

Whashton **Conservation Area**

Draft **Conservation Area Study**

*This Study is being carried out by Richmondshire District Council in partnership with
Whashton Parish Meeting*



Whashton Conservation Area Study

1.0 Introduction.

- 1.1 The Whashton Conservation Area Study is being carried out jointly by the local community, Whashton Parish Meeting and Richmondshire District Council. The Draft Study aims to describe Whashton as it is today and identify the special character or distinctiveness of its setting, buildings and open spaces. Having identified those special qualities, the Draft Study will examine whether opportunities exist to protect and enhance its character.
- 1.2 By identifying what makes Whashton special or distinctive, it is suggested that any future change, whether to individual buildings, building groups or the village as a whole, will be based on a considered understanding of the past and present character of the village. Based on this understanding, future change will make a positive contribution towards preserving or enhancing its special character.

2.0 Background.

- 2.1 Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, places a duty on Local Planning Authorities “from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement” of conservation areas. In simple terms this means the District Council have an obligation firstly, to prepare policies to protect the special character of the conservation area and secondly, to draft ideas to improve its character or appearance.
- 2.2 The first part of this duty has, in part, been met through the conservation policies included within the Richmondshire Local Plan. The key purpose of this Draft Study is to examine whether or not there are presently any buildings or spaces that detract from the character of the conservation area or which may offer enhancement opportunities.
- 2.3 To place these suggestions in context, it is important however to firstly define the special and distinctive character of the village. The Draft Study focuses on 3 main elements, with the first 2 being factual assessments to define the existing character of Whashton Conservation Area, as follows :-
 - (1) the overall form and layout of the village
 - (2) the form and character of buildings
 - (3) opportunities for enhancement

3.0 Form and layout of Whashton.

- 3.1 Whashton lies on the South slope of a wide valley, with the bulk of the village being just below a pronounced ridge line, which screens from the south much of the village. The main approach, from the West, must rank among the more spectacular entrances to any village in Richmondshire. The road passes through a tight, narrow valley which frames the first glimpse of the village as buildings pierce the skyline. This attractive valley is important for its small scale landscape quality.
- 3.2 From its junction with the C41 (Richmond - Ravensworth road), the road dips eastwards down into the valley which is very much agricultural in character, with the road being flanked by generally well maintained hedges with rising paddocks beyond. A low point is reached at its junction with Quarry Bank where the road rises steeply towards the village with the roadside verges beginning to take on a more manicured appearance, particularly on the north side. The skyline to either side of the valley is well defined and crowned with trees and shrub growth.



- 3.3 The bulk of the developed part of the village lies beyond the crown of the hill where the landform drops away to the east and north, allowing long distance views over the open countryside beyond the village. The form of the village is unusual, based on an elongated triangle, enclosing an undulating green, with the narrow point of the triangle at its western end. The widening green is terminated at its east end by Whashton Farm. On the south side of the road, the green rises quite steeply to a ridge which effectively cuts off views to the south.

- 3.4 The village green, which is a striking and dominant feature throughout Whashton, is generally well maintained, and the quoits pitches and seats provide evidence that the space is valued by the community for more than purely aesthetic reasons. Unfortunately in places, the edges of the green do suffer from vehicle erosion, particularly at the east end. There is no evidence for traditional hard landscaping (for example cobbles or stone setts) in the village beyond standard road dressings and hard-core tracks. Where these cross the village green, there is evidence in some cases of a rather harsh mechanical/engineering approach to the detailing, for example the use of concrete pin kerbs (edgings). Where used, for example near Chapel House, they tend to produce a harsh engineered finish and appearance in contrast to the otherwise generally soft transition between the green and surfaced areas.



- 3.5 Trees and shrubs and hedges play an important role throughout the conservation area. Generally within the heart of the village, trees and shrubs appear to be in good condition, with the tree to the east of The Old Smithy acting as a significant landmark. Likewise the area of trees and shrubs to the south of the green provide a strong planting feature. Within the valley area, although the hedges appear well maintained, there is evidence that some hedgerow trees on the south side of the road are beginning to suffer.
- 3.6 The pattern of development within the village is distinctive, comprising a series of building groups interspersed by substantial gaps, rather than continuous frontages. Most buildings are orientated east - west, emphasising the strong linear form to the village. This linear form is complimented by strong boundary lines, in particular stone walls, which play an important role in providing physical links between the building groups creating a clear sense of enclosure.

- 3.7 This rather loose and dispersed pattern of buildings has been partially diluted through infilling, though overall the distinctive form of the village survives. However, the balance between the building groups and gaps is a delicate one, and further dilution would be harmful.

4.0 The form and character of buildings.

Note : a summary, in graph form, of building character and building condition surveys are appended to this report.

- 4.1 Whashton contains few buildings of outstanding individual quality, its architectural character being derived more from the overall grouping and form of buildings. That said, the buildings do have a distinctive style which is very much based on local traditions. In architectural terms this is known as the 'vernacular' style. 3 individual buildings are included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, together with walls, gateway and railings at Whashton Lodge. Details of these are appended to this report.

- 4.2 Most of the buildings are of two storey scale, but not exclusively so, as for example, the single storey Ash Tree Cottage and Hill Top Cottage illustrate. The key characteristics of the local architectural style, based on the principal elevations of the remaining largely unaltered buildings are :-

- general form :-
 - > quite narrow gutted (width) buildings with gabled roofs
 - > buildings orientated on a generally east - west axis with main frontages to the village green or main street
 - > a high wall to window relationship
 - > roof pitches tend to be generally quite steep, except where stone slates have been used as the roof covering
- materials :-
 - > local natural stone is used throughout the village as the external wall finish, with the exception of Whashton Farm, which is rendered. This contrast of materials is both interesting and welcome
 - > the quality of stone in Whashton is generally high and of two quite distinctive forms. Almost 60% of buildings are constructed in coursed rubble, for example The Old Smithy and Stable Cottage, with the remaining stone buildings being of high quality squared coursed rubble (front facade only in many cases), Whashton Grange, Whashton Lodge and the Hack and Spade being examples



Ash Tree Cottage : an example of a traditional single storey cottage

- > 58% of buildings retain one of the 3 traditional roof coverings found in the village, being stone slates, Welsh slates and clay pantiles. Of these buildings 50% have a pantile roof covering, some of which, for example Woodbine Cottage, have a stone slate eaves course used in conjunction with the pantile roof covering
- > Welsh slate appears to have been used as a replacement covering. An example of this is the Hack and Spade where scars of an earlier, steeper roof pitch can be seen on the East gable. The one notable exception is Chapel House (former Methodist Chapel), which was almost certainly built with a Welsh slate roof covering.
- architectural detailing :-

Buildings in Whashton are not richly decorated yet the unaltered historic buildings do have a distinctive style.

dm-

- > most domestic buildings have chimney stacks situated at the apex of the roof either at the gable or the junction between buildings. They are generally of stone construction. The gable flues are built within the thickness of the external wall with a couple of notable exceptions, Whashton Farm and the Hack and Spade, which have external stacks
- > water tabling (verge coping) is quite a common feature, Ash Tree Cottage and Cobblers Cottage being examples, sometimes in association with projecting kneelers, for example at Box Hedge Cottage

> an interesting local detail is found at Woodbine Cottage and Clarence Cottage where the verge (top edge of the gable) is formed by a series of large, roughly triangular stones

external walls -

> quoins (corner stones) are a common feature, though in many cases very simple in form, for example at Hilltop (former barn). Examples of more finely dressed stone quoins are found at Clematis Cottage and Whashton Lodge

> most window openings are of simple form with flush stone lintels and cills. At Whashton Lodge a more decorative form is found, with the window openings being formed by full dressed stone surrounds, which originally had flat faced mullions

> although not richly embellished, main entrance doors are emphasised more strongly, with plain ashlar surrounds being a feature for example at Clarence Cottage and Woodbine Cottage and, in a slightly more decorative form, Whashton Lodge and Chapel Cottage

an interesting local detail is found on the group 3 cottages which includes Woodbine Cottage and Cobblers Cottage, where the ashlar door surrounds are surmounted by a triangular shaped stone fate canopy or hood

*triangular
slat4 hood or canopy above the
heavy plain ashlar door surround at Cobblers Cottage*



doors -

> within Richmondshire as a whole, the 3 most traditional forms of external door design are plain vertically boarded, 6 panel and 4 panel. Whashton exhibits all 3 forms, though interestingly, of the 53% of buildings which retain doors of a traditional pattern, almost two thirds are of a vertically boarded design

windows -

> 4 basic traditional window types dominate vernacular buildings in Richmondshire, being mullions, vertically sliding sashes, horizontally sliding or Yorkshire sashes and casements. Although there is evidence of mullions, for example at Whashton Farm and Whashton Lodge, mullioned windows they no longer a feature of a principal elevation

> perhaps surprisingly, Yorkshire sashes are not characteristic of Whashton,, though may have been so at one time

> almost 60% of buildings retain windows of a generally traditional style, with 4 pane vertically sliding sashes being the most prevalent pattern.

*Bell Garth Cottage and Clematis Cottage :
examples of two storey cottages which typify the local architectural style*



4.3 Based on this information it is possible to identify individual examples that accurately typify the local architectural style of Whashton :-

small two storey cottages :- Bell Garth Cottage
Woodbine Cottage
Clarence Cottage

larger two storey houses :- Whashton Grange
Whashton Lodge

single storey cottage :- Ash Tree Cottage



Whashton Lodge : the south elevation is built in high quality squared coursed rubble. Details of particular interest include flush quoins, shaped kneelers, stone copings and the dressed stone surrounds to the windows (which originally had flat faced mullions)



5.0 Opportunities for enhancement.

Note : the following sections should be read in conjunction with Map 1 : Appraisal and Map 2 : Enhancement Opportunities which are attached to this report.

- 5.1 Although Whashton is an attractive village, it does not follow that all buildings and spaces within the conservation area necessarily contribute to that attractiveness. Ultimately the aim is to (a) explore whether there are any buildings or areas which are at odds with or spoil the character of the conservation area and (b) to consider how the special character or distinctiveness, as defined in earlier sections of this report, might be best preserved or enhanced.
- 5.2 To set this process in motion, some ideas are set out below, **but it is important to emphasise that these initial thoughts and suggestions are designed to stimulate debate - it is hoped that they will encourage comment from the community and promote other thoughts and ideas.**
- 5.3 Clearly some of the ideas or suggestions will relate to buildings or land in private ownership. It is important to remember that the Conservation Area Study merely represents a list of ideas and opportunities. Individual owners and/or the local community will not be under any obligation to make the changes or improvements suggested.
- 5.4 However, they may be encouraged to think about any suggestions made, and once the Study has been adopted, the findings and recommendations will be considered by the District Council in response to any application for planning permission, Listed Building Consent, conservation area consent or request for grant aid.

6.0 Suggestions for preservation and enhancement schemes

6.1 General setting of the conservation area :-

- (i) the valley to the west of the village provides a dramatic entrance. To maintain its existing character in the future, some thought should be given to a management scheme to ensure :

(a) buildings, including agricultural development, do not intrude into this area

Note : this could be achieved in a number of ways. The current Notification procedures mean that the District Council would be notified of most new agricultural buildings. The procedure allows the District Council to 'call in' proposals where they are concerned over the siting or design of the proposed building. This results in a requirement to submit an application for planning permission, which can be assessed in the normal way. There are certain minor works which fall outside the notification procedure. An alternative means of controlling development exists through the removal 'Permitted Development' rights by imposing an Article 4 Direction on the area in question. Yet another alternative would be to seek a unilateral planning agreement with the owner of the land (Section 106 Agreement). This is a voluntary agreement.

(b) the existing pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees, trees and shrubs is preserved through managed planting and maintenance

Note : agreement could be reached through use of a Section 106 Agreement, as described above, and this initiative could be coupled with exploring opportunities for grant aid, for example through FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group).

(c) measures are taken to minimise erosion of verges, particularly at the junction with the Richmond - Ravensworth road, and the area adjacent to the informal passing bay (surfacing of the passing bay in an appropriate material would be desirable)

- (ii) the tree/shrub growth to the south side of the village green is a striking feature, and again thought should be given to a management scheme to ensure this feature is preserved. The District Council would be prepared to offer professional advice in drawing up a management scheme.
- (iii) in considering both of the above areas, guidance should be geared towards tree/shrub planting and management methods that improve wildlife habitats
- (iv) the village green is a focal point of Whashton, and for the most part is maintained in good condition. However there are areas where vehicle erosion is damaging, particularly at its East end. Clearly a balance needs to be found which recognises the need to accommodate vehicles without destroying the surface of the green. Where regular over-running of the green by vehicles is causing long term damage, kerbing (stone) and/or other methods (e.g. low

stone walls, bollards) should be considered in association with North Yorkshire County Council as Highway Authority.

The most significant area of erosion is at the East end of the green where vehicles are routinely parked. Preventing vehicles parking on this area is one option, though in reality there remains a need for parking provision and this measure would only move the problem to another part of the village. A more practical solution would be to surface this area in an appropriate material (e.g. cobbles) which would not only resolve the problem of erosion but would contribute positively to the attractiveness of the area. An alternative might be the introduction of a mesh system to withstand vehicular but maintain a 'green' appearance. Provision of an appropriate surfacing would be dependant upon the Parish being satisfied that they are legally entitled to undertake such work. Based on that assumption, the scheme is likely to fall within the scope of the District Council's Environmental Improvement Fund (conservation grants).

- (v) overhead wires are intrusive throughout the conservation area and undergrounding would considerably enhance the character of the village



6.2 Existing buildings :-

The survey of the existing buildings within Whashton clearly identified that a distinctive character exists, although to some extent this has been eroded by subsequent alterations which have not always recognised that distinctiveness, including alterations which have been subject to planning control. Over the past 30 years, public awareness and expectation of the planning system to protect the 'familiar and cherished scene' has increased substantially. Additionally, there now exists a greater understanding of the impact which incremental change can have upon the distinctive character of historic areas. Options to safeguard and enhance the architectural character of Whashton could include some or all of the following :-

- (i) production of design guidance (jointly by the Parish Meeting and District Council) for future alterations to direct change towards materials and design detailing which compliments the defined local architectural character.

Note : this would be in the form of non-statutory planning guidance. Such guidance if adopted by both the Parish Meeting and District Council, would act as a yardstick against which proposals could be assessed, and could prove helpful to both existing and future residents in understanding what is desirable. It must be remembered however, that such guidance could only be applied in those cases where control exists - i.e. those cases where planning permission or Listed Building Consent is required and would not cover all alterations or extensions (see paragraph 6.2 (ii) below) .

- (ii) formal control over future alterations of buildings could be introduced through what is known as an Article 4 Direction. An Article 4 Direction removes permitted development rights (these are the rights granted by Statute to alter dwellings without the need for planning permission within strict limitations) and can be designed to relate for example, only to alterations to the roof covering and front elevation. The Article 4 Direction does not place an embargo on change, but rather brings it within the scope of planning control, so the impact of any proposed change can be assessed and controlled. Article 4 Directions are drawn up by the District Council.

*Note : the introduction of an Article 4 Direction is the only means of applying equal control to all buildings within the conservation area. Without such a Direction, alterations will only be subject to control where planning permission or Listed Building Consent is required. Equally, any non-statutory planning guidance will only be capable of being applied in those cases where applications are necessary. **The initial view of the Parish Meeting is that they would not wish to support the introduction of an Article 4 Direction.***

- (iii) promotion of schemes that seek to restore the architectural character of altered buildings. Quite a number of buildings have been altered in a way that has changed their architectural form in a way which conflicts with the distinctive character of Whashton. Some, to such an extent that the original form and character is no longer recognisable. An example of this is Chapel Cottage,

which was formerly the Methodist Chapel and of a quite different form to the building we now see. Clearly, to contemplate restoring the Chapel back to its original appearance would not be tenable. There are however a number of cottages where the extent of change has been less dramatic and where restoration would benefit not only the appearance of individual buildings but the conservation area as a whole. Examples include Granary Cottage, Stable Cottage and York House.

Note : schemes which restore the character of altered buildings are currently eligible for consideration for grant under the District Council's Environmental Improvement Scheme. This is a discretionary grant scheme, details of which can be obtained from the District Council.

- (iv) although buildings appear generally to be in good condition, the condition of the barn to the East of the Old Smithy does detract from the character of the conservation area and should be restored.

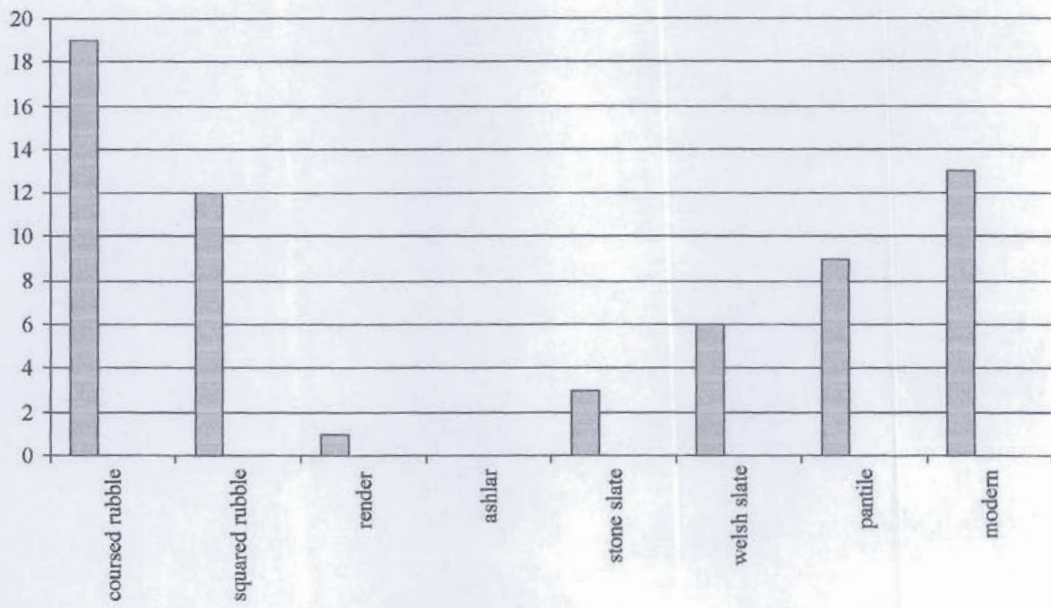
Note : discretionary grants for structural repairs to historic buildings are available through the District Council's Historic Buildings Fund

6.3 Future buildings and extensions :-

Although the Richmondshire Local Plan does not envisage specific planned development at Whashton, some thought needs to be given to the impact that future development proposals (whether in the form of new buildings or through the extension of existing) might have on the character of the conservation area. Having identified the distinctive form and character of Whashton it would be possible to provide a form of checklist to direct future decisions in relation to development - this could be adopted as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance and be considered alongside the Local Plan policies.

- 6.4 Such guidance might propose that :
 - (i) development should not impede upon the open form and character of Whashton
 - (ii) buildings should be constructed of materials which match local traditional materials
 - (iii) design should reflect the distinctive local architectural style both in terms of overall form and detailed design.

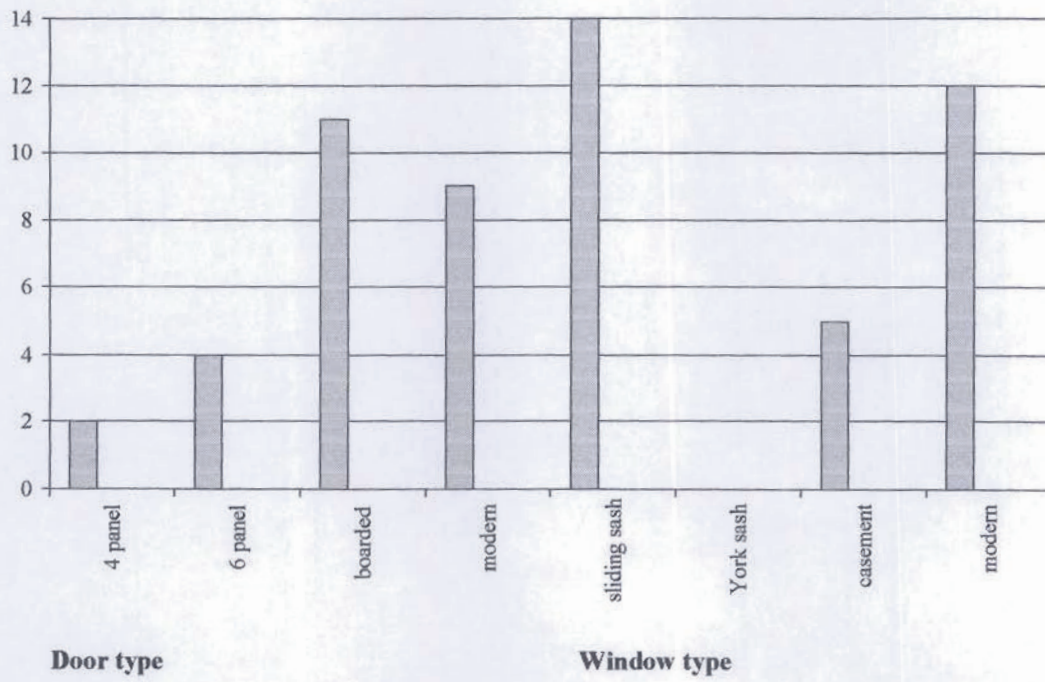
Whashton Conservation Area Building Character Survey



External wall finishes

Roof coverings

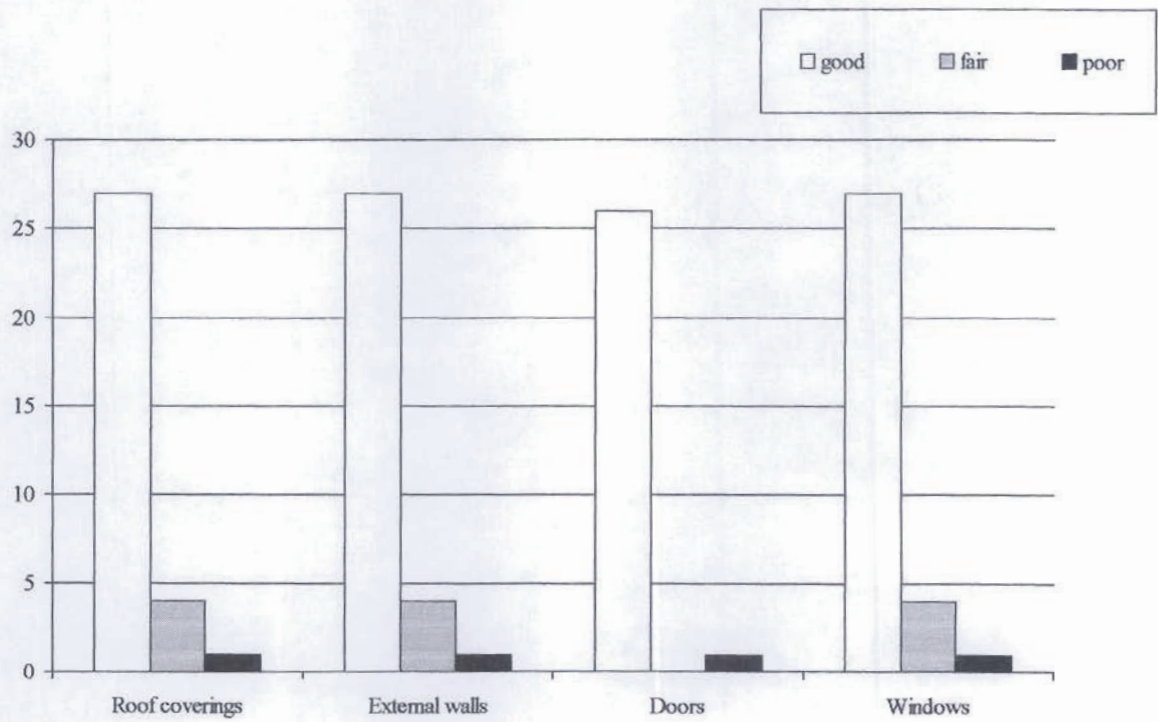
**Whashton Conservation Area
Building Character Survey**



Whashton Conservation Area : Building Character Survey

Ref	external wall finish			roof covering			door type			window type				
	course rubble	square rubble	ashlar render	stone slate	welsh slate	pan tile conc./mod	4 panel	6 panel	board mod.	Sliding sash	Yorks sash	case ment	mull	mod.
40/														
01	0					0			0			0		
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Whashton Conservation Area Building Condition Survey



Whashton Conservation Area : Building Condition Survey

Ref	external walls			roof covering			doors			windows		
	good	fair	poor	good	fair	poor	good	fair	poor	good	fair	poor
40/01	0			0			0			0		
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