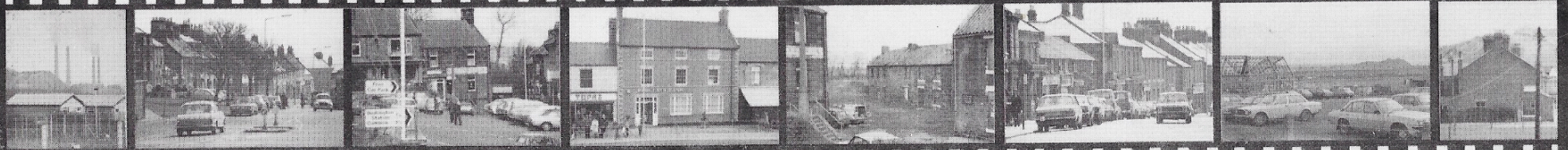


# Bedlington Town Local Plan

## Main Choices



Environment...Jobs...Housing...Shopping...Leisure...Movement...Environment



Main Choices

## Bedlington Town Local Plan

### A Discussion Document

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June, 1979.



## FOREWORD.

This report has been written and published by the Chief Planning Officer of Wansbeck District Council as part of the preparation of the Bedlington Town Local Plan.

Because the Council are anxious to involve the public as far as possible in the local plan they have delayed detailed consideration of the report until after it has been presented to the people of Bedlington by the Planning Department.

The report therefore represents the views of the Chief Planning Officer alone. It is an attempt to summarise the practical information which has been collected and to describe the main choices which must be made in the making of local plan proposals.

It must be stressed that neither the Chief Planning Officer nor Wansbeck District Council have at this stage formulated final planning proposals for Bedlington. This will only be done after the public and the Council have given their views. Both the public and the Council are free to suggest further possible courses of action to those discussed in this report.



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# Introduction



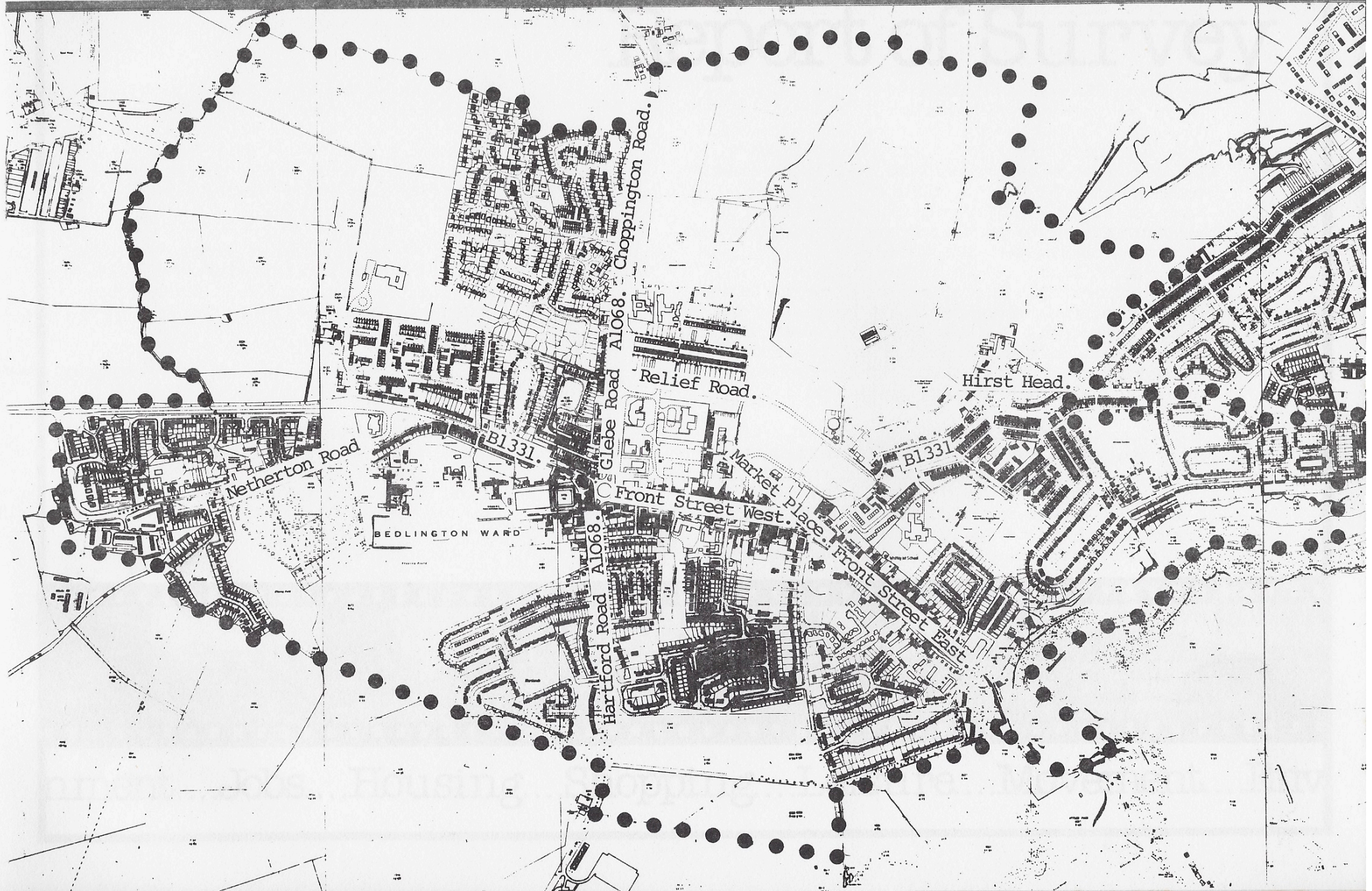
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- 1.1. This report is a consultation document for the Bedlington Town Local Plan. Work commenced on the Local Plan in July 1978 as an amendment to the County of Northumberland Development Plan Scheme, published in July 1976. It is to incorporate two plans previously programmed, Bedlington Town Centre Development Plan and the North Bedlington Development Brief.
- 1.2. The Bedlington Town Local Plan is intended to examine the current proposals set out in the two development briefs in the context of the whole town and to then provide a planning framework for the future.
- 1.3. The area of study for the Bedlington Town Local Plan includes the whole of the existing developed area, together with the land to the north and west of the town. The eastern boundary of the study area adjoins the western limit of the Bedlington Station Local Plan. The Bedlington Town Local Plan Area is shown on Map 1.
- 1.4. A full report of survey has been produced, but in order to set the main issues before the public this has been summarised in this report.
- 1.5. The aim of 'Bedlington, The Main Choices', is to describe briefly the current situation in Bedlington and to set out the main areas where decisions have to be taken before a final plan can be formulated. The Main Choices are put forward in each of the Decision Areas and the implications of each choice is discussed. Where the Chief Planning Officer has a preference this is shown, and the reasons for that preference explained.

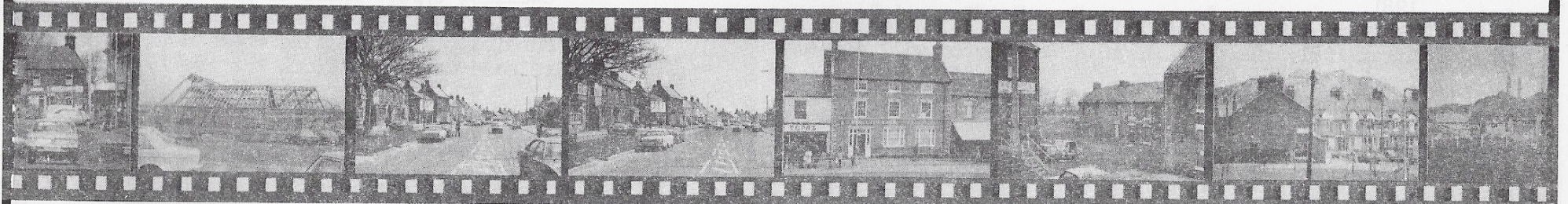


# Map 1 LOCAL PLAN AREA





# Report of Survey



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particularly tree planting would help to improve these areas.

- 7.3. There are 5 listed buildings in the plan area. Special care needs to be taken to ensure their survival, and to make sure they have a suitable setting. Council have statutory powers to protect listed buildings.

- 7.4. Bedlington has several interesting changes in ground level, as the Town Centre is higher than most of the surrounding land. This leads to a number of interesting views, particularly to the north, which should be exploited in any future development.

- 7.5. Bedlington has a number of areas of mature woodland, notably in the Country Park, and the Cemetery. The trees along Front Street West are extremely important to the townscape.

## 8. Community Facilities.

- 8.1. The Northumberland County Council Education Committee plan to replace the West Sleekburn Middle School with a new Middle School situated at Hirst Head. An increase in population may lead to a situation where further first school provision is required.

- 8.2. The Area Health Authority consider that expansion of the Health Centre may be necessary if there is substantial growth in the population of Bedlington.

## 9. Recreation and Leisure.

- 9.1. With 11 acres of permanent allotments the local plan area has sufficient to meet the requirements laid down in the Thorpe Report on Allotments and Leisure Gardens although the current waiting list indicates that there is unsatisfied demand in Bedlington.

- 9.2. There is no overall shortage of public open space in the local plan area but areas of open space will be needed adjacent to new housing in the northern part of the plan area to provide safe and attractive areas for childrens play.

- 9.3. Community, social and cultural facilities would appear to be adequate apart from the lack of an assembly hall large enough to be used for civic functions, major dances, concerts and other large functions.

- 9.4. Outdoor sports provision for the local plan area will need to be extended if national standards are to be met and a new population catered for.

- 9.5. There is a lack of indoor sports provision in the local plan area though Bedlington High School at Bedlington Station has many good facilities available for use by the public outside school hours. These include a sports hall, squash courts, athletics track, tennis courts and various sports pitches.

## 10. Public Utilities.

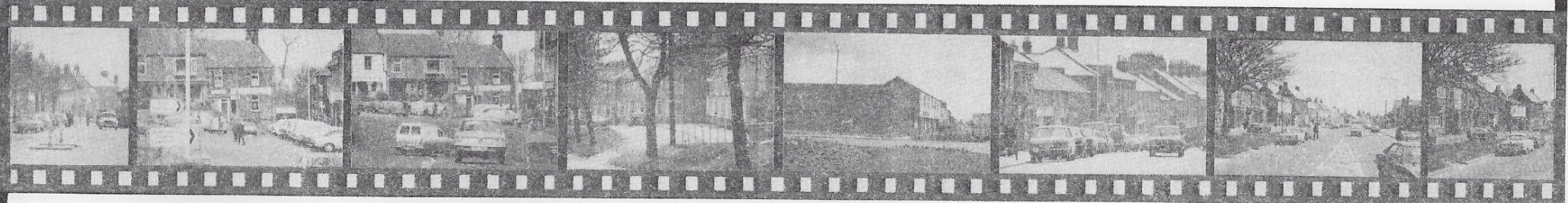
- 10.1. There are no major land use problems regarding the provision of public utility services to the local plan area. Certain technical problems may arise as a result of development and these will be dealt with by normal procedures.

- 10.2. The Gas Holder on the Relief Road will be demolished during the plan period.

- 10.3. The North Eastern Electricity Board own an area of land north of the Relief Road which is reserved for future expansion.



# Commitments & Constraints



nment...Jobs...Housing...Shopping...Leisure...Movement...Env



- 11.1. The plan must take account of commitments and constraints that are matters of current planning policy.
- 11.2. Overall planning policy framework for the area is provided by the Northumberland County Structure Plan. This has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment for formal approval. The Structure Plan states that within the Bedlington, Stakeford, Guide Post and Choppington areas sufficient land should be made available for the construction of 1,450 dwellings between 1976 and 1991. Around 450 dwellings and 112 aged persons units have been constructed since 1976, which means that land for around 900 dwellings needs to be found for the next 12 years. The Structure Plan also covers shopping policy over this period. It gives no precise details of maximum permitted shopping development, but states that the County Council will resist major developments which will have an adverse effect on the viability of existing retail centres throughout the County. Details of future shopping in Bedlington are being discussed at present with the County Council.
- 11.3. The North Bedlington Development Brief identifies 8 hectares of land which is being made available for private residential development under the Councils Community Land Act powers. This consists of the former brickworks site, and the 2 fields immediately to the north.
- 11.4. A report on Bedlington Town Centre Development has been completed by a group of planning consultants, Leslie Berry Associates. This report was accepted by the Council in September 1978 as a guide for development. Its major proposal was for a new shopping development in Rosella Place, with a need for 2,000 square metres net additional shopping by 1985. In addition they proposed some major leisure provision behind this development, and a major office development north of the relief road. It was proposed that the rest of the town centre area would be for residential use with special housing on Vulcan Place, behind the old Council Offices, and family housing elsewhere.
- 11.5. Northumberland County Council are committed to the replacement of the West Sleekburn Middle School with a new school at Hirst Head. The County Education Department anticipate that construction will commence in 1984/5.
- 11.6. Development in the Local Plan area is constrained by 2 major schemes adjacent to the plan area. Because of the working of the Howard Opencast from Autumn 1979 to the west of the plan area it is considered that the area of farmland to the west of Bedlington should not be developed until such time as the opencast workings are completed. In the east Northumberland County Council are due to commence reclamation of the 'A' pit spoil heap in September 1979. It is anticipated that this should be complete around 1982.



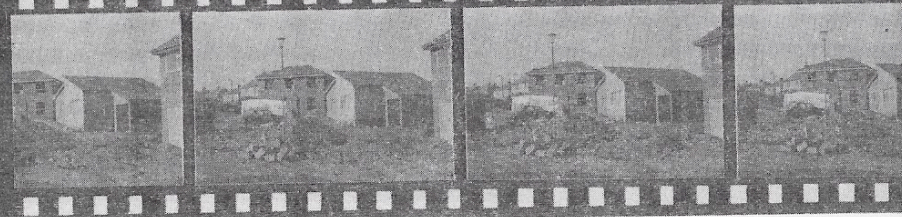
# Main Choices



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## 12:Housing

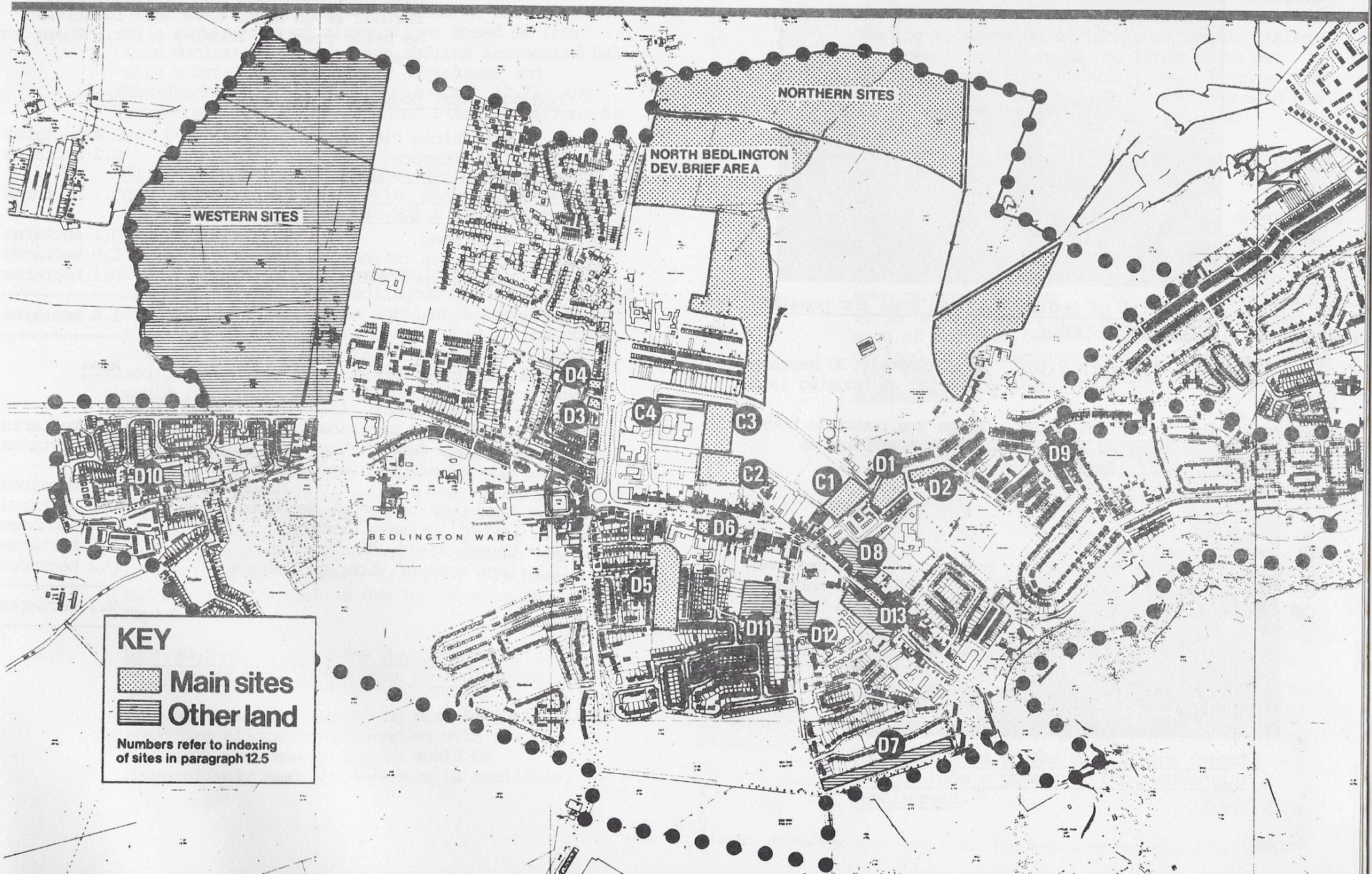


using...Housing...Housing..

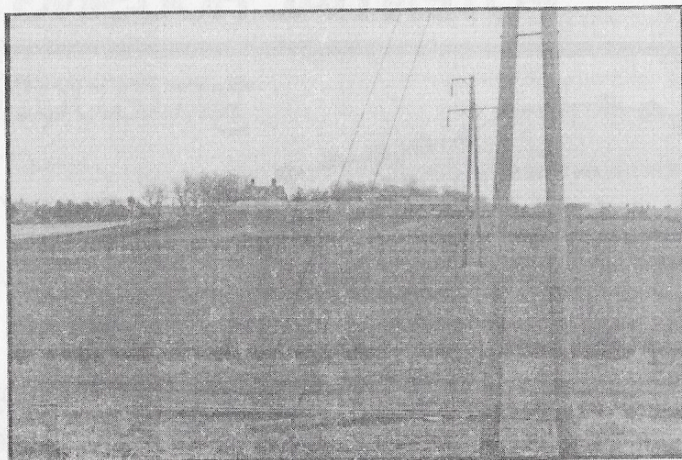
- 12.1. The issue of housing is one of the most important areas for decision in the Bedlington Town Local Plan. Choices made here will affect the development of the settlement of Bedlington for the next few years.
- 12.2. The Structure Plan housing policy regarding the Bedlington area is that land should be made available for the construction of 1,450 dwellings between 1976 and 1991. Approximately 720 dwellings plus a further 103 aged person units have been completed or have outstanding permission since 1976, and therefore land is required for a further 700 dwellings.
- 12.3. Land will be made available in advance of the Local Plan through the North Bedlington Development Brief. Approximately 8 hectares of land is to be released which could take up between 200 and 250 dwellings of the Structure Plan allocation.
- 12.4. Through the Local Plan the choice will be made as to which areas of land will be allocated for residential development. Approximately 20 hectares of land will be required to ensure sufficient supply for 450 to 500 dwellings.
- 12.5. In the Bedlington Town Local Plan Report of Survey potential development land was identified. The many different sites were grouped into four categories. The sites are shown on Map 2.
  - (a) Northern sites; that is areas of land to the North of Bedlington. Eight hectares of land are to be made available for residential development under the North Bedlington Development Brief. A further 15 hectares have good potential as housing land.



# Map 2 POTENTIAL HOUSING SITES







Land North of Bedlington. An area for possible future development.

(b) Western Sites. Approximately 30 hectares of land have a potential as housing land.

(c) Central Sites. These are possible housing sites in the town centre and are as follows:-

|                                     | <u>Area</u>              |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| C1 West Vulcan Place.               | 0.5 hectares             |
| C2 Rear of 42-68 Front Street West. | 0.7 hectares             |
| C3 Remainder of Council Yard.       | 0.8 hectares             |
| C4 Other Land.                      | 0.5 hectares             |
|                                     | <hr/> 2.5 hectares <hr/> |

(d) Peripheral Sites. These are sites not in the town centre but still within the built-up area of Bedlington. Six sites have good potential for housing whilst a further seven sites have been identified as being possible housing sites. These are listed below.

| <u>Good potential housing sites.</u>                         | <u>Area</u>              |
|--|--------------------------|
| D1 East Vulcan Place.  | 0.4 hectares             |
| D2 Hirst Terrace.  | 0.2 hectares             |
| D3 Land north of Nobles Bingo Hall,<br>Glebe Road. less than | 0.1 hectares             |
| D4 Site of former Parish Hall,<br>Glebe Road. less than      | 0.1 hectares             |
| D5 Allotments to rear of Council Offices.                    | 1.0 hectares             |
| D6 Front Street Methodist Church.                            | 0.1 hectares             |
|  | <hr/> 1.8 hectares <hr/> |

| <u>Other possible housing sites.</u>                               | <u>Area</u>              |
|--|--------------------------|
| D7 Millfield South (following demolition<br>of existing pre-fabs). | 1.0 hectares             |
| D8 Vicarage Gardens/Foggans Yard.                                  | 0.3 hectares             |
| D9 Site adjacent 1 Seaton Terrace.<br>less than                    | 0.1 hectares             |
| D10 Land rear of Co-op, Netherton Road.                            | 0.2 hectares             |
| D11 Council Nursery Gardens.                                       | 0.4 hectares             |
| D12 Church Field, Church Lane.                                     | 0.2 hectares             |
| D13 Land rear of Vicarage Terrace.                                 | 0.2 hectares             |
|  | <hr/> 2.3 hectares <hr/> |



12.6. Paragraph 12.5. lists all the sites which have potential for residential development in the plan period. The approach to future residential development in Bedlington depends on the selection of a combination of alternatives based on four main decisions. These four choices are stated below with a brief summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each. In paragraph 12.11. the preferred opinion of the Chief Planning Officer is put forward for discussion.

12.7. H1 : Whether to continue the development of land north of Bedlington following the completion of the phase designated under the North Bedlington Development Brief.

Continuing the development would fulfil a feeling, often expressed, that Bedlington should be 'rounded off' to the north, as the settlement spreads south, east and west at present with a void to the north. A further advantage is that sewerage is already available. Part of the development of this area would involve the loss of considerable marginal farmland.

The disadvantages of developing this land include difficulties of gaining access from the west, the problem of electricity power lines crossing some of the fields, the possibility of limited subsidence due to previous mining operations in the east of this area and the loss of some farmland. Parts of the area are adjacent to the 'A' Pit heap and reclamation work is due to commence in September 1979.

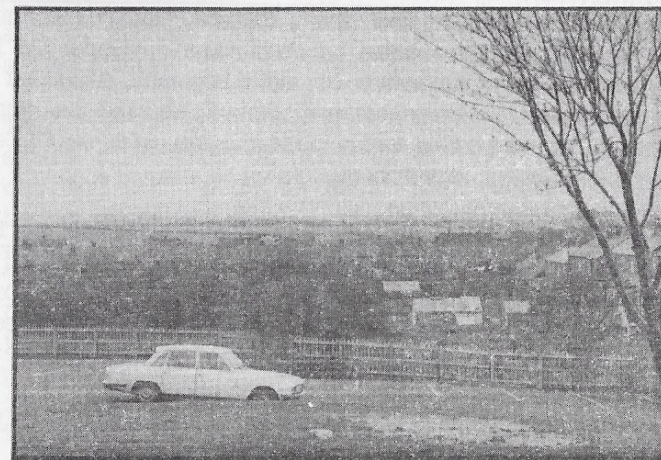
12.8. H2 : Whether to allow the development of 30 hectares of land to the west of Bedlington.

This area is large enough in size to take all the remaining allocation of housing with few technical problems as access would be comparatively easy and sewerage is available.

The main objection is that the development of this area would further stretch Bedlington along its east-west axis thereby making the outskirts of the settlement more remote from the town centre, leading to needs to duplicate services. (Also the area is adjacent to the land due to be opencast mined from late 1979 onwards under the Howard Opencast Scheme. Development should not take place whilst this scheme continues).

12.9. H3 : Whether to develop sites in the town centre for housing.

The advantage of allowing residential development in the town centre is that it would achieve the aim of immediately developing the town centre. Such development could bring more life into the town centre. However, large areas of suburban style housing would impose an alien character on much of the town centre. The immediate development of land is not necessarily desirable when in the long term more appropriate uses could be accommodated.



The allotments to the rear of the Council Offices have a potential for residential development.



- 12.10. H4 : Whether to continue the policy of infilling small sites outside the above areas with residential development.

The infilling of small sites within the existing built up area would mean that less agricultural land would be taken for new development. Often sites are untidy and in need of enhancement and residential development would be a satisfactory way of achieving a solution.

However, most of these sites are fairly difficult to develop, because of ownership, existing use or physical site problems, and their size often acts as a further constraint. If housing development is desired on these difficult sites then Wansbeck District Council might have to take an active role in removing some of these constraints.

- 12.11. These four choices combine to give many options for the residential development of Bedlington. The option that the Chief Planning Officer favours is one based on:-

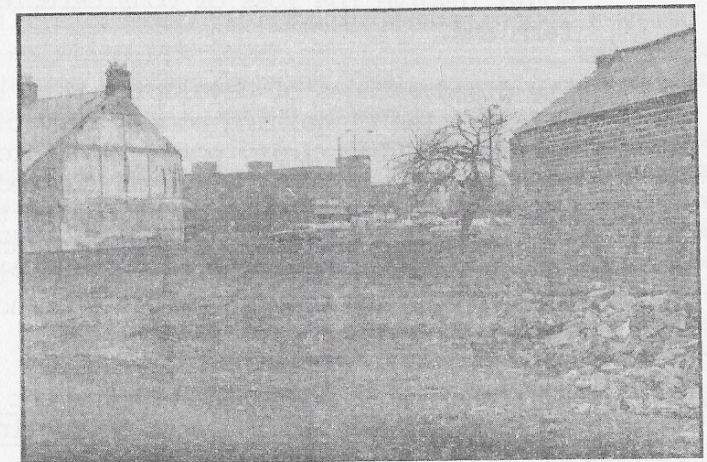
- (a) The continued development of North Bedlington as the most logical main extension to the built up area of the town. Here it is felt that the impetus of development started through the Development Brief should be continued, and that the main objections are technical and can be overcome.
- (b) No development to the West of Bedlington until other development land is used up. This area is not considered to be a priority, and the splitting of development between the north and west could mean a loss of impetus in the north.
- (c) Selective development of town centre sites.

The sites to the west of Vulcan Place and to the rear of 42-68 Front Street West should be considered for special housing schemes whilst

the development of other parts of the town centre should be held back so as not to interfere with the development of north Bedlington.

- (d) Selective development of the peripheral sites.

Here it is considered that those identified in paragraph 12.5. as good potential housing sites should receive full promotion as residential development land so that development can take place as soon as possible. The other sites are noted as land where there is no objection in principle to residential development but that at the present such development is not necessary as the sites are relatively unimportant. Changing circumstances could lead to a position where a more positive approach would be required to facilitate development.



The Chief Planning Officer favours the development of this peripheral site, East Vulcan Place.



The Chief Planning Officer considers that this combination will lead to the most satisfactory and orderly development of Bedlington, whilst offering a good variety of sites to the prospective developer.

- 12.12. Wansbeck District Council can, at its discretion, give grants towards the cost of improvement of older residential property. It also has a duty to ensure that dwellings are maintained at a standard that will cause no injury to public health. Powers are conferred on the Council to enable it to clear housing not meeting this requirement. The combined use of improvement grants and clearance powers should allow the Council to maintain a satisfactory stock of housing within the District.
- 12.13. The District Council has regularly received applications for grant aid to improve dwellings in most parts of Bedlington. No area falls within the criteria established by the Department of Environment for the declaration of a General Improvement Area or Housing Action Area.
- 12.14. However, the Local Plan should consider the life of housing in the Plan Area, especially in relation to environmental conditions and the possibility of alternative land uses. The choice exists, in considering the short and long term futures of areas of older residential property, as to the balance between policies based on improvement and those based on clearance.
- 12.15. H5 : Whether to continue the existing policy of encouraging improvement of older property thereby guaranteeing them a long term future. There are a number of alternatives to the present policy.

The District Council could take an active role in promoting improvement, by entering the housing market, purchasing, improving and then selling or



A typical house improvement.

renting properties, and in particular in the improvement of pairs of flats where the impetus for improvement seems to be less.

Alternatively the clearance of large areas of older properties could be considered desirable as the dwellings often lack all amenities, have little private open space and were not designed for car owning occupants. The Council would identify such areas, refuse grant aided improvement, and carry out a programme of clearance and redevelopment.

This option could be modified with selective small scale clearance of pockets of poor housing being carried out in areas where improvement is generally being encouraged.

- 12.16. The Chief Planning Officer considers that there is no justification changing from the existing policy towards older property. Therefore the general policy should be to support the retention and improvement of older property throughout the town. However in appropriate cases the Council should take a more active role in encouraging improvement, particularly with regard to dwellings within the Conservation Area.



## 13:Shopping



pping...Shopping...Shopping.

- 13.1. Shopping was one of the major considerations of the Consultants report on Bedlington Town Centre Redevelopment. This proposed a new shopping precinct at Rosella Place, which would incorporate a market, and the redevelopment of 42-48 Front Street West for shopping. In addition it suggested that the former Ex-Servicemen's Club site could be considered for retail uses. The report calculated that about 900m<sup>2</sup> additional floorspace would be required by 1979, with an additional 1100m<sup>2</sup> required by 1985.
- 13.2. The consultants' report covered only the Market Place and Front Street West part of the shopping area. The Local Plan must consider the form and size of any new development in the context of future shopping patterns in the town as a whole.
- 13.3. S1 : Should shops in Bedlington be encouraged to centralise?

The present pattern of shops in the town consists of a line of shops running along the north side of Front Street, another row of shops in Glebe Row and a small number of local shops in residential areas. A number of the shops on the fringes of the town centre operate primarily for the local needs of the nearby residents. There have been a number of new shops built in recent years, mainly in Front Street West, and Market Place. The largest of the new shops have been in Market Place, which has concentrated the shopping in this area. In addition there have been a number of closures at the east end of Front Street East and the current trend is for centralisation of the shopping centre.

Development at Rosella Place would further concentrate shopping around Market Place. A



choice exists to attempt to retain a strong shopping presence in Front Street East by limiting the new development in the west, or to encourage positively the relocation of the main shops from Front Street East into new shops in Market Place and Front Street West.

The latter policy would have the advantage of making the centre more compact, reducing walking distances, and bringing the shops closer to the main car parks. In addition it would increase the amount of new shopping floorspace needed in Rosella Place, and allow a more viable development. An increase in modern units would also increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the centre.

The loss of shops in Front Street East would leave some buildings without an obvious function. This could result in a certain amount of dereliction and decay which would detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area.



An example of contraction of shopping in Front Street East, vacant shop unit.

The Chief Planning Officer favours a policy of encouraging the centralisation of shopping in the town. This would continue market trends, and provide a more convenient centre. This should be accompanied by a policy of encouraging some shopping units to change to residential use in Front Street East, though it is expected that many local and specialist shops would remain.

13.4. S2 : What form should shopping expansion take?

The principle and rough location of shopping in the Rosella Place area has been accepted in the consultants report, and precise details would have to be agreed with a developer but a decision must be made on the location of any new shops.

There are three main choices. The first would involve further shopping development to the north of Rosella Place. This has the advantage that land is available for any user/developer to come in and extend the Rosella Place scheme. It has the disadvantage that it would not reinforce the shopping centre, but start a spread in a different direction.

The second choice is to continue shopping development to the west of Rosella Place in a second phase of development behind Front Street West. The land here is available at present but if reserved for shopping it could sterilise the land and stop the housing development being suggested in this area.

The third choice would involve the redevelopment or extension of parts of Front Street West. This is a piecemeal approach, but allows for changes in direct response to market forces. A number of properties in Front Street West are in poor condition, and redevelopment of these would improve the overall street scene. Any redevelopment would be expected to achieve a high standard of design appropriate to its Conservation Area location.





Potential for expansion within  
Front Street West.

The Chief Planning Officer favours the third approach, feeling that following the Rosella Place scheme enough potential exists in the existing buildings for expansion, rather than embarking upon a further large shopping development.

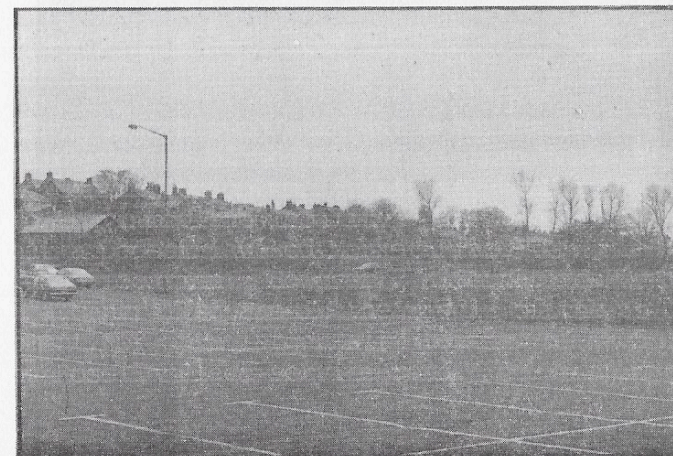
S3 : What would be the best location for a  
market in the Town?

The Consultants report suggests that a market in the town would provide an additional feature in the shopping centre, which would attract shoppers from outside the immediate locality. The report suggests that a pedestrianised Market Place would be a good location. However 2 alternatives could be in a central square in the middle of the new development, or on a larger site to the north of the Rosella Place service road.

There are a number of points that have to be considered in deciding between these alternatives. A major problem is the non continuous nature of a street market. This means that an open site is left on the days the market does not operate. If the market is relatively small this would not cause too much of a problem - a large market would leave a large open area on non market days which would be difficult to make attractive.

A second problem is access, both for service vehicles, and emergency vehicles to any adjacent shops. This would cause particular difficulties in a new market in Rosella Place, as the development will be primarily designed for pedestrians.

The Chief Planning Officer considers that a small number of market stalls in either the Market Place, or the Rosella Place development (or both) could be catered for. A market to the north of the Rosella Place service road would be remote, but it would be the only suitable site if a demand existed for a large market.



Space for a larger market.



## 14:Jobs

- 14.1. Employment in Bedlington is primarily dependent on shops and small scale service industries. There are choices over whether attempts should be made to broaden this employment base.
- 14.2. El : Whether to allow the development of no nuisance light industry in appropriate locations in the Local Plan Area.

Since the closure of the Doctor Pit and brickworks, Bedlington has had virtually no new industry and has become established as a residential town. District Council policy has been to encourage new industry on the purpose built industrial estates. However some small scale industry benefits from being close to population, as people can walk to work. In addition small scale industries would increase the job opportunities of the local population.

The Chief Planning Officer recognises that the encouragement of employment opportunities is one of the principal aims of the District Council and that small scale industry on suitable sites away from residential areas would benefit the town. The Consultants suggestion for industry in the immediate town centre has been rejected by the Council. However a suitable site exists to the North of the Gasholder on the town centre fringe, which is not immediately adjacent to residential areas, and has good access from the relief road.

Other areas have also been examined as potential sites for small industrial users. Land to the north and west of the town, also examined for housing potential, is not considered as suitable as it could prejudice both the future residential growth of Bedlington and the status of existing industrial estates, in particular Barrington Industrial Estate.



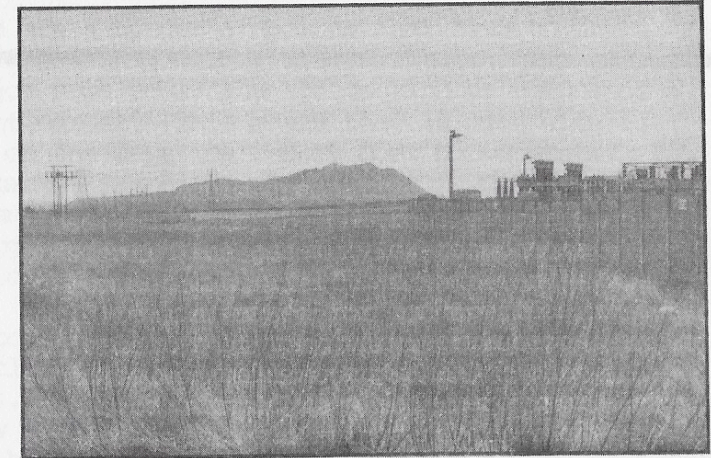
Front Street East has also been considered as an area with a potential for development. The contraction of shopping in Front Street East as envisaged in the favoured proposal of S1 would leave vacant shops. In the long term it is hoped that the area would gradually revert to a residential use. However the numerous problems that are foreseen in the assembly of reasonable areas of development land will mean that many buildings could remain unused for long periods of time. It is felt that temporary permissions for changes of use to small no nuisance, light industries could be granted when and where there are no material objections. Purpose built units are not favoured in this area as they would prejudice future residential development.

14.3. E2 : To try to obtain a major office development in Bedlington Town Centre.

There has been Council support in the past for the idea of a major office development in Bedlington Town Centre, and this was one of the Consultants proposals. However no development has been forthcoming for a number of reasons.

Most offices require central locations, such as Newcastle City Centre, because of the nature of their business. For an office to locate outside a central area most of its business will not require personal contact outside the organisation. This factor limits the number of what could be termed 'foot loose' office users. Bedlington is in direct competition with other S.E. Northumberland towns for these office users. The criteria which they use for selecting their location does not necessarily depend on planning matters, but these can have an important bearing on the choice.

Bedlington has over recent years improved its position with the great environmental improvements to the area and the construction of new housing.



Possible light industry location by the Gasholder.

However, suitable sites has remained a problem, especially when in competition with greenfield sites at Cramlington.

The possibility of speculative office development is only very slight, and therefore the most likely candidates are those in the major public authorities

The Chief Planning Officer favours the continued support for the idea of a major office user as it would further broaden employment opportunities. He recommends:-

- (a) That a suitable site be identified in the Town Centre capable of accepting office development of a reasonable size (over 1000 sq. m.).
- (b) That full publicity be given to the site, through advertisement, the canvassing of possible users and the production of a promotional document for the site.

He considers that these steps will not guarantee the securing of a major office user and therefore the selected site should not be in a visually important position as it may lie vacant over a period of time.



## 15: Movement



15.1. The major choice is the relative priority given to the pedestrian and the motor vehicle. Bedlington already has a substantial network of footpaths, and extension of the network is feasible.

15.2. M1 : Whether to extend the footpath network into areas of new development giving priority to pedestrian movement.

The extension of the segregated footpath system would provide a safe and interesting environment in which pedestrians could move. Footpaths can be made attractive and safe through planting, and careful design. Long straight paths should be avoided where possible, and use should be made of the slopes and buildings to increase the interest.

A totally segregated system could result in poor road access to certain parts of the town. In addition it could increase road costs, as footpaths tend to take direct routes, and roads more indirect routes.

The Chief Planning Officer considers that in the Town Centre pedestrian/vehicular conflict will be a problem, and cars and pedestrians should be segregated where possible. However in the new housing areas the problem would not be as severe, and completely separate networks would prove too costly. A spine network should be provided to keep pedestrians off the distributor roads.

15.3. Other choices concern possible changes in the town's road network.



15.4. M2 : Whether to make Choppington Road single carriageway.

The Consultants proposed a reduction of the dual carriageway section of Choppington Road to a single carriageway. This would allow the removal of some of the barriers, which are unattractive, and give space for landscape schemes on the east side of the road. They also proposed the replacement of the underpass by a pedestrian crossing.

These schemes would be costly, and involve changes to works that have only recently been completed. In addition the County Surveyor considers that if these proposals were to go ahead there could be capacity problems on Choppington Road in the long term.

The Chief Planning Officer considers that from an environmental point of view, reduction of the width of Choppington Road is desirable. However, as it is a main road, traffic considerations should take precedence.



The bend in the town centre Relief Road.

15.5. M3 : Whether to straighten the town centre Relief Road.

The town centre Relief Road has two 90 degree bends near to the junction with the western car parks. Another of the Consultants proposals was to straighten the line of the road at this point to improve traffic flow. The existing bends do help slow down traffic at this point, and increase pedestrian safety, though few people cross near them.

The Chief Planning Officer does not object to this proposal as he considers that it does not materially affect land parcels, and it would encourage the use of the Relief Road.

15.6. M4 : Whether to improve bus interchange facilities.

All buses travelling through Bedlington pass the Red Lion, and stop near to it. It is a useful point for interchange between the various services, though at present there is no single group of stops where all services call. The Council's Transport Policy and Programme Working Group consider that there is a need for a small Bus Station in Bedlington. This would make interchange between services easier. United Automobile Services consider that a manned Bus Station would prove too costly, and that there is only limited need.

The Chief Planning Officer considers that a manned Bus Station is unnecessary as Bedlington is not a terminus. A small interchange point, with bus shelters would make it easier for people changing buses, but would not be of any great benefit to local users. Provision of an interchange point also depends on finding a suitable site and necessary finance. If Choppington Road was reduced to a single carriageway this would be a possible site.



## 16:Environment



Environment...Environment..

- 16.1. The future form of Bedlington will, to a degree, depend on the priority given to environmental control and enhancement by Wansbeck District Council. Several issues are raised here, including the design of new areas of development, the enhancement of existing poor environment, attitudes towards conservation, and policies for the town centre.
- 16.2. Enl : How should Wansbeck District Council attempt to influence the general design of new development.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1971 confers significant powers on a Local Planning Authority, in this case Wansbeck District Council, to enable it to control new development in the public interest. Most forms of development require planning permission prior to work commencing and in certain circumstances the Authority also has control over matters such as demolition, advertisements, trees and waste land.

In determining an application for planning permission the Local Planning Authority will consider such matters as siting, access, design, materials and landscaping. This extensive examination of a proposal allows a great deal of control over development. However the process is in reaction to a proposal and cannot anticipate development.

An addition to the development control system is to deal with the principles of use and design in a development brief whilst leaving the details to be examined as submitted in a planning application. The principles would comprise matters such as land use, circulation and the general form of development whilst other matters would be agreed at a later stage between the planning authority and developer.



This approach has already been used by the Local Planning Authority for certain areas of residential development, i.e. Nursery Park Ashington and North Bedlington. The preparation of development briefs is recommended by the Department of Environment for all large disposals of residential land under Community Land Act Powers.

A second option is the formulation of a series of design guides for specific types of development. Suggested topics for these guides could include new dwellings, extensions to dwellings, shop fronts and advertisements.

Design guides have a number of advantages; policy for specific types of development becomes explicit, the formulation of policy can be subject to public participation, and consistency in the operation of development control. A disadvantage is that explicit policy takes away a certain degree of flexibility in the control process and can often stifle a flair for original design.

- 16.3. The Chief Planning Officer considers that a balance is necessary between the various options outlined.

The use of development briefs dealing with principles of development is already a practice of Wansbeck District Council on greenfield sites and is a useful tool in appropriate cases. It is considered that such briefs should be prepared for all potential development sites in the town centre and for any major housing sites identified in the local plan.

The formulation of design guides dealing with specific development topics is a matter for determination in the Wansbeck District Plan except for the subject of the Bedlington Conservation Area. Here a design guide could deal with fascias, shop fronts, advertisements, colour schemes, materials, and as such could either be incorporated into the Bedlington Local Plan or stand in its own right.

- 16.4. En2 : What action should be taken by Wansbeck District Council to improve areas of existing poor environment?

It is possible for the District Council to take positive steps to enhance areas of poor environment by acquiring interests in land and carrying out landscaping or developing the land, though, generally speaking, the resources necessary are unlikely to be available in the plan period.

Alternatively certain powers are available under the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act by which a planning authority can require an owner to improve waste land, or the authority can carry out such improvement and recover the costs of works from the land owner.

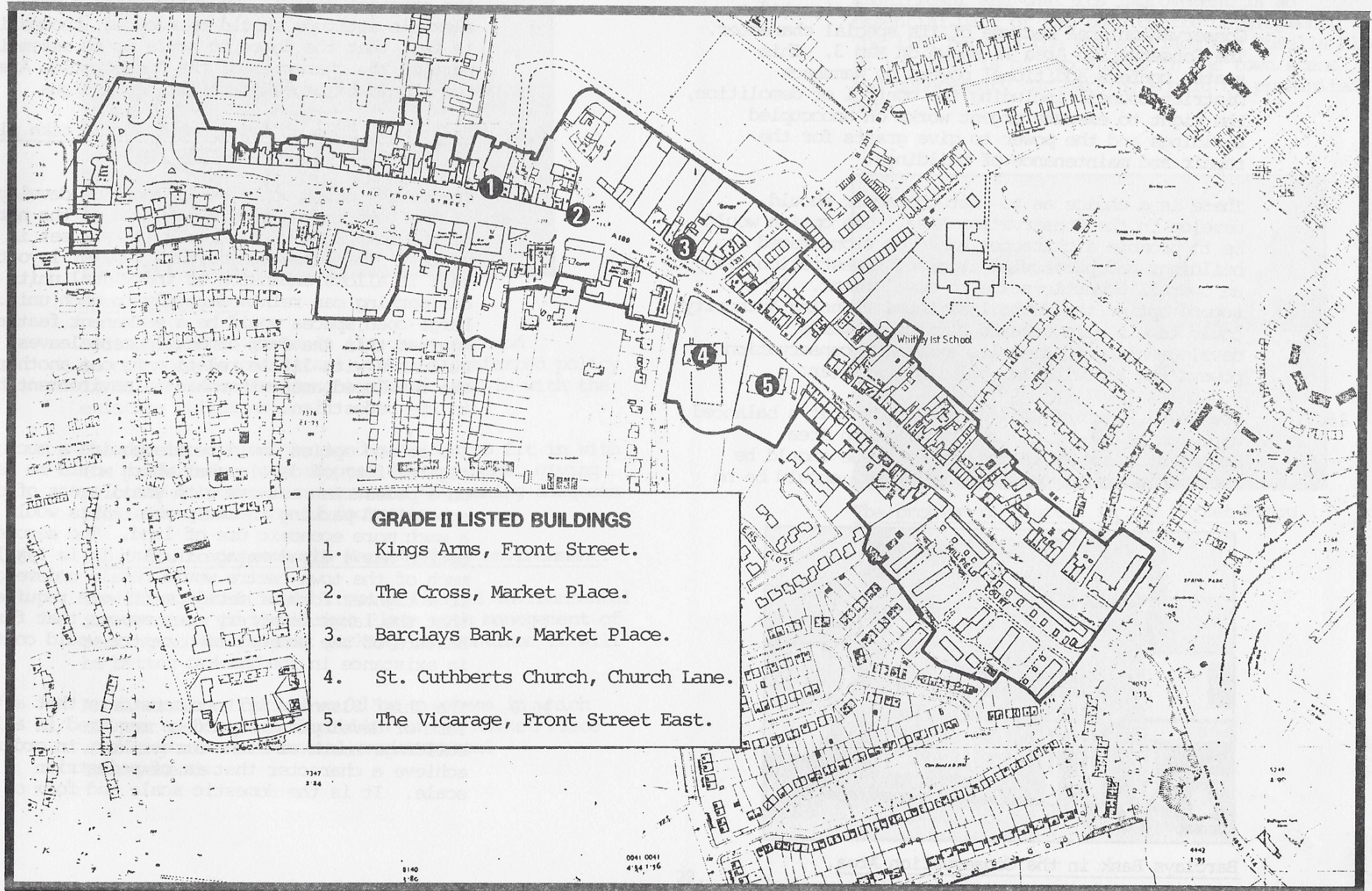
- 16.5. The Chief Planning Officer considers that the options can be considered as reserve powers only to be used in extreme cases. The District Council's current practice of using persuasion rather than force is felt to be the best approach. Furthermore in the context of District-wide priorities the concentration of resources on improving the already pleasant environment of Bedlington cannot be justified.



The problem of waste land.



# Map 3 CONSERVATION AREA & LISTED BUILDINGS





16.6. En3 : How should Wansbeck District Council continue to conserve the character of the Conservation Area.

An area of the town centre has been designated a Conservation Area because of its special character. The Conservation Area is shown on Map 3. This status confers additional powers on Wansbeck District Council including the control of demolition, the right to execute urgent works on unoccupied buildings and the power to give grants for the repair and maintenance of buildings.

There is a choice as to what character should develop in the Conservation Area. One option would be to promote a character based on stone-faced buildings and particular types of fenestration with an overall domestic scale to development. As a second option the Council as Local Planning Authority could take a more relaxed attitude towards development, not using its extensive conservation powers and allowing an evolving character.

16.7. The Chief Planning Officer considers that a balanced approach is needed in the Conservation Area. Important elements in the street scene should be retained wherever possible, yet there should be no



Barclays Bank in the Conservation Area.

automatic presumption against redevelopment. If this proves to be necessary then important buildings should be replaced with ones reflecting the original design. On other sites a more flexible attitude should be adopted, though it is felt that the domestic style is an essential part of the character of the Conservation Area and should be expected in all new designs.

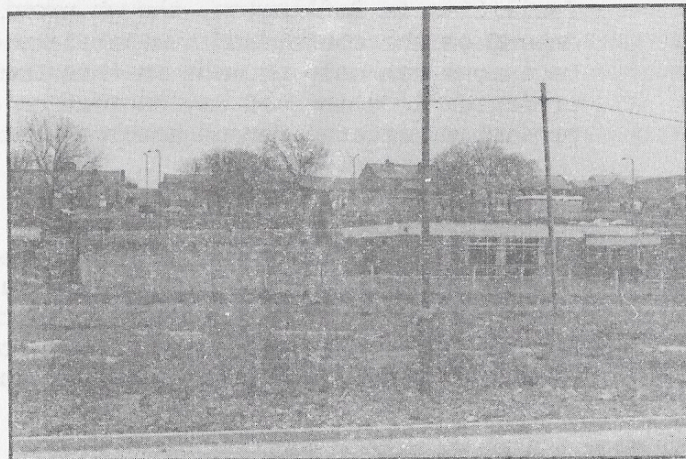
16.8. En4 : What form of development should take place to the north of Front Street West?

The first option would be to continue development of the town centre as has occurred to the north of the West End, with large buildings set in open spaces. The advantage of this type of layout is that it allows expansion of individual units and car parking can relate directly to each unit. Large open spaces would be a permanent feature. Against this the form of development leaves buildings with little relation to one another, and the developed area often has an environment hostile to the pedestrian.

The second option would be to require a much tighter form of development which would be based on a pedestrian network with small areas of open spaces and parking in car parks. This would make a much more economic use of land. The second option has a disadvantage in that it is likely that much of the town centre would remain undeveloped if a tighter form of development were required, and that the large temporary open spaces that form a feature of the present town centre would continue in existence in the future.

16.9. The Chief Planning Officer considers that a tight form of development should be required in all new buildings north of Front Street West in order to achieve a character that is of pedestrian scale. It is the domestic scale and form of





Open development.

Bedlington that gives it its character and in order to be consistent with the preferred policy in En3 the new development should link in with the existing buildings.

The development of the land should also fit in with the preferred option adopted for movement, giving priority to pedestrian movement and making adequate provision in the way of footpaths.

16.10. En5 : How to improve the Market Place environment.

The first option would involve limited environmental improvements to the Market Place with management of parking so that whilst parking can continue it will be better ordered.

An alternative option would be a scheme in which all car parking was forbidden in the Market Place allowing more substantial environmental improvements.

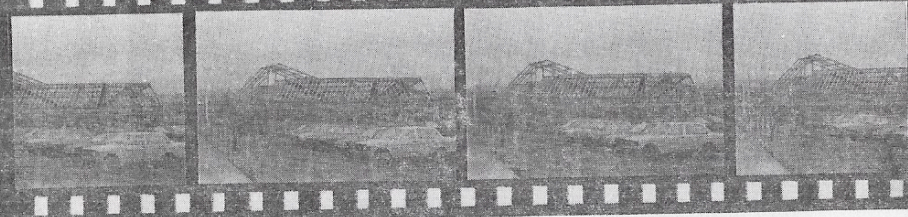
16.11. The Chief Planning Officer considers that as the Market Place forms the focus of the town centre its environmental condition is particularly significant and that its improvement is an essential part of the town centre development. The link between the Market Place and Rosella Place to the rear is of importance in the town scene and unnecessary car parking should be prohibited here.



The problem of clutter in the Market Place.



## 17:Leisure



17.1. There is a demand for an increase in leisure facilities in Bedlington, though provision will depend on the costs, and availability of resources. Decisions can only be made in this Local Plan about preferred locations of any recreation or leisure provision, after a demand has been established.

### 17.2. R1 : Provision of Allotments.

In Bedlington allotment provision exceeds national standards. However there is a long waiting list which indicates a demand higher than the national average. The only really suitable site for new allotments would be in North Bedlington where suitable flat sites are available.

However provision of land for allotments would reduce the amount of land available for other purposes - notably housing, and ancillary recreation space.

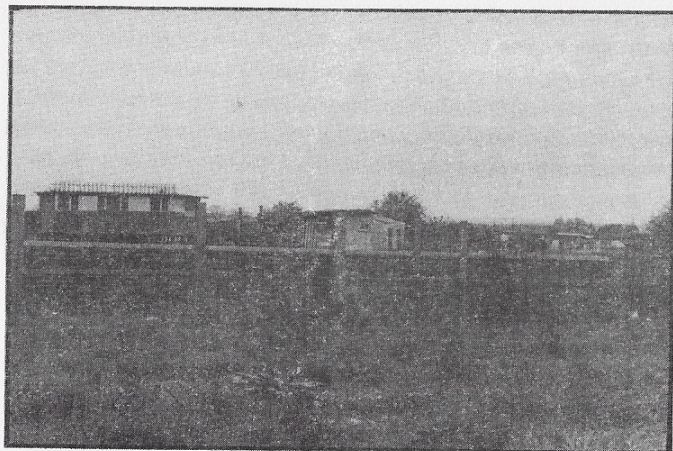
### 17.3. R2 : Indoor Recreation Provision.

At present there is a shortage of indoor facilities in the town, though the District as a whole has good facilities. A number of different facilities could be provided during the plan period, depending on costs, and finance:-

(i) An Assembly Hall - this is obviously a fairly limited need, and it seems probable that it could be designed as a dual use sports and assembly hall.

(ii) Sports Hall/Squash Courts etc. - some of these facilities are already provided at Bedlington High School, though further facilities in the town centre would be more accessible to Bedlington Town. Squash Courts are being constructed as part of the Ex-Servicemens Club development.





Dr. Pit Allotments.

- (iii) Swimming Pool - the Town previously had an outdoor pool at Humford Mill, but now the closest pools are at Ashington or Blyth. A new pool could either be built at the High School, or in the Town Centre.

It seems likely that only a small pool (25m) could be justified, as any larger would be extremely expensive to build and run.

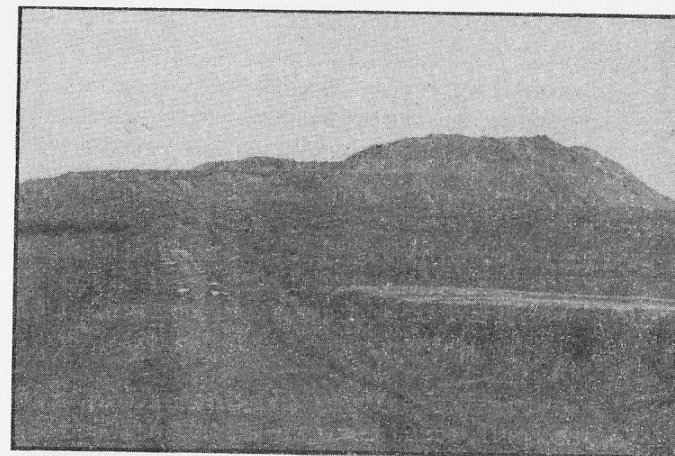
Any new indoor provision will require a fairly large flat site with ancillary parking. The best sites will be close to the Town Centre as the centre is easily accessible by car, foot or bus. The most suitable site would be adjacent to the relief road, just west of the large car park, which would satisfy the parking needs of any development.

#### 17.4. R3 : Outdoor Sports Facilities.

A shortfall in outdoor sports facilities has also been identified. As far as changing facilities, and maintenance is concerned it would be better if

such facilities could be grouped in one area. The only major acreage of land available within the plan area is the fields north of Bedlington. However it might be feasible to design the 'A' pit reclamation scheme in such a way to allow the construction of a number of pitches, though topsoil would have to be brought in. The 'A' Pit site would, in addition, be convenient for residents in Bedlington Station.

The problem with the 'A' pit site is that it would not become available until after 1983. However though there is a shortage at present immediate action is not essential.



The reclamation of the 'A' Pit could provide an opportunity for the provision of centralised playing fields.