestnut Lodge. Elsewhere remnants of medieval farm buildings survive within some buildings. At Hallgarth Manor Cottages tree-ring dating analysis uncovered a mid 16<sup>th</sup> century roof structure.

The Medieval Barn may well live up to its name as the triangular vent holes retained in its conversion are indicative of a farm building belonging to the Priors of Durham. Further discoveries may await in any of the historic buildings within the site and the below-ground archaeological potential of the area has great significance.

The medieval period is enduringly represented within Hallgarth by the Church of St Laurence, which is most notably known for its 12<sup>th</sup> century north arcade and wall-paintings. It is also likely that the basic layout of the hamlet dates from this time, possibly earlier. The number of footpaths, lanes and roads converging reflects its importance at the heart of a large parish.

Hallgarth Manor Hotel was the successor to the Priors Manor house. The estate contained about 912 acres, twenty-eight of which were freehold. The Shipperdson family and Lord Londonderry are two names associated with the Hall and estate after the medieval period. When the hall moved from its medieval site to the present location of the Hallgarth Manor Hotel is unclear. The present hotel is at least 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin though a detailed exploration may well uncover further clues.

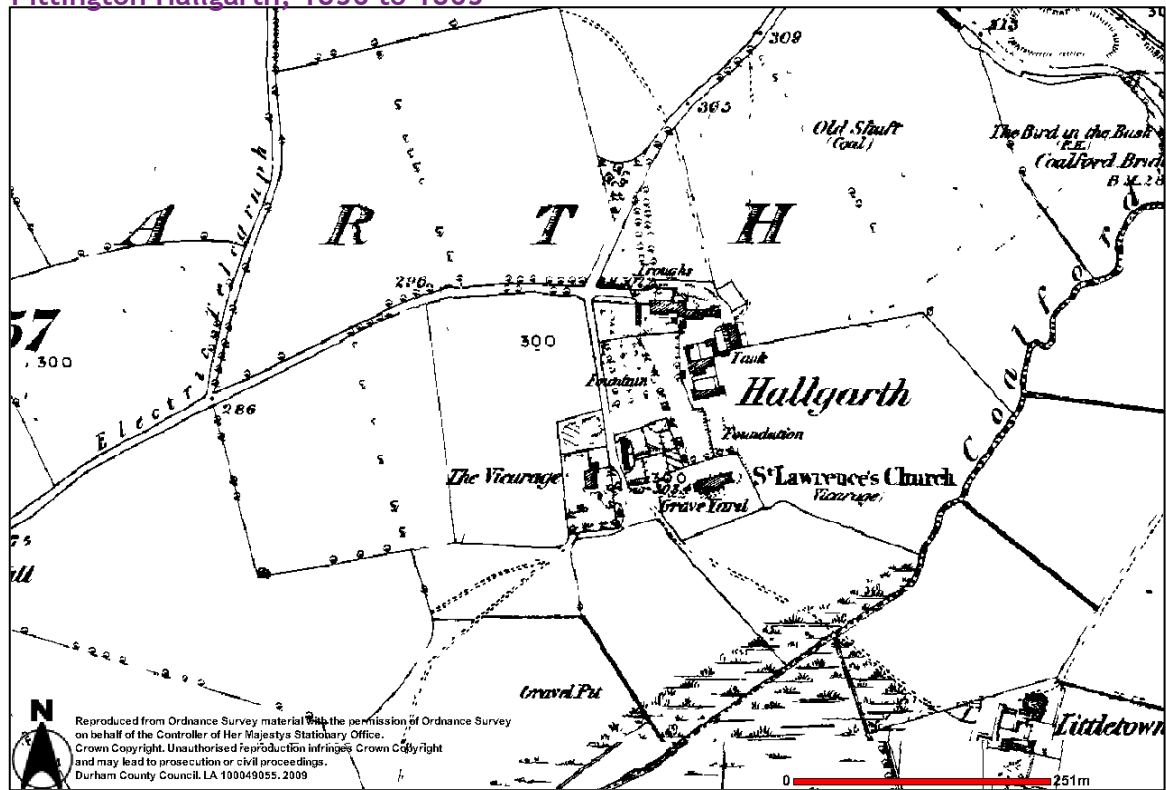
The impact of coal mining from the 1830s onwards was pronounced on the parish. The surrounding landscape was transformed with the various pits of the Pittington Colliery and its associated railways and miners housing. The need for housing created Pittington Hallgarth whilst surrounding existing villages expanded. Hallgarth though, remained largely unchanged save for alterations to the Church in 1846 and a large Vicarage built in the middle part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The ornate 19<sup>th</sup> century gravestones within the church ground suggest that the status of the Church at the heart of the area was maintained, at least by the more wealthy section of the population.

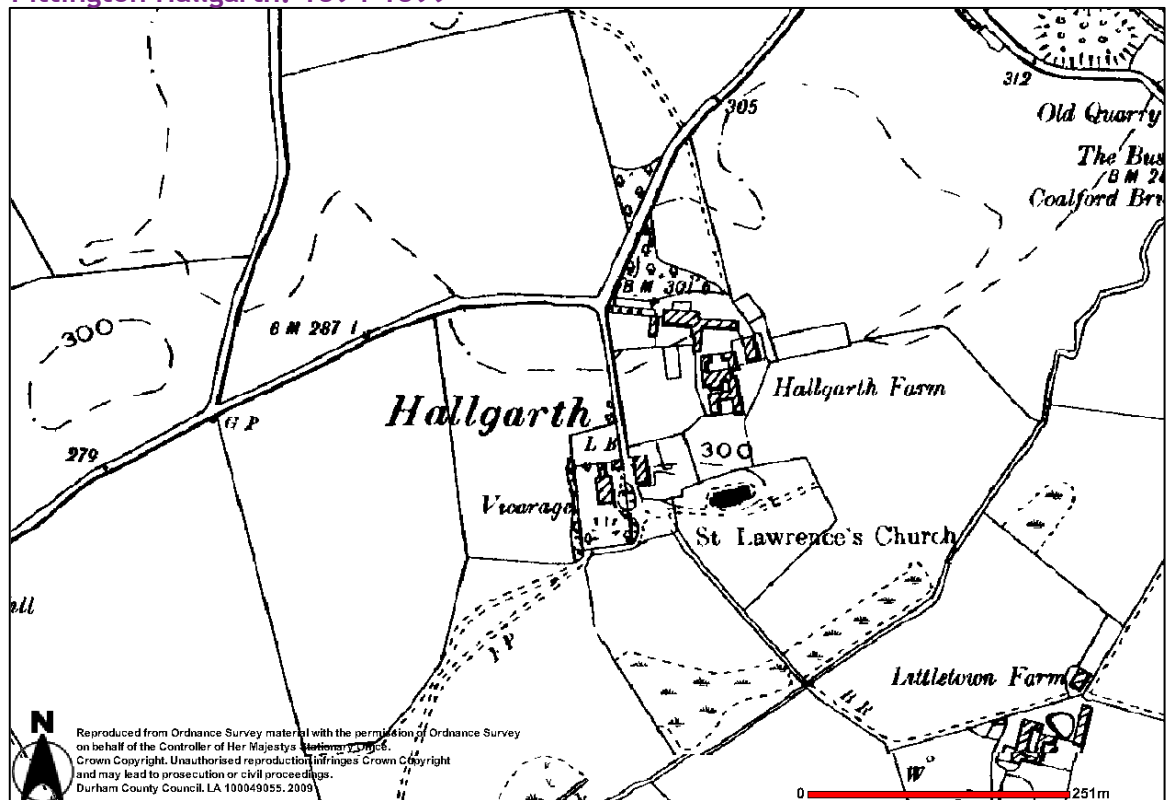
The traditional rural character of Hallgarth has remained to the present. The expansion of High Pittington in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century has brought about a close relationship between the two

settlements, though importantly the physical distinction is retained. This close relationship is a contrast that reinforces the traditional nature of Hallgarth. Limited residential development and conversion has not changed this relationship. In a landscape that is both rural and industrial Hallgarth remains one of the most significant historical rural settlements.

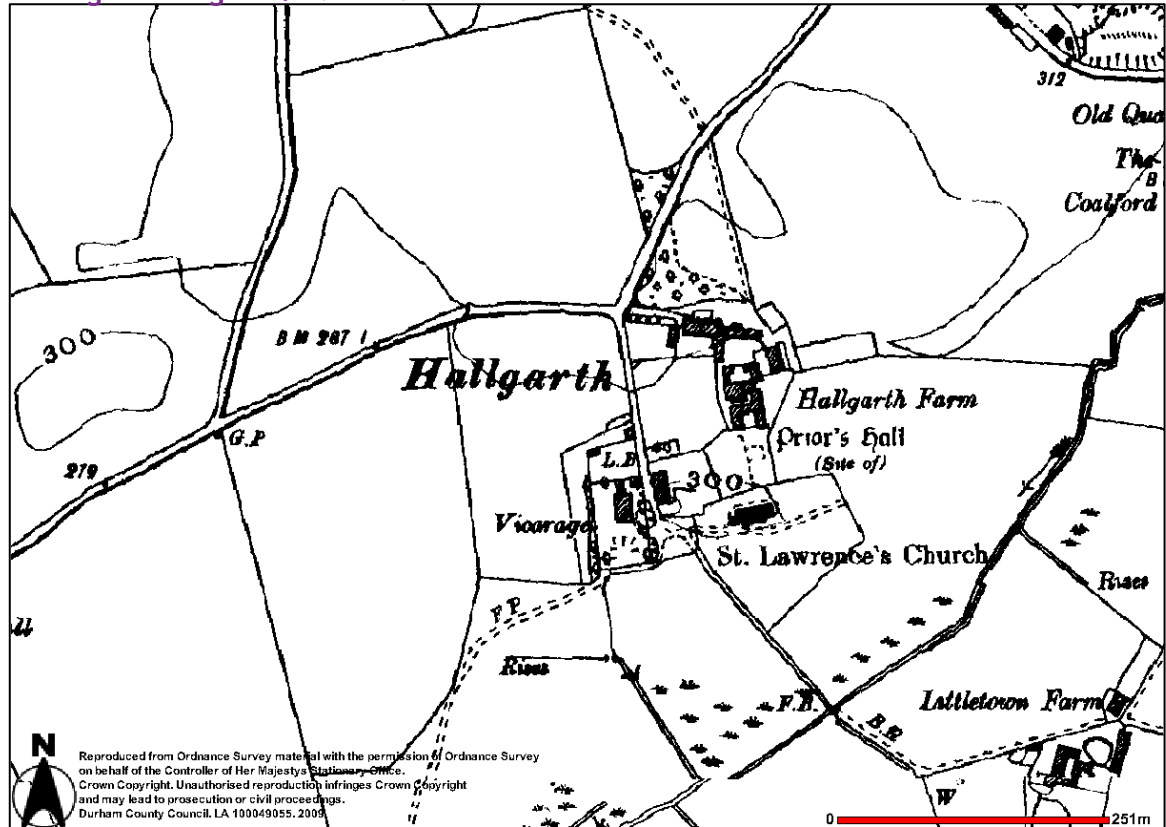
## Historic Map 1 Pitlington Hallgarth, 1856 to 1865



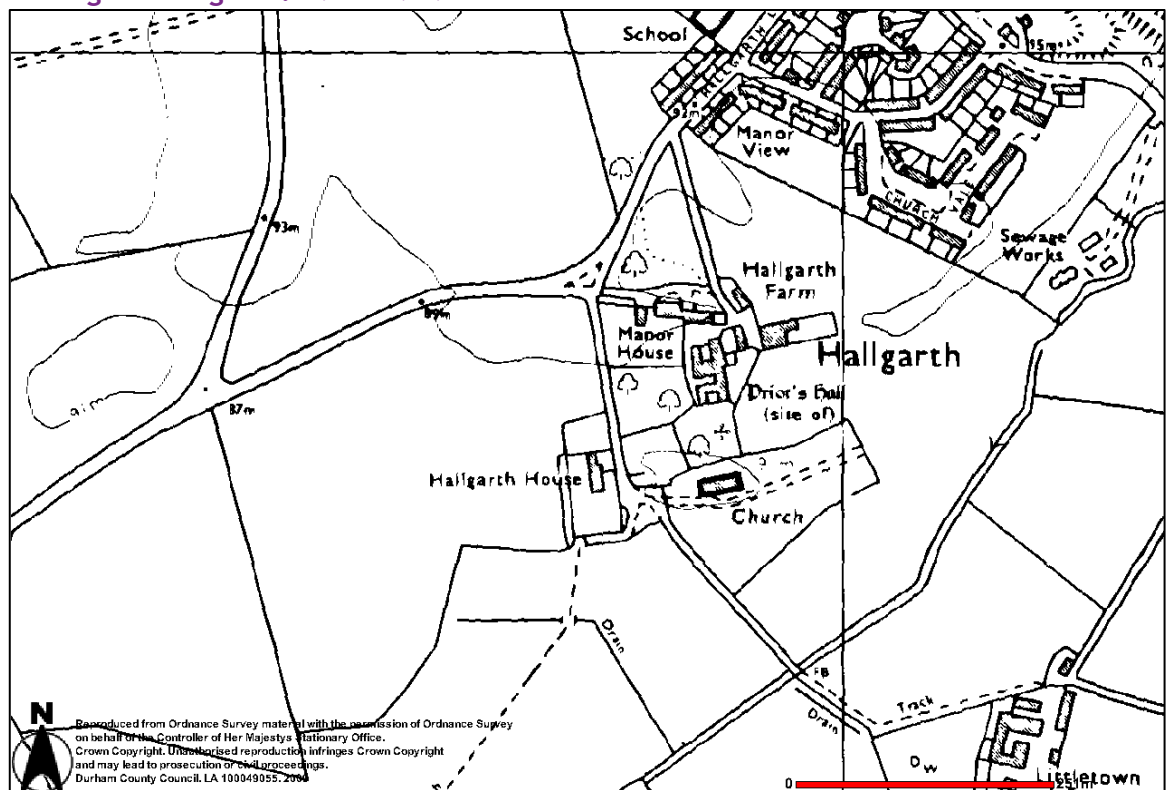
## Historic Map 2 Pitlington Hallgarth, 1894-1899



**Historic Map 3**  
**Pittington Hallgarth, 1938-1950**



**Historic Map 4**  
**Pittington Hallgarth, 1970-1979**





**Map 1**  
**Pittington Hallgarth Conservation**  
**Area - Plan Form**



**Map 2**  
**Pittington Hallgarth Conservation**  
**Area - Aerial View**



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### 1.3 THE BASIC CHARACTER AND LAYOUT OF THE PITTINGTON HALLGARTH CONSERVATION AREA

One of the most important aspects of Hallgarth is that its origins were not as a village but a manorial centre for Durham Cathedral Priory. This gave it a compactness and sense of prestige that survives today. In this respect it has links not only to the Cathedral but the Priory's other outlying sites, such as Beaufort and forms part of the wider rich religious medieval legacy of the Durham area, signified by sites such as Keping and Finchale Abbey. If the medieval manor had survived beyond its footings this quality would have been very obvious yet it remains dominated by the Church and Hall as it has done through the centuries, producing a deep sense of continuity with the past.

Even though the present Hall is not the medieval building or in the original location these two types of buildings have defined Hallgarth from the medieval period to the present. Other buildings, green spaces and trees compliment this relationship, adding to the overall story of this small yet historically significant settlement.

Despite substantial growth and development brought on by mining in the 19th Century the settlement remained largely unaffected. This produces a contrast between itself and High and Low Pittington that only adds to its individual sense of

history and prestige whilst forming a distinct settlement in the wider part industrial part rural landscape of the former Durham Coalfield.

Another important aspect is its rural character. Its remoteness from major roads, enclosure by large mature trees and proximity to the surrounding farmland are key contributors to its quiet rural character. This is complimented by the historic buildings many of which have links to farming.

Hallgarth is orientated north – south with the Hall and Church 'book-ending' the north and south edges and dictating the course of roads, open spaces and location of other buildings. This results in a simple plan form but one that can not be readily appreciated due to the flatness of the land and the degree of enclosure made by walls, trees and planting.

The street pattern is enhanced by predominantly traditional boundary treatments of stone walls, single trees, groups of trees in bunches or lines. Roadside verges, some planted, are an important feature contributing to the overall character whilst a lack of street signage lighting etc keeps down visual clutter.

## 1.4 BUILDINGS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

There are 15 main buildings and a number of detached structures including garages and sheds etc. within the conservation area. The architecture is varied but in the main consists of large houses, small cottages together with the Church and Hallgarth Manor Hotel.

The majority of the buildings are clustered to the rear of the Hotel, generally grouped around small courtyards. Other buildings are detached within well defined and widely spaced rectangular plots.

At the south end of the village the Church of St. Laurence stands slightly detached within its large church yard.

The heights of buildings vary between one and two stories, occasionally with rooms in attic spaces. This is particularly important when viewing the village from the surrounding countryside, where the larger buildings dominate the wider views.

### HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The majority of buildings within Hallgarth are historic, i.e., before the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from the church most of them have a residential use either historically or because they are converted farm buildings.

The Church of St Laurence is the most significant building. Hallgarth Manor Hotel, dating from mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Old Vicarage (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) are the most significant historic houses. The small estate cottages: Cooks Cottage, Blacksmiths Cottage and Squire's Cottage, are the only historically smaller-scale domestic buildings, albeit with an agricultural origin.

The former agricultural buildings are generally low-lying and grouped within courtyards of long ranges. All are converted and although some are much altered they generally retain their traditional form and positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The courtyard arrangement provides visually coherence between each farm building as well as retaining their historic association. These neighbourly characteristics are important to the retaining their rural character.

The oldest building is the Church of St Laurence (12<sup>th</sup> century onwards) followed by the Manor Hotel (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century).

The majority of other historic buildings are difficult to date precisely; though a late 18<sup>th</sup> to late 19<sup>th</sup> century date range seems reasonable considering their style and type.

It is also reasonable to conclude that the street pattern and buildings within the village largely stand as they were represented on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1860,

Two buildings, Hallgarth Manor Hotel (Grade II) and the Church of St Laurence (Grade I) are listed for their special architectural or historic interest.

### **MODERN BUILDINGS**

Modern buildings comprise houses and outbuildings such as garages. The houses consist of a few infill developments on the western side of the conservation area. They are of both suburban and traditional styles and set within large gardens with definite boundaries which reduces their impact on the predominant historic character of the conservation area.

Intermingled with the converted farm buildings exist a number of modern detached and attached garages. These are constructed in traditional materials with vertically bordered timber doors and steep pitched roofs. Again these buildings generally respect the local character having a neutral impact upon the conservation area.

### **MATERIALS AND DETAILS**

Stone is the chief building material for buildings and walls, followed by the occasional use of brick. Render is used over stone in a number of buildings, most notably the Manor Hotel.

Roofs are generally steeply pitched and covered predominately by natural slate

with red pantiles used on some agricultural buildings. Dormer windows with pitched roofs feature on some domestic properties but are not a traditional feature for converted farm buildings.

Windows are timber casement or sash, the latter being vertical hung with a common arrangement being 6-over-6 panes, or plain without glazing bars. Windows and doors within farm conversions are modern, with historic influences and characterised by timber construction and simple designs.

The predominant use of stone, pantile and slate coupled with a high retention rate of historic details is central to forming the high quality of the conservation area.

## **1.5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

Throughout the village there are a number of archaeological sites which add considerably to the character of the conservation area providing a sense of history other than the remaining historic buildings.

The Priors Hall was a manor house of the Prior of the Monastery at Durham and was the most important medieval building in the Parish during its time.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Hall stood on the rectangular plot of land immediately to the north west of St Laurence's Church. The site consists of surviving low earth works and low moss

covered foundations of various buildings with a heavy scatter of some building debris, an old random rubble stone wall encloses the site to the front and rear. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and consequently protected by law.

Hallgarth House lies to the north of the Old Vicarage on the site of former walled gardens, during excavation a single trench revealed evidence of the construction of archaeological features cut into the natural subsoil. These consisted of post holes and gullies probably relating to the construction and demolition of various wooden structures including domestic buildings and animal pens.

These features are dated to between the C11 and early C13 on the basis of the pottery assemblage, although there is some evidence of medieval occupation.

The Church of St Laurence and its church yard has great archaeological potential above and below ground. Burials are one obvious aspect, yet clues to the early origins of the church and settlement could also be gathered.

At Hallgarth Farm to the east of the Hotel a number of Roman coins of varying dates have also been discovered. Outside of the village various earthworks, crop and field marks indicate former medieval settlements and await further research.

## 1.6 VIEWS, LANDSCAPE, TREES AND OPEN SPACES

The natural environment makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Within the Area trees and gardens are an integral part of its special character. Outside the Area Hallgarth's position on a spur of land allows it to be seen from a number of vantage points.

Hallgarth is surrounded by a patchwork of rolling fields on all but the northern side which creates an attractive rural setting for the settlement.

It is seen in distant views from the northern edge of Sherburn Village, Cookshold Lane, Littletown Lane and Coalford Lane. Tree cover within the village, especially on the southern side partly masks the settlement, helping it to merge with the surrounding landscape. Hallgarth appears as glimpses of stonework, the church tower or the white rendered wall of the Manor Hotel and forms a distinct contrast to the red brick and white rendered buildings of Pittington and Sherburn Hill.

Within the conservation area the landscape becomes flatter, apart from at the southern edge of the church yard where the spur of land drops down into the open countryside. Trees, high boundary walls and buildings all combine to constrict views, breaking buildings into groups and making this small area appear larger. This is particularly noticeable moving south

towards the church and within the western half of the church yard. Here mature trees are in abundance and almost dominate giving an intimate aspect that in winter feels close and dark and in summer shaded and cool.

The primary open green space within the conservation area is the churchyard; there is no park or playground. The churchyard is very significant in a number of ways and is described further in Section 2 'A Closer Look at the Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area'. Beyond the churchyard public spaces are restricted to green road verges and it is private gardens that provide the greatest sense of space, the most notable example being the areas to the front and rear of the Manor Hotel.



**View 1:**  
**South East from Lady Pierce Lane.**



**View 2:**  
**North from Cookshold Lane**



**View 3:**  
**North West from the top of Sherburn Hill**



**View 4:**  
**North East from Cooks Cottage to Littletown Bank**

While not every part of a private garden is publicly visible these spaces are important to the setting of the buildings they surround, and visually soften the buildings, adding to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Gardens are well kept and planted and like the well-maintained buildings clearly show the pride that residents have in Hallgarth.

Grass verges are present throughout the Conservation Area. Often planted or lined with mature trees they provide a soft green edge to the lanes, footpaths and buildings that they border. This is important to the rural character and appearance. A number of the grass verges appear on the 1860 plan in particular the wide verge to the front of the Old Vicarage which may have originally formed part of the front garden of the property. Well-maintained lawns exist to the front of converted farm buildings; these would have originally been hard courtyard areas and the change to soft landscaping has slightly lessened the agricultural character of the buildings.

Trees are overwhelmingly of native species with numerous fine mature specimens. The churchyard contains a wide variety of species and ages including hawthorn, scots pine, yew, sycamore, ash and beech. Often trees occur in sufficient number to dominate buildings, in particular the areas around the Old Vicarage and Church. Elsewhere avenues of trees frame the principle approaches to the village from the north and west. These appear as established on the 1860 Ordnance Survey plan indicating that they have been purposely planted to enhance the setting of buildings and form attractive approaches.

Tree cover is also particularly dense to south of the church with other tree belts to the north

and west making a particularly valuable contribution to the character of the area.

These groups work together to define the edges to the Conservation Area and enclose the spaces within it.

There are numerous lanes and tracks giving access into the surrounding countryside. There are only two public rights of way which run from the south of the conservation area, these form part of an extensive network of tracks which lead to Sherburn Village, Sherburn Hill and Littletown.



**Fig 1: Trees within the old part of St Laurence's churchyard**



**Fig 2: Line of trees and roadside verge to the front of the Old Vicarage**





**Fig 3: Trees and green spaces at the entrance to Hallgarth Manor Hotel**

## 1.7 BOUNDARIES

Boundary treatments are an important part of the character of the conservation area and contribute to the strong sense of enclosure and intimacy within the village. Walls vary in height with traditional stone walls of roughly coursed rubble stone predominating.

The consistent use of stone reinforces the visual relationship between the village and the surrounding landscape. Walls are generally capped with flat stone slabs or with stones laid vertically on edge. Often traditional walls provide the main features of the street scene.

Some larger dwellings have stone piers with ornate cast iron entrance gates providing prominent entrances. Other boundaries consist of vertically boarded timber fencing and more traditional timber fencing with occasional timber gates.

Fields and un-made tracks are bordered by a mix of mature trees, hedgerows and timber post and wire fencing.



**Fig 4: Variation of boundary treatments within the conservation area**

## 1.8 PUBLIC RELAM, SURFACES AND STREET FURNITURE

The floorscape of the conservation area varies greatly. The main roads are tarmaced with grass verges. Off the roads are drive ways made of block paving, gravel and more tarmac. The use of tarmac and in some cases block paving can give a slight suburban character to houses or converted barns. Tarmaced pavement exists along the road to the church and along the main road into High Pittington. Tracks and lanes are unmetalled and so add to the rural character of the area.

Road markings and signs are few, and absent within the settlement. Green verges help maintain the rural character. There are a number of standard design street lighting columns and telegraph poles through the conservation area and are often lost within the tree canopy

lessening their visual impact, for example on the road to the Church. The lamps along the main drive to the front of the hotel are traditional cast iron lamps and add visual interest.

Signage is concentrated around the Hotel entrance with advertisement boards, banner signs and road signs. Further signage exists to the front of the Church in the form of a freestanding timber flat panel sign.

The village contains little street furniture. The overall impression within and around the village is generally uncluttered and traditional.

## 2 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE HALLGARTH PITTINGTON CONSERVATION AREA

### 2.1 THE PRINCIPLE APPROACH AND CHURCH AREA

Approaching from Sherburn Village in the east the first glimpse of Hallgarth is from the rear of Park House Gardens on the eastern side of Hallgarth Lane. From here the conservation area is seen behind rolling fields defined by tree lined hedgerows. The white render of Hallgarth Manor catches the eye within the

landscape; the remaining buildings are almost completely hidden from view by mature trees with glimpses of the gable end of Hallgarth House and the Church tower can be seen.



**Fig 5: The approach to Pittington Hallgarth from Sherburn, the small hamlet can be seen in the background**

Approaching the village the road gently curves south-east passing Broomside Farm on the left and climbs steadily. The village's presence goes almost unnoticed due to the woodland and avenues of mature trees screening the village.

The hamlet starts with the Hallgarth Manor Hotel which dominates the northern section of the conservation area. A small triangular grassed area is formed by the road that leads off the main road into High Pittington. To the north east is an irregular plot of woodland with a variety of species including sycamore, ash and beech. The woodland is relatively young and appears to have been planted in order form a buffer between High Pittington and countryside beyond.



**Fig 6: The view along Hallgarth Lane from the eastern edge of the conservation area leading to High Pittington**

Turning right off Hallgarth Lane a single-lane road heads south to St Laurence's Church. Stopping approximately 40metres along this road a long-distance view to the west presents itself across the countryside back towards Durham, including the central tower of Durham Cathedral, thus reinforcing the historic link between the settlement and Durham City.

Continuing south the road is enclosed by high boundary walls, with mature trees behind. The sense of tree cover increases towards a wide turning area between the front of the Old Vicarage and the main entrance of St Laurence's Church. Here boundary walls

and large mature trees dominate, producing a strong sense of enclosure, traditionally rural in character, whilst forming a wonderful setting to the Church.



**Fig 7: The road leading to St Laurence's Church**

**St Laurence's Church** is a grade I listed stone church consisting of tower, nave with south and north aisles and a chancel with north and south aisles. It is one of the oldest and most architecturally significant churches in the Durham Diocese.

The parish's links with the Priory of Durham suggest that there was a church here at an early pre-Conquest date. The present church has an early nave dating from around 1100 whilst the northern arcade comprises exquisite carved columns within the Romanesque style dating from around 1180.

Above this is a section of wall painting, contemporary, with the arcading, that shows two scenes from the Gift of St Cuthbert: the Consecration of the Saint by Archbishop Theodore and the Saint's vision at the table of the Abbess of Whitby.

The date and style of the arcade carvings is similar to the work within Durham Cathedral's Gallilee Chapel and the Norman Hall within Durham Castle, commissioned by Bishop Hugh de Puiset. Christian, one of the master masons, for these projects was buried in St Laurence and held lands in Sherburn suggesting that he may well have directed the works within the Church.

The development of the rest of the medieval church dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. A comprehensive restoration and re-facing programme was undertaken by Ignatius Bonomi in 1846. This work and further extensions to the Chancel in 1877 and 1905 have had a considerable impact on the appearance and fabric of the Church.



Fig 9: St Laurence's Church tower



Fig 10: The main entrance to St Laurence's Church



Fig 8: The early 19<sup>th</sup> century gates and piers forming the entrance to the Church

The **churchyard** is large and roughly rectangular with the Church in its north-west corner. It comprises two distinct parts; the original churchyard around the church which stretches south down the slope of a hillside and a mid C20 expansion to the east. The separation of the two areas is clearly defined by a line of trees and a drop in land level. The Church is clearly located on the brow of the land giving it prominence.

The oldest section contains many fine mature trees and

gravestones which combine with the church to produce a deeply attractive almost timeless and poetic impression. It is enclosed by a stone wall with simple early 19<sup>th</sup> century cast iron vehicle and pedestrian gates. These are listed grade II.

The tree cover around the church is largely of native species characterised by mature tree groups, large scattered individual trees and other vegetation, Some of the trees have great beauty and as a whole they provide a distinct backdrop for the Church and define its secluded character.

Most of the gravestones are 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, with some from the 18<sup>th</sup> century surviving. Many have detailed carvings and inscriptions reflecting both the status of the Church and the large parish it once served. Two memorials are listed grade II: The **Fenwick tomb** dating from 1820 and the **Scorer** tomb dated 1766. Both are sandstone ashlar slabs with various ornate carvings and are of local historical interest. Along the south of western boundary of the church yard is the burial plot of the **Baker Baker** family. This group is conspicuous for the use of simple memorials in white marble enclosed by white-painted cast iron railings.

Walking through the older section of the churchyard there is a intimate, secluded if somewhat dark feel created by the abundance of mature trees. By contrast the modern section of the graveyard is a lot plainer,

more open and altogether leaves behind the traditional wooded character. The openness allows views to the north, south and east, allowing an appreciation of the conservation area in its wider setting. The contrast between the rural historic character of the conservation area and the newer, more industrial character of High Pittington is clearly felt here.



**Fig 11: St Laurence's Churchyard; the view along the footpath leading to the rear expansion**

Leaving the churchyard an unmade track heads south to the edge of the conservation area. This track is framed by a stone wall with trees behind on the church yard side and dense hedge on the other, giving a very enclosed rural appearance.

Continuing south the track opens up to produce a distant view east across the open countryside. Here Little Town Farmhouse can be seen nestled

within the landscape; the white render of the building drawing the eye. Long hedgerows define field boundaries and green fields climb behind the building to woodland on the horizon. Crossing the track and looking east from the same vantage point exposes a long distance view back towards Sherburn Village; the settlement positioned high above the rolling fields.



**Fig 12: The view from the southern edge of the conservation area boundary east towards Little Town Farm**

Turning and heading north back up the track; opposite the Church to the east lies the **Old Vicarage**. This large 2½ storey building is constructed from coursed squared stone with a pitched slate roof; the building is of an “L” plan with prominent gables and chimneys and

feature timber mullioned windows. The building was constructed in 1833 and extended to the north with an additional wing some time in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The setting of the building is formed by a large garden enclosed by a coursed rubble stone wall with two prominent piers and ornate gates forming the entrance. The garden is well-maintained and contains a number of trees of differing ages and species.

Associated with the Old Vicarage to the north lies **Hallgarth House** dating from the mid to late C20. The building has been constructed on the site of the former walled gardens of the Old Vicarage which were present up until the late C19.

Although a modern building the design is traditional, influenced by the Old Vicarage, and has clearly tried to reflect the character of the conservation area. In this respect the development is successful and the buildings impact has been lessened by its positioning set back within its plot and contained behind a high stone wall. The setting of the building is enhanced by a large well maintained garden.



**Fig 13: The Old Vicarage constructed in 1833**



**Fig 14: Hallgarth House dating from the mid to late C20**

To the east of the Old Vicarage lies the site of **Priors Hall Scheduled Ancient Monument**.

This is believed to be part of the main manorial house belonging to the Prior of Durham Cathedral.

Historic maps show that two semi-detached cottages occupied the site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1950s but to what degree these were constructed on or from the remnants of any hall is currently unknown.

It was first built around 1258. It is known from historic records that there was once a mill, hall, various barns, a bake house,

stables, kitchen and other buildings grouped around the site. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536 to 1541) the buildings were dismantled. The surviving remains consist of low moss covered foundations of various buildings and a scatter of building debris. There are number of matures trees to the front and within the site and a low random rubble stone wall surrounds the site on three side.

An un-made track runs through Priors Hall to the rear of the site. Here there is a set of stone steps which lead up to a break in the stone boundary wall, the top of the wall providing a viewing platform out across fields and open countryside. From here the edge of the Medieval barn and Priory View can be seen to the left along with the more modern buildings forming Church Vale within Pitlington. Further in the distance rolling fields and grazing lands climb up to woodland areas.



**Fig 15: The stone wall and steps to the rear of the site of the Priors Hall, with Priory View to the left**

North of Priors Hall on the eastern side of the road lies **Chestnut Lodge** a 20<sup>th</sup> Century bungalow. This red brick building is modern and suburban in style yet sited back from the road in a well-maintained garden behind a low stone wall.

The adjoining large plot of land to the north of Chestnut Lodge is occupied by **The Orchard**, a 20<sup>th</sup> century two-storey building constructed from a pale brick with a pitched slate roof. Like Chestnut Lodge the building is overtly modern in style with a glazed extension and roof terrace to its front. The property has a large well-maintained garden with a water feature to the front and is enclosed by a stone wall, large mature trees and an established hedgerow to the east side.

In contrast to Hallgarth House the modern style of both properties does not reflect the historic buildings of the conservation area. Whilst pleasant buildings within well-maintained gardens they make a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area.



**Fig 16: Chestnut Lodge a 20C bungalow**



**Fig 17: The Orchard constructed in the 20C with a later glazed extension**

## **2.2 HALLGARTH MANOR HOTEL**

Heading north back towards the main road a short secondary road leads east to **Hallgarth Manor Hotel** (grade II listed). The entrance to the hotel is marked by two stone piers with large ball finials and an avenue of mature trees flanking the main drive. Hallgarth Manor Hotel is a Grade II listed building and along with its outbuildings forms the main focal point of the north side of the hamlet.

The Hotel is a large white render and slate building with ranges of out buildings attached to its sides and clustered to the rear. The building has the 'stand-alone' status of a hall at the heart of an estate. It is set back behind a large front garden which gives it considerable presence along the main road into High Pittington, whilst all other buildings near to it are subservient in scale.



At least early 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin the building was significantly altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its obvious status the front elevation appears slightly disjointed. The venetian stair window to the right hand of the front door may indicate that the present front elevation was the rear and that the original building was focused on the Church.

The hotel site is bordered by high rubble stone walls to the south and timber rails and trees to the north. This produces a contrast between the enclosed private side facing the church and the open aspect facing High Pittington.

Although much altered this former hall still retains much of its traditional character and poses a number of historical questions significant to the area, such as its age and development. Along with the Church it defines everything around it and so is central to the character of this conservation area.

To the front of the hotel exists a large triangular plot of land, tarmaced as a car park to the front of the hotel and then lawned to the road. Of particular importance within the lawned section is the avenue of trees that lead from the apex of the triangle, where it meets the road to the entrance of the Hotel. The avenue consists of large mature trees with some younger species planted as replacement at the northern end. The trees are of various species including sycamore, ash, maple, and beech. The

older trees may be over three hundred years old and therefore pre-date the Hotel, indeed on older maps the avenue heads to the side of the Hotel and towards the Church via the site of the Priors Hall.

The relationship between the hotel and its surroundings are mixed. To the rear there is a strong relationship between the building and the well-maintained grounds. The grounds are spacious, and enhanced by planting providing an attractive setting for the listed building.

The front, has a similar potential, especially considering the avenue of trees, but fails to realise its promise. The tarmaced drive and car park dulls the area, whilst the plain lawn fails to compensate. However it remains a simple open space that is central to separating Hallgarth from High Pittington and giving the former its rural character.



**Fig 18: Hallgarth Manor Hotel, front elevation, the Venetian stair window is to the right**



**Fig 19: The rear of the hotel, the well landscaped grounds enhancing the setting of the listed building**



**Fig 20: The avenue of trees to the front of the hotel many of which pre-date the hotel itself**

Attached to the west-end of the Hotel is a single storey stone outbuilding with timber sash windows with stone heads and sills and appears to be a former barn. To the east end of the hotel is a single storey stone range comprising the **Tavern**, currently in use as a bar attached to the Hotel and the

**Old Dairy**, a residence. The building is a low-lying single storey former farm building constructed from stone with a pitched slate roof.

Its conversion has had mixed results with a strong degree of character being retained at the front where few new openings have been inserted in contrast the rear has been more altered, with modern timber windows, small roof-lights and red-brick boundary wall with modern style gates, giving it a residential feel.

To the north east of the Old Dairy, across the second road into the village is **Hallgarth Farm**. This mid 20<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse was perhaps built when the hall stopped becoming the centre of an estate. The substantial detached two-storey property is of a red brick construction with a hipped red tiled roof. The building was altered in 2001 with the addition of an extension to the front and garage to the rear.

The building is of a simple solid style that has a neutral effect on the character of the conservation area. It is enclosed by a rubble stone wall and a number of trees, within its garden, help to blend the building in with its surroundings.



**Fig 21: The Tavern**



Fig 22: Hallgarth House

## 2.3 THE AREA TO THE SOUTH EAST OF HALLGARTH MANOR HOTEL

To the south east of the hotel exists the former workers cottages and agricultural buildings formerly associated within the Hall. These buildings vary in age and former function and were converted in 2001. Together they have a key role in maintaining the agricultural character of the hamlet.

The first buildings within the area are the three terraced cottages; **Cooks Cottage, Blacksmiths Cottage and Squires Cottage**. These small single storey cottages are white painted render with pitched slate roofs and prominent dormers. The cottages sit back within rectangular plots behind front gardens overlooking open countryside. Replacement windows and hard render have lessened their historic character but they retain a cosy character, of a different historic status to the large houses of the hamlet. The cottages now have a domestic 19<sup>th</sup> century character but tree-ring dating analysis, undertaken by English Heritage in 2001, found that two-thirds of the roof timbers

dated from the mid to late 16<sup>th</sup> century with the remaining third indicating a later mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century extension. This research highlights the depth of historic interest and potential that the historic buildings in the conservation area represent and also that first appearances can be deceptive.



Fig 23: The three terraced cottages, Cooks Cottage, Blacksmiths Cottage and Squires Cottage

Beyond the cottages are the former farm buildings. These are constructed from rubble stone and brick with pitched red pantile roofs. The public faces of the buildings are set behind rubble stone walls adding to the tight sense of enclosure within this part of the conservation

area. The private space to the rear of the buildings is particularly attractive with large openings facing well landscaped gardens.

The standard of conversion is good and considerable care has been taken over details. As with all residential barn conversions some degree of residential character is inevitable. The lawn and garden areas, as well as the garages add to this aspect. On balance the initial conversion is successful, retaining the general agricultural character important to preserving a rounded and full picture of Hallgarth. Care must be taken in the future to respect and maintain this.

The first of the farm buildings is the **Hayloft**, to the south of the cottages. The building is a 1½ storey residential dwelling with a single storey detached garage at its northern end. Unusually the structure is constructed in brick with round arched openings on the ground floor suggesting that it was originally either a cart shed or open shelter with storage above. The garage to the north appears to be a recent building and makes good use of traditional materials with a simple design.



**Fig 24: The Hayloft and garage a former cart shed or open shelter which has been sympathetically converted**

To the south is a large long barn of an “L” plan set around and open courtyard, this building is known as the **Medieval Barn**, it is constructed from rubble stone with a pitched red pantile roof. Triangular ventilation holes within the gable ends and a large opening in its main elevation show that this was a threshing barn. Whether it is medieval in origin is currently unknown but suggested by its physical link within the medieval manor complex and the triangular ventilation holes which are characteristic of agricultural buildings belonging to the Priory of Durham. It is one of the key former farm buildings.

Continuing south the footpath leads to **Priory View** and **The Parlour**, two attached former agricultural buildings forming a “U” shape around a small courtyard area. The buildings date from the late C19 but may feature some earlier fabric and despite some modern interventions they retain their original and traditional form.

To the rear of Priory View a there is an attractive view above the stone wall of the north elevation of St. Lawrence's. The historic development of the Church can be read with the later additions clearly identifiable from the original structure.

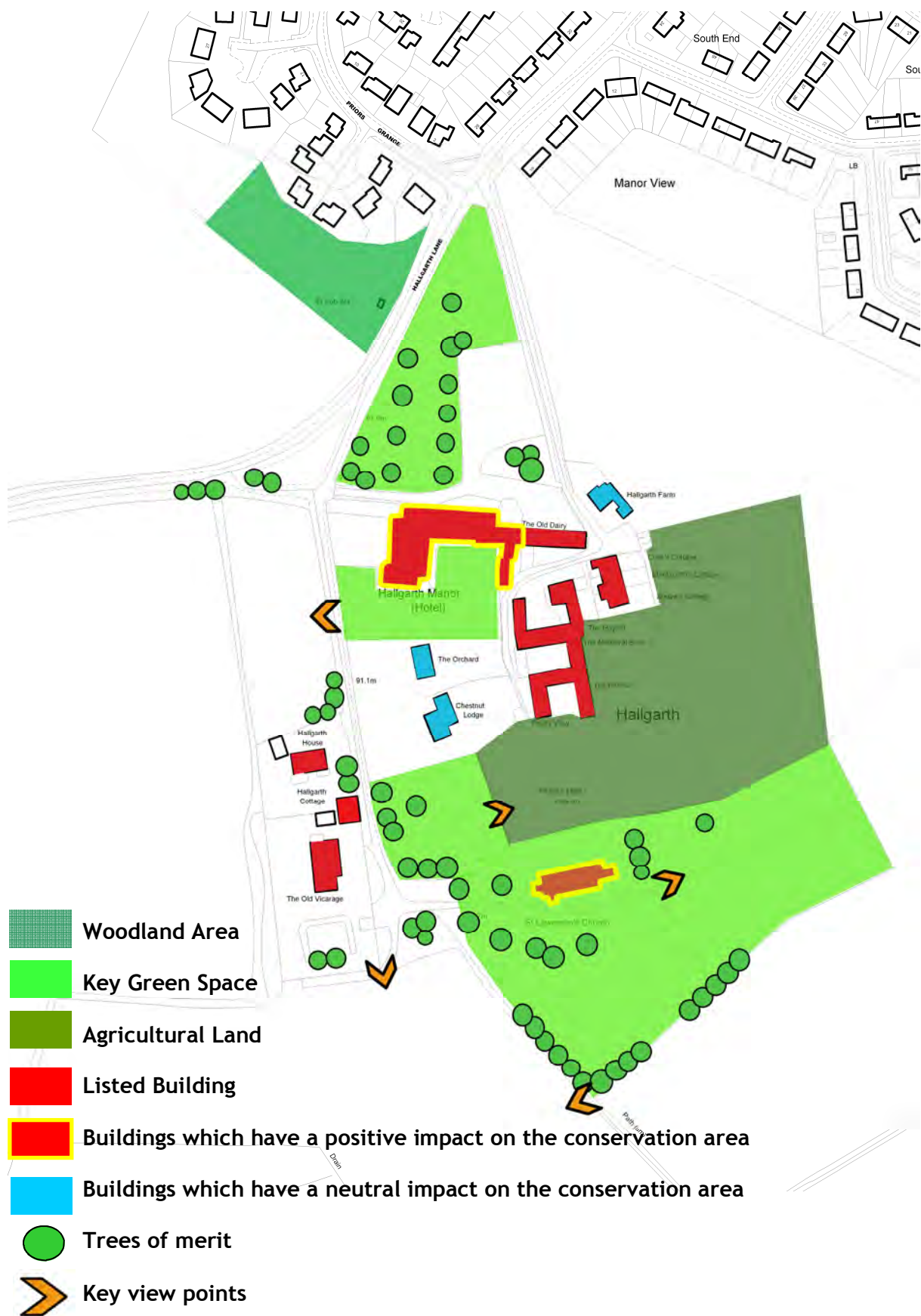


**Fig 25: The Medieval Barn**



**Fig 26: Priory View and the Parlour  
former agricultural buildings  
dating from the late 19C**

**Map 3**  
**Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area**  
**Townscape & Landscape Analysis Plan**



### **3 MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

#### **3.1 MANAGING CHANGE**

The long term success of a conservation area relies on ensuring that changes within it respect its special architectural and historic character. The principle way in which this is achieved is through the planning system which is administered by Durham County Council.

Beyond the planning system the role of residents and building owners is also crucial. Everyday actions such as the maintenance of gardens, keeping buildings and boundaries in good repair using traditional materials and styles all combine to preserve character and charm of a conservation area.

Enhancement projects, large and small, make a strong positive impression on the character of a conservation area. The reinstatement and repair of traditional street surfaces, building features, such as doors and windows, and green areas, such as gardens and parks can all help improve the quality of an area.

Generally such work is undertaken by the local authority when funding allows. They can also be undertaken at a more individual scale by a local residents group, parish council or individual.

#### **3.2 CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

The principle aim of the conservation area is to protect the settlement and its setting. The current boundary clearly achieves this.

Public consultation requested that the fields between the conservation area and High Pittington be included within the boundary. On consideration these fields were not felt to be of sufficient interest as they relate equally to High Pittington as they do Pittington Hallgarth. The fields are already classed as open countryside for planning purposes which carries a strong presumption against development on them. Consideration of the setting of the conservation area means that the fields do have a planning relationship with that designation. Consequently no need was found to change the current boundary either through extension or reduction.

#### **3.3 CONDITION OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

All of the buildings within the conservation area are in use and the majority of the buildings well maintained. There is an obvious pride, from residents, in the appearance of Hallgarth which greatly adds to its charm and traditional character.

Whilst the traditional still dominates there are a number of instances where modern additions such as satellite dishes, TV aerials and alarm boxes have

been made on the principle elevations or chimney stacks of buildings. Such additions are highly visible and detract from the character of the historic environment. In addition, although limited in number, roof-lights do appear on some buildings, the majority are conservation rooflights installed flush with the roof plane which lessen their visual intrusion, however a number protrude from the roofs these generally detract from the visual quality of the buildings on which they sit.

The stone boundary walls are an attractive feature of the conservation area and are generally well maintained throughout the settlement. However there are some instances where repairs are required; such as the stone wall to the Manor Hotel. Some stone walls within the churchyard have also suffered due to vandalism and graffiti.

Hedgerows are generally well established and in good condition, apart from some that are filled in with post and wire fencing.

There are a number of open spaces which don't markedly detract from the character of the conservation area but could be improved upon, such as the area between the Church and Old Vicarage or the car park and lawn to the front of the Hotel.

### **3.4 THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

Conservation Areas are protected in planning legislation through the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and through policies within the City of Durham Local Plan (2004). Both will be replaced within the coming years, with the Heritage Protection Bill and a County-wide Local Developments Framework respectively.

However the way in which protection applies will be maintained and can be summarised as follows:

- In controlling the demolition of buildings and boundaries;
- In considering the impact of development on the special character of conservation area when planning permission is required;
- In controlling minor operations such as (changing windows, doors or installing porches);
- In controlling works to trees.

#### **RELEVANT POLICIES WITHIN THE CITY OF DURHAM LOCAL PLAN**

The Durham City Council Local Plan has policies that aim to preserve the scale and character of Pitlington Hallgarth. Pitlington Hallgarth has no defined 'settlement limits' meaning that the scope for new housing or the redevelopment of existing plots is very limited and subject to



fitting in with the character of the village (Policies H4 to H6).

Policies EMP 16, 17 & 17A relate to farming and the rural employment and aim to strike a balance between creating a strong rural economy and maintaining the character and natural value of the countryside. The cultural value of the conservation area, its buildings and green areas is protected through numerous policies relating to the environment (Policies E7, E8, E14, E15, E21 & E22).

### **SPECIFIC PLANNING GUIDANCE**

The following guidance is written in light of the appraisal and specific to this document. The guidance compliments the existing Local Plan Policies.

#### **Demolition**

The demolition of all historic buildings within the conservation area will be resisted and re-use encouraged.

The demolition of modern buildings is unlikely to be resisted, though in the majority of cases plans for re-development of a site will be required before approval is given.

#### **New Residential Development**

The scope for new residential development in or surrounding

the conservation area is limited due to its location in open countryside. However when opportunities occur new development should seek to preserve or enhance the character of the Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area. This will be achieved not only by a good quality design but through the scale and density of development in relation to its plot, to the settlement and the surrounding countryside.

Within a rural conservation area good design does not just mean building in the right materials and style. Density and scale are equally important in order to maintain the settlements rural character. Boundary treatments, green spaces and respecting openness and views to and from the surrounding countryside are equally important issues.

#### **Changes to existing buildings**

Changes to existing buildings should respect the character of that property and the area. Extensions should be kept subservient to the main property and avoid complex roof junctions and too much architectural detailing. Proposals that seek to re-instate appropriate historic features within historic buildings will be welcomed.

Extensions to any building can have a strong effect on its appearance. This is particularly the case with barn conversions and historic buildings in general where poorly designed extensions can appear very

discordant. There is scope for improving older properties through the reinstatement of historic features, such as windows and doors, though only when they are appropriate in style and date.

### **Works to boundary walls**

The boundary walls within and around the settlement are an important feature of the conservation area and add to its rural and enclosed character.

These walls are key features and should be maintained and preserved.

### **Archaeology**

The archaeological implications of all new build including extensions within the settlement should always be considered when new developments are being considered. The settlements long history and compactness means that the archaeological potential should be considered high.

### **PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND ARTILCE 4(2) DIRECTIONS**

Within a conservation area planning restrictions are tighter but there is still a lot that can be done without planning permission by the owner of a dwelling house. These works are called permitted development rights and are summarised in Appendix 2.

Permitted development rights can be restricted by the Council

through making an Article 4(2) direction. At present there is no Article 4(2) Direction covering the Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area. Considering the quality of historic development and conversion within the conservation area it is worth considering the placement of Article 4 (2) on the historic houses. The process to do so is independent to this document and subject to a separate public consultation exercise.

### **HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND UTILITY PROVISION**

It is not the role of a conservation area appraisal to comment on specific traffic or utility provision issues. It will though have an informative impact on any related proposals such as traffic calming measures or telegraph pole replacements. As a general rule statutory contractors should have due regard to the status of a conservation area, most notably its small size, rural character and lack of visual clutter.

### **ENHANCEMENT**

As a small settlement with no defined public space and amenity areas the scope for substantial enhancement works appears limited.

In addition the small scale of the settlement suggests that the potential for public funding for enhancement works would unfortunately be limited. However that is not to rule out including the settlement in wider funding projects and the potential to enhance the conservation area through minor changes. Consequently an aspirational list of work can be drawn up and used to inform projects that cover the wider area.

Below is an initial list which is suggestive only and which can be expanded upon through public consultation:

1. The undergrounding of overhead wires to cut down visual clutter.
2. The reinstatement of historic details to buildings and boundaries through grant funding or owner action or both.
3. Interpretation work on the archaeology and history of the settlement, especially its surviving archaeological features. Perhaps led by a local history group with outside funding and advice.
4. Improvement works to street surfaces and green spaces.
5. Consider Article 4(2) Directions covering a select number of properties (See above)

## Appendix A

### WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

Pittington Hallgarth Conservation Area equals approximately 8hectars and was designated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1981.

The conservation area is generally tightly drawn around the settlement and encompasses the irregular shaped plot of woodland to the north and the churchyard to the south. The boundary is predominantly denoted by the walls that border the rear plots of the buildings contained within the conservation area.

Approaching along Hallgarth Lane from the west, the conservation area commences at the small triangular plot of green space forming the road junction leading to High Pittington and Hallgarth. It then proceeds north-east following the hedgerow along the road side towards High Pittington before turning sharply to the north-west along the edge of the woodland area to the rear of Priors Grange. The boundary continues along this path for approximately 110meters before heading north-east crossing mid-way between the woodland area. From here the boundary curves to the east following the line of the rear gardens of Priors Grange on the edge of High Pittington and heading back towards Hallgarth Lane.

From this point the boundary travels east crossing Hallgath Lane and along the northern edge of the front lawn and car park to the Hotel. The boundary then turns sharply to the south-east following the inside edge of the of the track road towards Hallgarth Farm.

The boundary then follows the outside edge of Hallgarth Farm and then turns east running approximately 70metres out into the adjacent field. From here the conservation area turns south and continues along the rear of St Laurence's Churchyard following the line of the boundary wall.

The conservation area then turns to the west following the path of the southern wall of the churchyard. It continues along this route until it reaches the un-made footpath to Coalford Beck. It then heads north-west following the un-made track back towards the church. Once at the top of the footpath the boundary turns west following the fence line along a field boundary to the south west corner of the Old Vicarage. At this point the boundary turns north following the line of an un-made track which terminates at the south west corner of Hallgarth House. It then continues north before heading east following the line of the grazing land lying immediately to the north of Hallgarth House. Once at the road, the boundary turns north again following the line of the stone wall along the roads western edge, it then turns east arriving back at the triangular piece of land.

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