



Conservation Area Character Appraisal and  
Management Plan

# Robin Hood's Bay



July 2023

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## 2.0 Summary of Significance

The architectural character of Robin Hood's Bay is largely dependent on the historic need to squash as many buildings as possible into the ravine sides whilst remaining largely invisible from the surrounding landscape. Consequently, mostly modestly sized buildings are tightly packed with small alleys between them instead of roads; the only way to extend a building was upwards.

Curiously shaped buildings take advantage of tiny spaces and even the beck has been culverted to create more developable space.

Where developable land is scarce, open spaces are a rarity being largely restricted to the chapel and school area; while the biggest open space visible is the shore and the sea. The location of the village in this valley was to ensure the closest proximity to the sea which provided a transport route and natural resources whether obtained legitimately through fishing or illegitimately through smuggling.

The buildings are predominantly 18th century in appearance and built of stone with red pantile pitched roofs and some Welsh slate. Dormer windows are common because of the need to extend upwards; these are sometimes imaginatively designed and make a positive contribution towards the roofscape along with stone water tabling, chimneys and the variety of roof heights brought about by the steep valley sides.

Many doors are brightly painted with quirky door knockers, the occasional surviving boot scraper and canopies to provide additional protection from the coastal weather. The narrow lanes are surfaced in a variety of materials, mostly traditional cobbles and stone and lined with pots planted with flowers and shrubs. Views between the lanes invite exploration or frame views out to the sea. Redundant water stands and mooring rings all add to the historic interest.

The following elements have been identified as being of significance to the Conservation Area:

### Considerable significance

- Tightly packed settlement.
- Steep sided topography leading to varying ground levels and building heights.
- Separation from Victorian expansion at the top of the bank.
- Narrow flagged and cobbled lanes.
- Stone steps.
- Few open spaces.
- Stone retaining walls with vegetation.
- Visually permeable boundaries to private spaces, especially wrought ironwork.
- Slipway and dock area as reminders of the fishing industry.

- Culverted becks as evidence of smuggling and the need to obtain more developable space.
- Some tree cover along the King's Beck.
- Conservation Area largely hidden from the mainland by keeping development within the ravine.
- Historic street names.
- Views across the ravine of pitched roofs, pantiles and chimneys on various levels.
- View of the village from the Cleveland Way to the south and the Ness from the north.
- Views along alleys.
- Views to the sea.
- Views along cascading rooflines.
- Building materials of stone and small amounts of render (limewash). Red pantile roofs predominate with stone water tabling, some kneelers and chimneys of stone or brick.
- Most buildings one to three storeys.

### 3.0 Introduction

The old village of Robin Hood's Bay which nestles in a ravine, is a Conservation Area. Conservation Areas were first introduced in England in 1967 in recognition of the fact that the quality of historic areas depends not only on the qualities of individual buildings but also on the historic layout and interrelationship of properties, the use of characteristic building materials, the character of public spaces, the presence of trees and views between buildings and along streets.

These places are protected under the provision of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which defines them as areas 'of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

There are over 9,800 Conservation Areas in England<sup>1</sup> of which 42 are in the North York Moors National Park. Robin Hood's Bay was designated as a Conservation Area in 1974.

Historic England recommends that such Conservation Areas should be reviewed periodically to assess and communicate why the Area is special and what contributes towards its particular qualities; they also recommend that the boundary of the area designated should be reviewed and that guidelines are produced to help with the Area's long term management.

Conservation Areas give broader protection than listing individual buildings as features of historic, architectural and landscape interest are recognised as part of its character.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/conservation-areas/> [accessed 22.12.2016]

Conservation Area designation introduces controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties. Owners of residential properties often consider these controls to be beneficial because they also sustain and enhance the attractiveness and value of property within it. These controls include:

- the requirement in legislation and national and local planning policies for new development to preserve and enhance special character;
- control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- control over works to trees
- fewer types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent
- restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights)

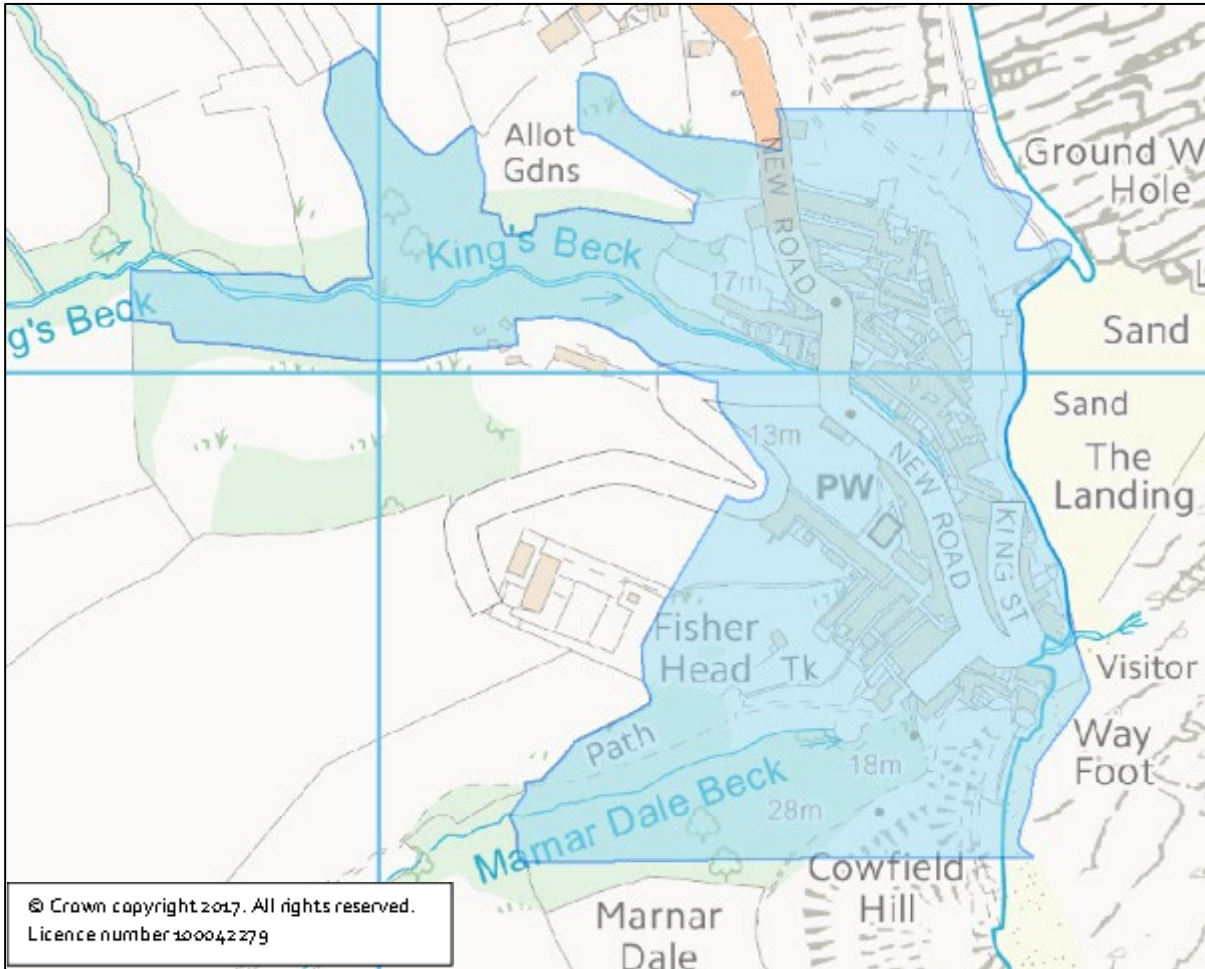


Figure 1: The Conservation Area of Robin Hood's Bay

This report assesses those features and qualities, which give Robin Hood's Bay its unique special interest and which justify its designation. It seeks to identify the character defining elements of the Conservation Area and describes the degrees of significance that can be attached to those elements such as the street plan, the open spaces, the vistas and views and the historic buildings.

It then goes on to make recommendations on how to conserve and enhance those elements of significance and makes further recommendations to guide future management decisions and development proposals.

However, no appraisal can ever be entirely comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space in the village, should not imply that it is of no interest.

“This is without question the most picturesque fishing village of Yorkshire, a maze of steep little streets and passages with houses on a diversity of levels, some of them nice trim three-bay ashlar houses.”<sup>2</sup>

## 4.0 Location and Context

Robin Hood’s Bay is a small fishing village with a bay located within the North York Moors National Park, just over eight kilometres south of Whitby and twenty four kilometres north of Scarborough. The village has evolved here because it has access to the coast with all its resources and two freshwater supplies from the King’s Beck and the Dale Beck. Behind it the land rises steeply to Fylingdales Moor. The cliffs are rich in fossils millions of years old, while the moors above are rich in prehistoric remains such as Robin Hoods Butts – burial mounds about 3,000 years old.

The extent of the developed area was originally restricted to the sides of the ravine so that settlement was almost invisible from the landward side. Consequently, the houses are packed together, often sitting on top of each other. This natural isolation brought about by the sea, ravine, cliff and moor attracted smugglers as well as legitimate fishing interests. Only the Victorian and later development, outside the Conservation Area, is located on the cliff top where the buildings can be seen from a wide area. There is therefore a very close association between the history of the village, its topography and its architectural interest.

## 5.0 The History of Robin Hood’s Bay

Robin Hood’s Bay lies in the ancient parish of Fylingdales. By about 1000 the neighbouring hamlet of Raw and village of Thorpe (Fylingthorpe) in Fylingdales had been settled by Norwegians and Danes. Before the Norman Conquest in 1066, the manor of Fyling belonged to Merewin with one carucate of land. After the Conquest, the land was given as spoils of war to one of William’s relatives, Hugh of Chester and was ruled by William de Percy, one of the invading nobles. William the Conqueror exacted revenge on the north after an uprising in 1068 and had most of the land laid to waste.

It is likely that any settlements along this stretch of coast would have been destroyed and the inhabitants killed or starved. It was therefore only through the rebuilding and reconstruction of villages afterwards, that the present village owes its origins and layout. ‘Fyling’ was passed to Whitby Abbey through its founder William de Percy (with a brief

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<sup>2</sup> Pevsner 1966, 3089

tenure by Tancred the Fleming) along with other villages, vaccaries<sup>3</sup> and land and this would have included the land where Robin Hood's Bay is now.

It is not clear when the present Robin Hood's Bay originated; the earliest reference to Robin Hood's Bay was in the period 1324-1346 when Louis I, Count of Flanders, wrote a letter to King Edward III in which he complained that Flemish fishermen together with their boats and catches were taken by force to Robin Hood's Bay. 'Robin Hoode Baye' was also mentioned by Leland in 1536 who described it as:

*The 'a fischer townelet of 20 bootes with Dok or Bosom of a mile yn length'.*

The same survey mentioned that the monks of Whitby Abbey not only owned the village, but also a "herynge house" kept by John Smith from Wakefield<sup>4</sup>. By 1540, the village was said to have fifty cottages by the shore (a large settlement at that time). At the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539-40, the land passed to the King who sold it to the Earl of Warwick. The Cholmleys then became Lords of the Manor until the direct line died out in 1864 when the position passed through marriage to the Stricklands who remain Lords of the Manor of Whitby today<sup>5</sup>. Another historic reference to the village is derived from 1544 when the men of "Robynhobday" set sail three of their boats with a dozen archers in them to come to the aid of a small English vessel being pursued by a Scottish ship. However, there are far more tales of smugglers using the Bay to carry on a war with the Crown and the excise men and this method of earning a living reached its peak from 1700 to the mid-19th century when taxes on staples such as tea were particularly high and worth avoiding.

The impact of this trade was not limited to the high sea. Contraband had to be landed, stored and distributed and so local outbuildings were used such as stables and the ventures funded and instigated by local yeomen. This presumably meant that many of the locals and the constable participated in the smuggling (willingly or unwillingly) and benefitted from it. Consequently, there are tales of Bay wives pouring boiling water on to the heads of visiting customs men from their bedroom windows above the narrow alleys<sup>6</sup>.

Hiding places, bolt holes and secret passages were an essential part of daily life in the Bay and tunnels below the houses sometimes link with the underground King's Beck which comes out in a 17th century tunnel on the beach and is joined by another tunnel carrying the Marna Dale Beck and another off shoot to the south. It was said that a bale of silk could pass from the bottom of the village to the top without leaving the houses and the King's Beck tunnel certainly provided ample opportunity to off load cargo on the beach and start it on its journey into a cellar of one of the cottages above<sup>7</sup>. Some tunnels

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<sup>3</sup> Large farms and pasture which concentrated on cattle rearing, partly for dairy, beef and leather, but possibly also for the production of vellum for the Abbey's manuscripts.

<sup>4</sup> Farnhill 1966, 16

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.whitbyabbeyfriends.org.uk/history.html> [accessed 251017]

<sup>6</sup> Farnhill 1966, 30

<sup>7</sup> Farnhill 1966, 37



have since been filled in such as the tunnels below the former Fishermen's Arms in The Dock which dates from 1680.

While the combination of smuggling and local topography created a village which hugged to the sides of an isolated ravine with narrow alleys and hiding places, the other influence on the village was Press Ganging or slavery which was not outlawed until 1833. In the late 18th to early 19th centuries, the Press Gangs were feared and if local residents were forced into service, their chances of returning to their homes were not high. Village women would beat a drum to warn the men folk that the Press Gangs had arrived, and it was not unusual for the Press Gang to be attacked and beaten off. Presumably the hiding places suitable for storing contraband were also useful places to hide from the Press Gangs<sup>8</sup>. An alley known as The Bolts leads to Bolts House. This is traditionally thought to be the route by which smugglers fled to escape the Excise men or the Press Gang<sup>9</sup>.

As smuggling penalties increased, and the spirit taxes decreased in the early 19th century, the economic mainstay of the village gradually concentrated on the legitimate fishing industry which reached its peak in the mid-19th century. By that time the village fishing community consisted of 130 fishermen sailing thirty-five cobles, five larger herring boats, and five lobster boats<sup>10</sup>. In addition, fishwives worked barrelling fish, baiting lines and mending nets and lobster pots as did the children. A shelved grassy area where boats were drawn up for maintenance has subsequently been swept away by coastal erosion.

*Robin Hood's Bay 'is a village of fishermen, who supply the city of York, and all the adjacent country, with herrings and all sorts of fish in their seasons; and have wellboats, wherein are kept vast quantities of crabs and lobsters.'*

*(Stephen Whatley's England's Gazetteer, 1750)*

The first school in the village opened in 1810 in two cottages in The Square; the National School was formed in 1814 and navigation schools were also formed by retired master mariners<sup>11</sup>.

After the mid-19th century, fishing was more economical by trawl which required deeper harbours and so fishermen started to leave Bay and the industry died off completely after the Second World War. Some of the retired mariners named their cottages after ships they mastered such as the "Coralline" named after a Hartlepool brig built in 1857<sup>12</sup>.

Robin Hood's Bay began to attract visitors from the early 19th century, but the construction of the railway in 1885 opened up the previously insular village to wider curiosity. An indirect result of the construction of the railway, was the need to build a prison in 1886 to house the drunken navvies employed to build the track bed. However,

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<sup>8</sup> Farnhill 1966, 47

<sup>9</sup> Farnhill 1966, 64

<sup>10</sup> Farnhill 1966, 4311

<sup>11</sup> Farnhill 1966, 45

<sup>12</sup> Farnhill 1966, 69

its picturesque surroundings attracted a colony of artists mostly from the end of the First World War, including Dame Ethel Walker (whose 17th century house and studio fell into the sea in 1961) and Owen Bowen<sup>13</sup>.

The author Leo Walmsley moved into Bay at the age of two with his family in 1894; his father Ulric was an artist. Many of his books are mainly autobiographical, the best known being his Bramblewick series set in Robin Hood's Bay – *Foreigners*, *Three Fevers*, *Phantom Lobster* and *Sally Lunn*, the second of which was filmed as *Turn of the Tide* (1935).

The early historic mapping by the Ordnance Survey suggests that the village had largely developed and settled by the mid-19th century with very little additional development until mid-Victorian times when the cliff top was developed with guesthouses and hotels, many very elegant buildings with fine sea views. Some 20th century bungalow development has been built very close to the old historic village and a caravan park and playground also overlooks it.

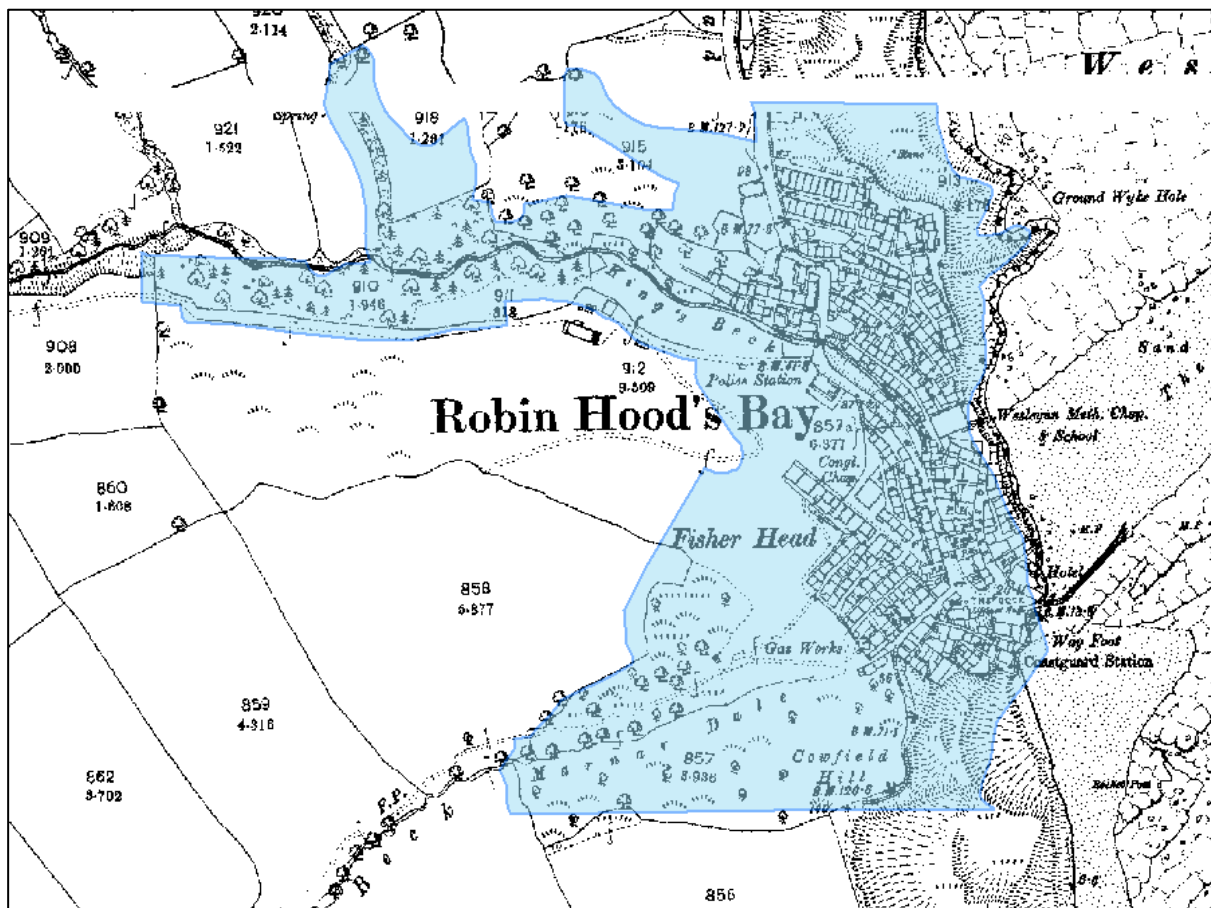


Figure 2: The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1842 (Conservation Area in blue). The well-established community had taken advantage of much of the building spaces available with buildings crammed together.

<sup>13</sup> Farnhill 1966, 67-812

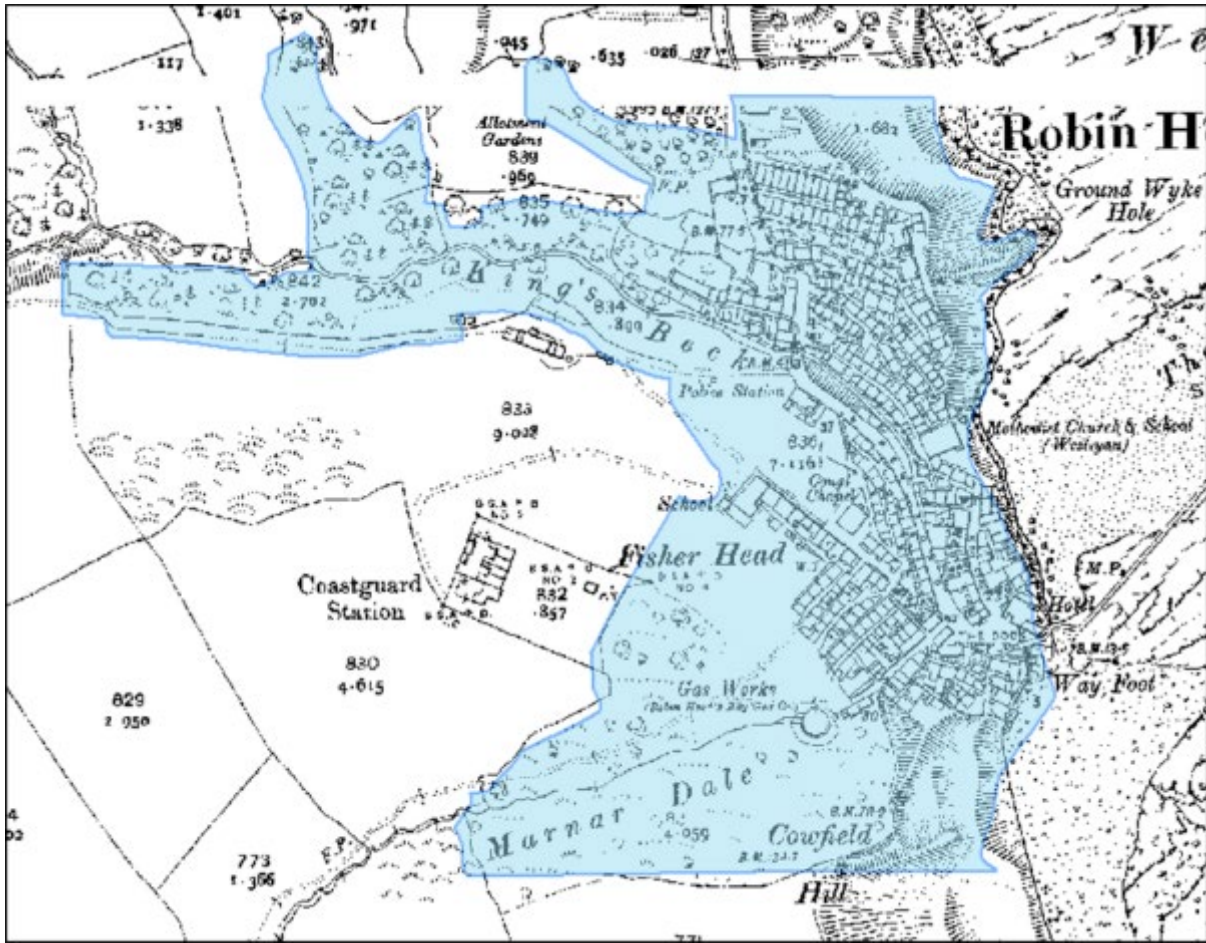


Figure 3. The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1892 showing little change, only the addition of a school.

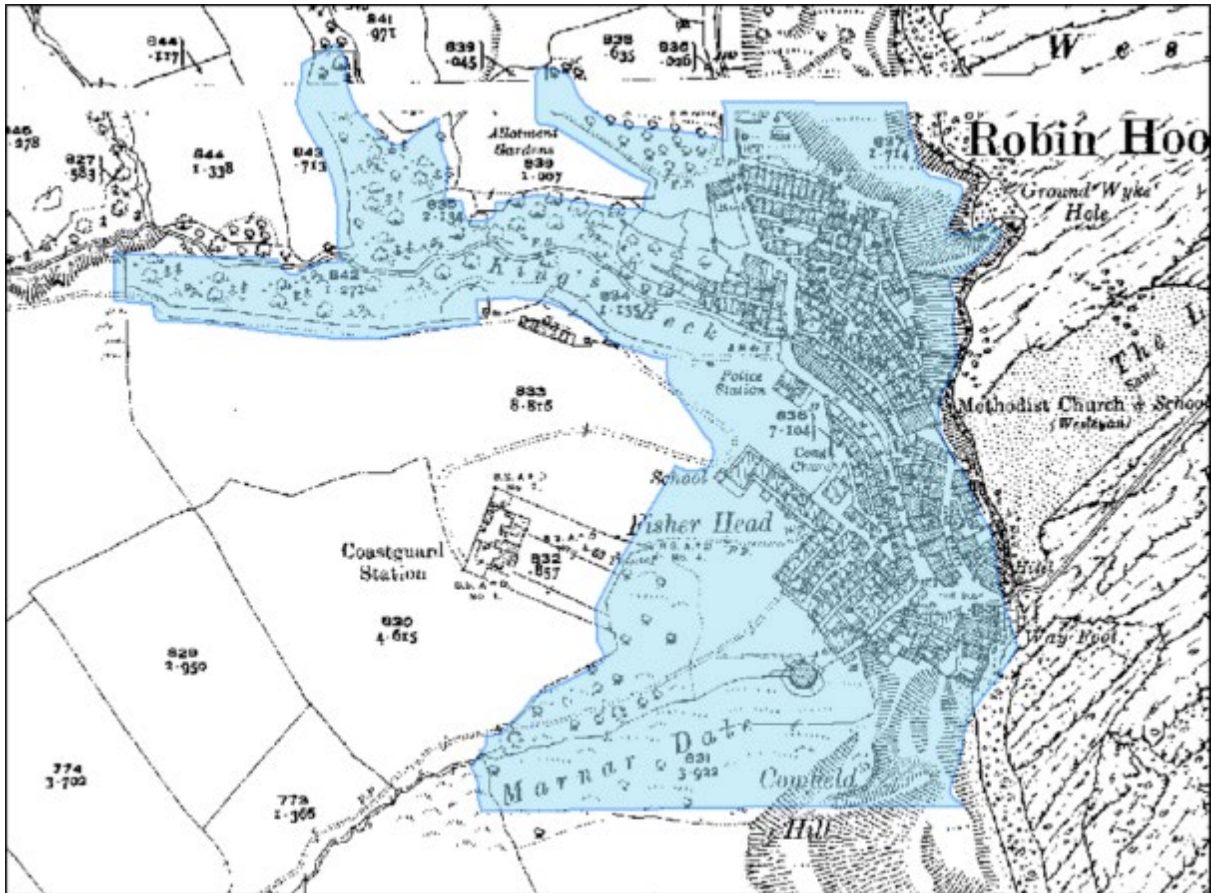


Figure 4. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1910. Very little additional development was apparent.

## 6.0 The Ancient Street Plan and Open Spaces

**In a nutshell: steep sided ravine with a tree lined beck, tightly packed cottages cling to the hillside, narrow flagged cobbled lanes between buildings lined with colourful pots, steps and tunnels, slipway and dock, twisted handrails, stone retaining walls with tumbles of wallflowers and painted wrought iron fences.**



Figures 5 - 7. The narrow York stone and cobbled streets.

## 6.1 The Street Plan

The planform of the village has been almost entirely dictated by the topography. All the buildings within the Conservation Area are located within a ravine that carried the King's Beck out to sea; this limited the available space suitable for building cottages. The desire to stay out of view from the land and to shelter from the inclement weather coming in from the sea, restricted buildings to the ravine sides.

The two main roads are New Road and King Street, but only New Road links with the outside world and this is on a steep gradient of one in three. Much of King Street fell into the sea in 1780<sup>14</sup>. Many other narrow lanes and passages exist, some named after former residents such as Tommy Baxter Street, commemorating a local character who died in 1890<sup>15</sup>.

The cottages cling to the sides of the ravine in a manner that is now picturesque but may have once been unsanitary and overcrowded. The lower part of King's Beck appears to have been undergrounded in the 17th century in order to create more space to build cottages on; it now ends in a cavern that discharges the beck out to the sea.

The top of the Conservation Area does not quite meet the start of the Victorian expansion of the village. This separation in character and in space is important and also represents a separation of time. The few metres of land between, while landscaped, should remain undeveloped.

## 6.2 Then and now



Figures 8 - 9. Left the approach from Bay Bank into the village, possibly in the late 1940s, early 1950s. Right: the same view today.

The extension of the Fish Bar has lost the broken roofline, chimney and pitched roof below and obscured the views of cottages near the sea. While it reflects aspects of the village's character, it has also lost some historic interest. Further down the village a catslide roof has been replaced with a more conventional outshut extension. The tarmacked road with yellow lines is overly urban for the village but the handrails sit well as a compromise between safety and historic character.

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<sup>14</sup> Farnhill 1966, 6416

<sup>15</sup> Farnhill 1966, 65

### 6.3 Surface Treatments, Open and Green Spaces

There are few surfaces in the village that are not developed and so most surface treatment applies to the narrow passages between fishermen's cottages which are predominantly paved with flags and cobbles, usually with flights of steps linking different levels, often adorned with pots of colourful plants and attractive railings (see above). New Road is disappointingly surfaced in tarmac with double yellow lines but is saved from too much urbanisation by cobbled paths to the sides, steps to the buildings and lanes and modern twisted green hand rails. The flagged paths running along The Esplanade have terracotta drainage ditches to the side which are unusual.

The village has very little open space, but the Conservation Area includes green space in the surrounding area in order to protect views and setting. A grassy area near the Congregational Church and former school is almost uncharacteristically open, but it does provide an unparalleled view of the village.

The green space north of the Esplanade is more typical being on a steep slope and providing some garden space for the row of houses to the south. The most important open space is the dock itself, now more of a village square, but terminating in a slipway and an underground tunnel that carries the King's Beck to the bay.

The steep undeveloped sides above the King's Beck are an important splash of green and the setting for the former mill building. The trees here are protected with Tree Preservation Orders. There are very few gardens in the village; any available space was usually sacrificed to build cottages for extended family members long ago.





Figures 10 – 13. Different surface treatments, and areas of open space.

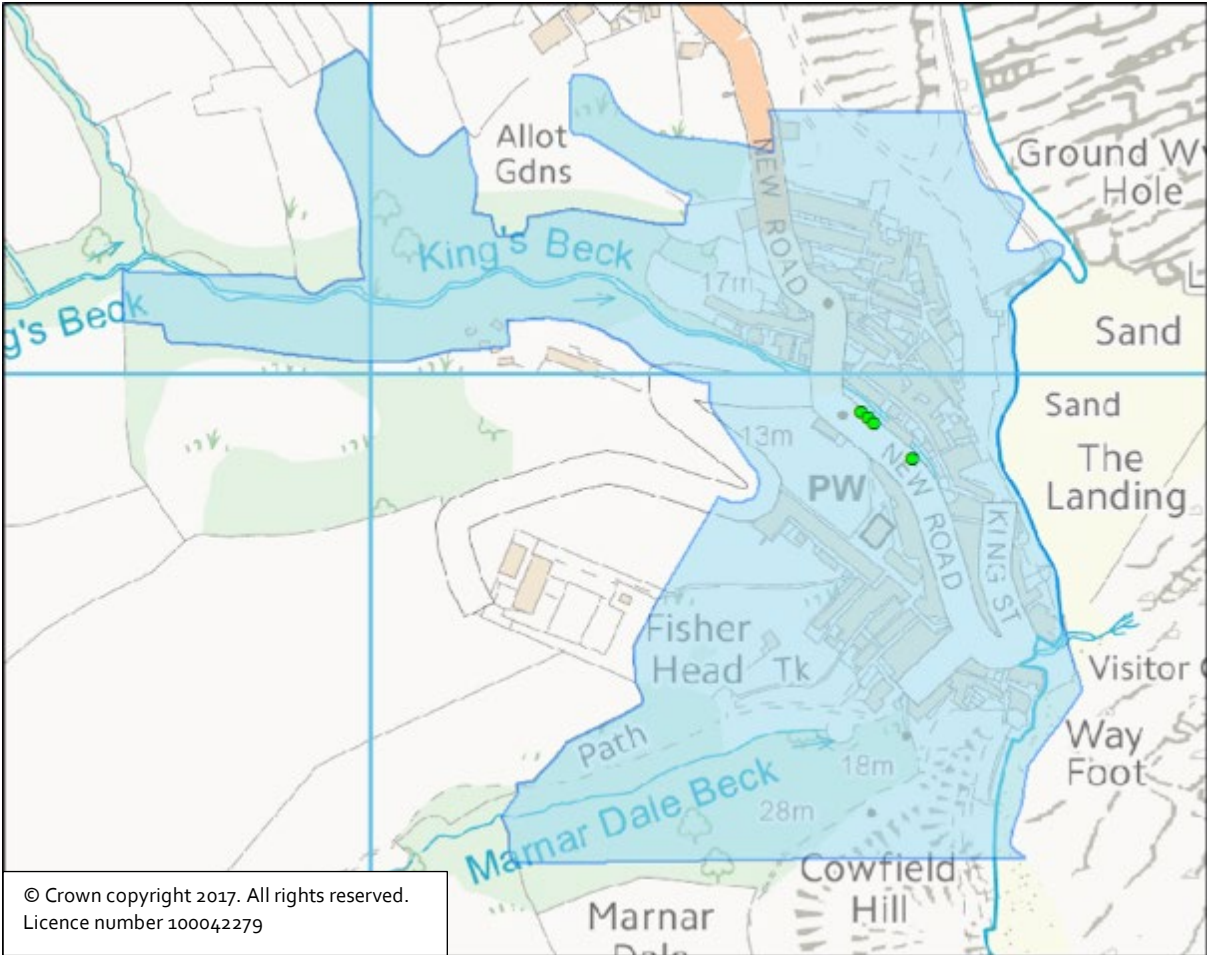


Figure 14. Tree Preservation Orders shown in green.

**6.4 Boundaries**

Boundaries have less importance in Robin Hood’s Bay than in other villages because the walls of the cottages and the narrow lanes function as boundaries.

There are few gardens to define, although where they do exist, metal fencing, wooden picket fencing and other visually permeable materials are used except where fronting some of the grander three storey 18th century houses with dressed stone walls and sweeping copes and even stone gate pillars with ball finials.

Boundaries are used to retain earth banks where differences in height require walls to stop the ravine sides from slipping on to New Road. These are constructed in coursed stone, some mortared, some not, some coped, often with ivy and wallflowers tumbling over the edge. Some of the lower stone walls are topped with iron railings. New Road is lined with modern green twisted metal railings and railings also feature as gates into lanes and gardens.

The village itself is now protected from the sea by a massive concrete wall built in 1975; this is not very picturesque but necessitated by historic losses of cottages and land to the waves of the North Sea.



Figures 15 – 19. Different boundary treatments.

**6.5 Considerable Significance**

- Tightly packed settlement.
- Steep sided topography leading to varying ground levels and building heights.
- Separation from Victorian expansion at the top of the bank.



- Narrow flagged and cobbled lanes.
- Stone steps.
- Few open spaces.
- Stone retaining walls with vegetation to soften.
- Visually permeable boundaries to private spaces, especially cast ironwork.
- Slipway and dock area as reminders of the fishing industry.
- Culverted becks as evidence of smuggling and the need to obtain more developable space.
- Some tree cover along the King's Beck.
- Conservation Area largely hidden from the mainland by keeping development within the ravine.
- Historic street names.

## 6.6 Opportunities to conserve and enhance

- Retain the narrow lanes and traditional surfaces of cobbles and flags; work with statutory undertakers and utilities to replace surfaces with traditional materials.
- Retain the gap between the Conservation Area and the rest of Robin Hood's Bay.
- Limit boundary types to stone retaining walls, softened with plants and visually permeable materials such as wrought iron or picket fencing.
- Manage tree cover along beck to ensure longevity and control self-seeding.
- Maintain the dramatic steep and wooded sides to the beck and resist attempts to encroach on to it.
- Limit the use of tarmac, highways signs and road markings.

## 7.0 Archaeology

Evidence of historic Robin Hood's Bay consists of the scarring of blocked openings, former buildings and reused foundations above ground and buried evidence below ground. Blocked openings are particularly common, but internally there are many other features, often obscured by later plasterwork.

These scars from the past tell us how buildings were altered over time to meet changing circumstances, such as a growing family or the gradual shift in the economy from smuggling to fishing. They can also represent the availability of new building materials made possible by the arrival of the railway in 1836 or changing fashions in building design. This means that even where a building appears to be 18th or 19th century, it may contain the hidden remains of a much earlier building.

The buried remains are more difficult to quantify and in Robin Hood's Bay this is likely to be very complex. The same area of ground has been occupied and built on repeatedly since at least the 16th century. The village properties must have had access to wells; indeed, one home on King Street is reputed to have a well over 30m deep<sup>16</sup>. Further, the culverting of the becks to create additional surface areas, the prolific use of cellars and caverns, means that any development is likely to have to consider its impact on unknown sub surface remains.



Figures 20 – 23. Features showing how buildings have been adapted and evolved.

### 7.1 Some significance

- Evidence of blocked openings and former buildings.

### 7.2 Unknown significance

- Buried archaeology, wells, cess pits and fabric within buildings from earlier dates.

### 7.3 Opportunities to conserve and enhance

- Alterations to historic buildings should be informed by a Statement of Significance.
- A Heritage Statement may need to consider the impact of new development on sub surface remains.

Ground disturbance may need to be archaeologically recorded.

## 8.0 Vistas and Views

**In a nutshell: pitches and pantiles, channelled views along cobbled lanes decorated with plant pots, sea views, cliff backdrop.**

<sup>16</sup> Farnhill 1966, 6522

## 8.1 Then and now



Figures 23 – 24. Historic view of Robin Hood's Bay vs today's view.

The village is notable for being almost invisible from the mainland until arriving inside its jumbled collection of cottages. Views within the village are channelled between cottages and lanes, mostly downhill towards the sea. The cottage walls frame the views, but on high ground near the old school the views across the other side of the ravine are of the red pantile pitched roofs (and some Welsh slate) all jumbled one above the other. To the south of the bay, the views back from the Cleveland Way are of the village nestling in its ravine with a dramatic backdrop of the cliffs of the Ness and the sea and similarly the views from the Ness to the south are of note.

*'It has a most romantic and picturesque appearance, many of the houses being built on the extreme verge of the cliff, overhanging the sea... The town is so constructed that visitors approaching from the direction of Whitby, are almost in the place before they see it... Fine views are obtained of this strangely placed town, as well as of the bay, from Cawfoot Hill on the south-east, and Ness point, on the north side.'*

*(Bulmer's History and Directory of North Yorkshire, 1890)*

### 8.2 Considerable significance

- Views across the ravine of pitched roofs, pantiles and chimneys on various levels.
- View of the village from the Cleveland Way to the south and the Ness from the north.
- Views along alleys.
- Views to the sea.
- Views along cascading rooflines.

### 8.3 Opportunities to conserve and enhance

- Red pantile should be considered the norm for future roofing materials on new development so that views into the village continue to be a mix of green trees and red roofs.
- Chimneys should be retained.

- Any development on high ground above the village should be low lying so as not to obstruct existing views of the village from the Cleveland Way.

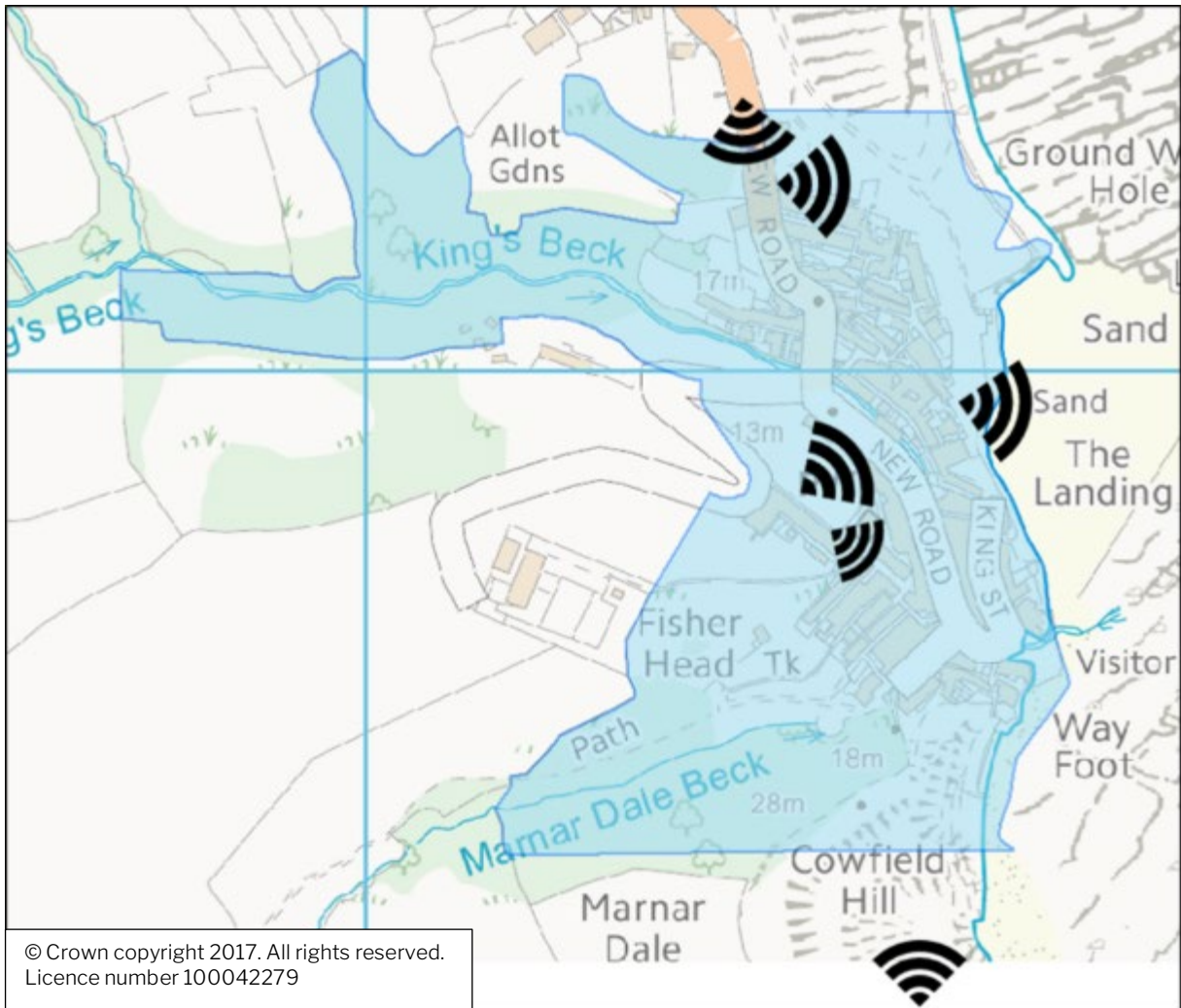


Figure 25. Views from the village which merit preserving. Many other views are framed along lanes between cottages – too numerous to map.



Figure 26. Views of cascading rooflines, pitches, pantiles and chimneys, views along alleys and lanes, views of the sea

## 9.0 The Historic Buildings of Robin Hood's Bay

**In a nutshell: stone buildings, some whitewashed, one to three storeys high; red pantile roofs and some Welsh slate, stone water tabling, chimneys in brick or stone, kneelers, traditional window types, brightly coloured painted timber doors with door knockers, little porches over doors, fanlights, over lights, date stones and access to cellars from street front. Shop front consoles and glazed tile butchers – ceramic cow.**

There are two star attractions to the Bay – the coast itself and the cottages which appear to tumble down the ravine towards the shore creating pretty cascades of red pantile roofs and chimneys. Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area were already built by the mid-19th century and little development has taken place within this historic core subsequently. As a result, there is an exceptionally high proportion of listed buildings within this area, reflecting the architectural and historic interest of the village.

The majority of buildings appear 18th and 19th century in date, but many were originally constructed between 1650 and 1750 (as date stones also suggest).

Evidence of these may be restricted to internal features and old openings behind the present-day plasterwork although many houses with sash windows display residual evidence of earlier mullion windows. Whitby Abbey had control of much of this land until it was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1540. This is likely to have resulted in changing tenurial systems giving tenants the right to buy their cottages and to leave them to their children.

This also resulted in greater investment in the building stock and a shift towards improvements in stone. Consequently, the earliest building remains in the village may be as early as the 16th century, even if that is simply an historic core in a subsequently modernised building.

Prior to the 1600s, it is likely that most buildings would have been constructed in timber and wattle and daub with roofs of heather thatch harvested from the surrounding moors. In Henry VIII's reign it was decreed "very necessary that all woods within the parish of Whitby or elsewhere thereunto, shall be reserved for the maintenance of the King's cottages in Whitby and at Robyn Hood's Baye"<sup>17</sup>. This suggests a shortage of timber for building works.

These cottages were subsequently disposed of by Queen Elizabeth, but King Street may refer back to the location of these buildings<sup>18</sup>. If timber was in short supply, ship wrecks did provide an alternative recycled source and there is evidence, somewhat later, of timbers being reused from brigs inside houses<sup>19</sup>. If a nautical chart dating to 1586 is to be trusted, then the settlement grew up along the coast facing out to sea with tall gabled houses, however, this is likely to be the product of artistic licence.

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<sup>17</sup> Farnhill 1966, 16

<sup>18</sup> Farnhill 1966, 16

<sup>19</sup> In 2003 a ceiling was removed in a cottage at Robin Hood's Bay and two timbers were found, one with 'Ipswich' carved in it and the other 'Elizabeth Jan'. They were later found to be the port of registration board and name-board of a Canadian brig called the Elizabeth Jane. (<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/NRY/Fylingdales>) [accessed 23.05.17]

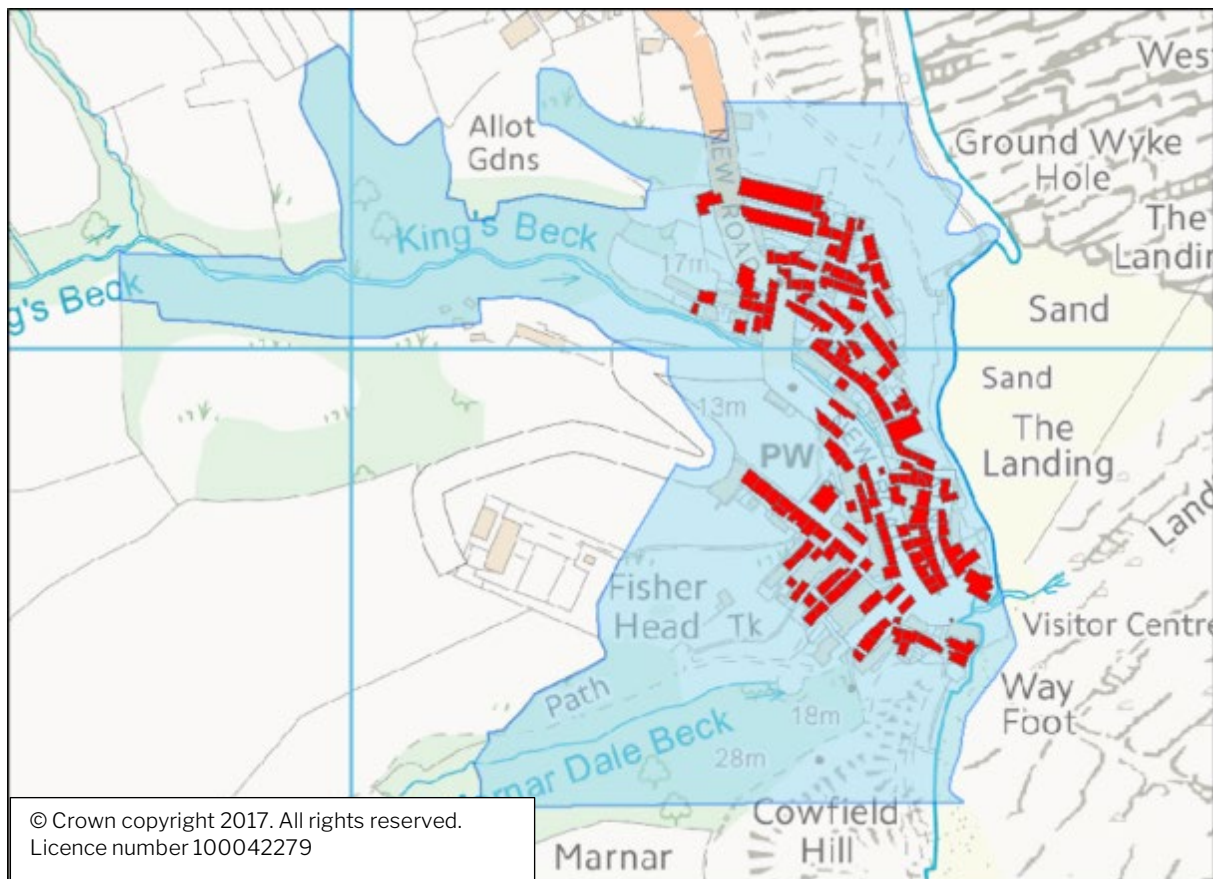


Figure 27. Listed buildings in the Conservation Area

Some buildings are known to date to the 17th century and it was to this time that the bridge over King's Beck appears to have been constructed and the tunnel to underground the beck – both substantial infrastructure investments for such a small fishing village.

As space on the ground was limited, the only way for cottages to expand was upwards and so many of the buildings are tall and narrow. The steep slope of the hillside also means that a ground floor extension on one cottage, may sit on the roof of another. Some cottages were linked at cellar level, such as the former Fisherman's Arms of 1680 in the Dock which connected to the neighbouring property and another house in The Square had a similar cellar level passage. Others linked in to the tunnel that carries the King's Beck out to sea, such as The Laurel Inn<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Farnhill 1966, 39



Figure 28. A North Sea chart dating to 1586 by Waghenauer describes the coasts in Europe.<sup>1</sup> It depicts “Robinhodes Bay” with tall houses and gabled roofs, although there may be some artistic licence here.



Figures 29 - 31. The steep sided ravine means there has always been very little space to build; consequently, buildings are curious shapes, often extended upwards or over buildings below and the beck has been culverted to create additional space to build on, whilst having a useful additional effect of creating tunnels suitable for smuggling.

There are about two hundred cottages in the ravine, the majority are now holiday lets, but permanent residents remain. The building materials are mainly stone and some brick and predominantly red pantile roofs with stone water tabling and kneelers, especially on 18th century cottages. A few buildings are rendered (traditionally lime washed), but these are still few in number and so not particularly distinctive. Tall brick or stone chimneys are typical because great height was needed to draw the smoke away from the neighbouring cottages which might be at a higher level. These features, plus the varied heights and tightly packed nature of development has created a stunningly attractive roofscape that



can be appreciated from all corners, nooks and crannies within the village and from the bay to the south. However, this roofscape is vulnerable to the insertion of excessive or poorly designed rooflights and dormer windows.

### 9.1 Doors

The colourful roofscape is enhanced by painted timber doors on the cottages, many with little canopies over to provide additional shelter. Colours tend to consist of earth tones such as sage green, blue-grey, browns, maroons, deep reds, burgundy, chestnut, dark green and blue reflecting the villages largely Georgian and Victorian character. Pastel colours are not that common and where they exist they do dilute the character of the village. The distinctive design of many doors is unique to Robin Hood’s Bay and one of its special qualities. Fanlights and over lights are painted over with such frequency that it suggests that they were always this way; there is some occasional imaginative use of stained glass in over lights.

Doors are a mixture of Georgian three panel and six panel types, narrow double doors, Victorian four panel doors and simple batten and plank doors. Door knockers are varied but many are on a coastal theme with fishes, anchors and ships. These contrast with more functional doorways that hark back to their use as part of the fishing industry, or for storage. The village has not escaped the Victorian civic styles exemplified by the Coroner’s Room and the Methodists’ Chapel. Date stones can be found above the doors and boot scrapers at their bases. Due to differing ground levels, the approaches to doorways can be up flights of stairs, or in some cases, below ground.



Figures 32 – 34. A selection of the different door designs in Robin Hood’s Bay.



Figures 35 – 37. A selection of the different door canopy designs.

Small decorative canopies which frame doorways are also a feature of the village, usually covered with lead and can be of flat or pitched roof design. Although often incorporating elaborate designs, they are small and simple in scale and do not dominate the appearance of the building.

## 9.2 Windows

Traditional windows feature strongly thanks to the protected status of the cottages and there is a huge variety. Their design often reflects the need to extend buildings upwards and to bring in light without obstructing the narrow lanes. Yorkshire sliding sashes abound including a rare tri-partite Yorkshire sliding sash; these windows are amongst the earliest survivors. Multi pane sashes and multi paned windows with tiny side hung or sliding casements known as ‘Whitby composite’ windows, are common and pre-date the mid-19th century. Oriel windows were designed to overlook narrow lanes from upper storeys without obstructing them. The Victorian four pane sash window is also in evidence and the late Victorian / Edwardian sash window with the upper pane divided into small panes and the lower ones as large panes. Some Victorian ironwork above the windows has also survived; such survivals are relatively rare in the wider region.

Windows are predominantly painted. A common theme seen in the coastal villages of the North York Moors is the use of a two-tone paint scheme where the window frames are painted a darker colour with lighter or white sashes. This is evident within Robin Hood’s Bay and is particularly the case in rendered properties where the two-tone provides relief against the light walls. Where non-painted or stained windows exist they diminish the character of the Conservation Area.

The chapels are distinctive for their stained and leaded glass and pointed arched windows and the Coroner’s Room has leaded glass windows.



Figures 38 – 46. A selection of the varying window designs and paint colours found in Robin Hood's Bay.

As part of the strategy of building upwards, many cottages have dormers to take advantage of roof space; where they are Victorian they are sometimes accompanied with barge boarding and finials, but the dormer roofs are mostly pantiles. Georgian and Queen Anne dormers can be set within attractive stone arches and the late 20th to 21st century response has been to use skylights.



Figure 47. A roovescape view of Robin Hood's Bay showing the different styles of dormers.

### 9.3 Shop Fronts

Shop fronts display larger window openings and while many are 20th century there are historic shop fronts such as at The Old Post Office. The glazed tiling of the fishmongers shop makes the building stand out on the corner. Other shop fronts retain their consoles on either side of the window tops and some simple joinery decoration.



Figures 48 – 49. Examples of shop fronts in the village.

#### **9.4 Considerable significance**

- Building materials of stone and small amounts of render (historically limewash). Red pantile roofs predominate with stone water tabling, some kneelers and chimneys of stone or brick.
- Most buildings one to three storeys.
- Oddly shaped buildings have been designed to fit into irregular spaces.
- A wide variety of traditional window types; cast iron work above Victorian windows, oriel windows overlooking narrow lanes.
- Traditional timber panelled doors, many with little wooden canopies and brass or iron door knockers.
- Painted fenestration with a two-tone colour scheme.
- Tradition of extending upwards into attic space.
- Access doors to cellars.
- Roofscapes and roof detailing is particularly important and sensitive to change.

#### **9.5 Some significance**

- Edwardian shop fronts.
- Glazed tile butcher's shop.
- Victorian civic architectural styles (chapels and school).

#### **9.6 Opportunities to conserve and enhance**

- New building stock should remain modest in scale and retain the settlement pattern.
- Irregularly shaped buildings designed to fit into small spaces is characteristic and can be referenced in any new development.
- Sandstone and red pantile are the characteristic building materials that should be visible in any view.
- Pitched roofs are characteristic; flat roofs would be a negative feature.
- Dormer windows are characteristic, but any new ones must be considered in terms of the wider composition to make a positive contribution to the roofscape.
- Chimneys should be retained.
- There is a wealth of traditional window types to choose from if new development is proposed, but existing traditional windows should be retained so that the variety is conserved, and distinctive original crown and cylinder glass preserved.
- Traditional shop windows should be conserved or restored where lost. Victorian iron fretwork over windows should be conserved.

- Brightly coloured doors are characteristic and on cottages, small wooden canopies over the doors are especially so.
- A variety of iron or brass door knockers also adds to the architectural interest.
- Where doors survive into cellars or have functions associated with storage or fishing, they should be retained.
- There is some evidence of 20th century cementitious pointing that is damaging to the stonework; in due course, this pointing should be replaced with lime to avoid permanent damage.

## 9.7 The little details

**In a nutshell: fingerposts, standpipes, door knockers, boot scrapers, glazed tile shop front, hanging shop signs, Georgian post box, flowerpots, wall mounted lanterns, finials, worn steps, cast iron drainpipes, chamfered corners, lobster pots, mooring rings, plaques, and date stones.**

Historic and architectural interest in the Conservation Area is derived from small features that individually might make little impact, but collectively, contribute considerably to its character. These are the sorts of things that add local distinctiveness and texture to the built environment and, often, a sense of connection with history – these can all too easily be overlooked, replaced, ‘improved’ or ignored, adding to a subtle sanitisation and erosion of local distinctiveness. These are the sorts of things we do not always notice until they are gone.

The remnants of old standpipes hark back to the days before water was supplied to each house and adds historic interest. Boot scrapers are also a testament to past activity as are worn steps. There is still evidence of fishing activity, past and present. Mooring rings on the dock survive from the past, lobster pots along back lanes add present day interest. Wall mounted lanterns hung on cottage corners add interest (and is a practical solution where there is insufficient street space to accommodate a lamp post) as do hanging shop signs. There is a very special c.1900 wall lantern on The Laurel recently restored, and said to have been relocated from the station. There are also unusual “fire certificate” signs located on some properties, particularly in The Square area, one which has recently been restored by the homeowner.

Small architectural details enliven the buildings such as brass door knockers, finials, cast iron drainpipes and chamfered corners designed to aid carts and people around tight corners. The King George VII post box is a good survival and the early 20th century glazed tile work to the former butcher’s makes a jolly addition to the streetscape. The lovingly planted flowerpots along the lanes and alleys enliven and brighten the village and compete with the brightly coloured doors.

Traditional building names are also an important element reflecting the social history of Robin Hood’s Bay and its inhabitants. Re-naming with names which are perhaps more commonplace, erodes this history of the village.



Figures 50 – 53. Different oddities found in Robin Hood’s Bay.



Figure 54. Coroner’s Room inscription above the door.

**9.8 Considerable significance**

- Worn steps to doorways.
- Wall hung lanterns.
- Date stones, civic plaques.

**9.9 Some significance**

- Old water standpipes.
- Mooring rings.
- King George post box.
- Ceramic cow and other shop signs.
- Boot scrapers.
- Cast iron water goods.
- Ceramic drainage channels.

- Finials.
- Chamfered corners.
- Flowerpots along lanes.
- Fire Certificate signs, particularly in The Square.



Figures 55 – 58. More oddities found in Robin Hood's Bay.

### 9.10 Opportunities to conserve and enhance

- The loss of minor historic features can cause harm to the historic interest of a Conservation Area and so they should be actively managed.
- Evidence of the former fishing industry should be retained.
- Wall mounted lanterns are the distinctive form of street lighting here.
- Drainpipes and guttering should be in cast iron.
- Ceramic channels should be protected during any works.
- Redundant features such as former standpipes, boot scrapers and mooring rings should be retained wherever possible.

## 10.0 Recommendations for Future Management

### 10.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Street Plan, the Surfaces, Open Spaces and Boundaries of the Conservation Area

- Retain the narrow lanes and traditional surfaces of cobbles and flags; work with statutory undertakers and utilities to replace surfaces with traditional materials.
- Retain the gap between the Conservation Area and the rest of Robin Hood's Bay (if the Conservation Area is extended, the gap will remain important).
- Limit boundary types to stone retaining walls, softened with plants and visually permeable materials such as wrought or cast iron or picket fencing.
- Manage tree cover along beck to ensure longevity and control self-seeding.



- Maintain the dramatic, wild quality of the wooded ravine and resist attempts to encroach on to it or over it.
- Ensure advertisements and signage are traditional and in-keeping with the character of Robin Hood's Bay by using hand painted timber signs and the minimum needed to advertise the business. Several businesses in one street or area could consider sharing a 'finger' style post, located on the main thoroughfare (New Road) to save a proliferation of separate signs in one area/wall face.

## **10.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Archaeology of the Conservation Area**

- In line with National Planning Policy, alterations to historic buildings should be informed by a Statement of Significance and ground disturbance may need to be archaeologically recorded. A Heritage Statement may need to consider the impact of new development on sub surface remains.

Conserving and Enhancing the Vistas and Views of the Conservation Area.

- Red pantile should be considered the norm for future roofing materials on new development so that views into the village continue to be a mix of green trees and red roofs.
- Chimneys should be retained.
- Any development on high ground above the village should be low lying so as not to obstruct existing views of the village from the Cleveland Way.

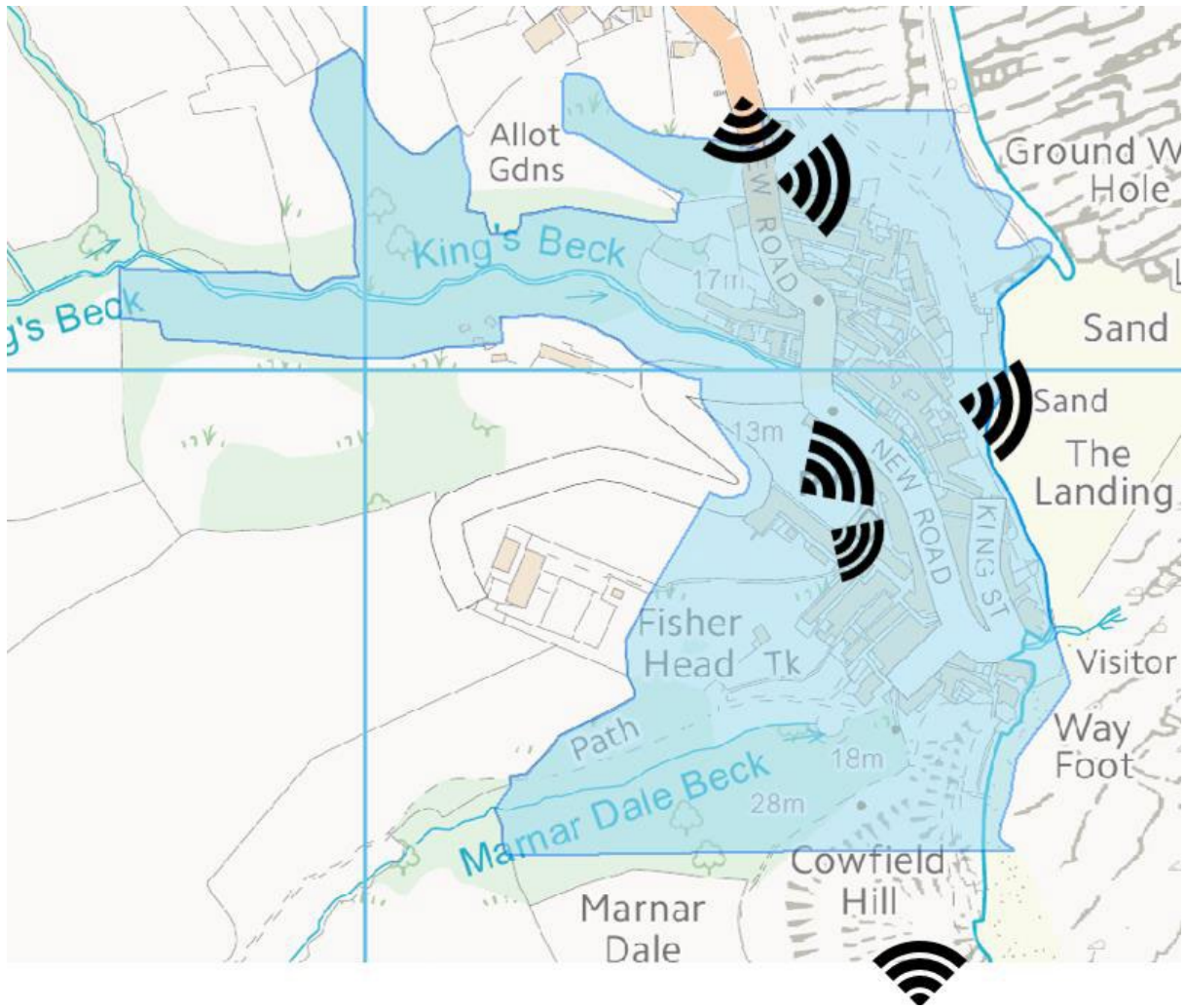


Figure 59. Views from the village which merit preserving. Many other views are framed along lanes between cottages – too numerous to map.

### 10.3 Conserving and enhancing the Historic Buildings of the Conservation Area

- New building stock should remain modest in scale and retain the settlement pattern.
- Irregularly shaped buildings designed to fit into small spaces is characteristic and can be referenced in any new development.
- Sandstone and red pantile are the characteristic building materials that should be visible in any view.
- Pitched roofs are characteristic and flat roofs would be a negative feature.
- Dormer windows are characteristic, but any new ones must be considered in terms of the wider composition to make a positive contribution to the roofscape.
- Chimneys should be retained.
- There is a wealth of traditional window types to choose from if new development is proposed, but existing traditional windows should be retained so that the variety is conserved, and distinctive original crown and cylinder glass preserved too.

- Traditional shop windows should be conserved or restored where lost. Victorian iron fretwork over windows should be conserved.
- Brightly coloured doors are characteristic and on cottages, small wooden canopies over the doors are especially so.
- A variety of iron or brass door knockers also adds to the architectural interest.
- Where doors survive into cellars or have functions associated with storage or fishing, they should be retained.
- There is some evidence of 20th century cementitious pointing that is damaging to the stonework; in due course, this pointing should be replaced with lime to avoid permanent damage.

#### **10.4 Conserving and enhancing the little architectural and historic details**

- The loss of minor historic features can cause harm to the historic interest of a Conservation Area and so they should be actively managed.
- Evidence of the former fishing industry should be retained.
- Wall mounted lanterns are the distinctive form of street lighting here.
- Drain pipes and guttering should be in cast iron.
- Ceramic channels should be protected during any works.
- Redundant features such as former standpipes, boot scrapers and mooring rings should be retained wherever possible.

#### **10.5 Recommended boundary changes**

The Conservation Area Appraisal process is designed to review the boundaries of the Conservation Area. This will be done in consultation with the local community, but one major extension is put forward for consideration.

Before 1885, there was very little development on the high ground above the village; only the Georgian Bay Tree with its sweeping stone walls was located opposite the junction of Thorpe Lane and a few dispersed farms opposite and at Mount Pleasant.

The advent of the railway in 1885 opened up the village to tourism and those visitors enamoured of the quaint village and dramatic sea views were able to purchase land to build their own homes or to cash in on its popularity by constructing hotels and guest house. This new area of development became known as The Bay and consisted of fine late Victorian and Edwardian villas located along Station Road overlooking the coast above Robin Hood's Bay. They contrasted starkly with the cottages below being larger in scale, often ornate and built mostly from red brick, but some ashlar sandstone buildings and detailing and roofing of imported Welsh slate of the traditional pantile. As a group,

they represent a new phase in the history of Robin Hood's Bay and are of architectural interest.



Figure 60. The Listed Bay Tree and boundary wall.

The Victoria Hotel of 1897 is a good example of its type with frontages designed to have views with large, canted bay windows and balconies and details that referenced earlier English history such as a mock Tudor frontage, tall Jacobean chimneys, mullion windows and leaded stained glass. Other villas had grandeur with ball finials, kneelers, crenellations and other mock medieval doorways and windows. The Queen Anne style with Dutch and Flemish gables (see The Grosvenor Hotel), hipped roofs and prominent chimneys seems to have been popular in The Bay. It was also at this time that windows were usually painted white as opposed to the earlier dark colours or wood effect. Windows were usually sashes, but sometimes only the bottom two thirds was made of large plate glass, while the top section which was usually hidden behind a blind, was furnished with small paned glass windows.

Houses generally became larger in order to accommodate new service rooms with accommodation for servants, more bedrooms, a nursery and maybe even a plumbed in bathroom. The Victorian and Edwardian villas have a strong street presence, slightly set back from the road with a small front garden, possible steps up to the grand front door and low stone boundaries with ornate gateposts carved with the name of the house and topped with a finial.

The emphasis on views continued even in smaller semi-detached houses and terraces with bay windows and balconies over. Along the side streets, the rows of Queen Anne and Arts and Crafts houses developed a suburban character with leafy gardens and hedges.



Figures 61 – 64. Late Victorian villas on the Bay referencing historic architectural details from medieval, Tudor and Jacobean England.

The Conservation Area could therefore be developed to capture this phase of Robin Hood’s Bay history and to conserve a sample of the Victorian and Edwardian houses and gardens along Station Road and the Mount Pleasants. It would also include two of the pre 19th century houses on Station Road. This area would form part of the existing Conservation Area, but be a separate character area and the Conservation Area Appraisal updated to reflect these additional buildings. When responding to the consultation, consultees may wish to also consider any possible extension to Fylingthorpe Conservation Area along Thorpe Lane and whether in fact both Conservation Areas should join.

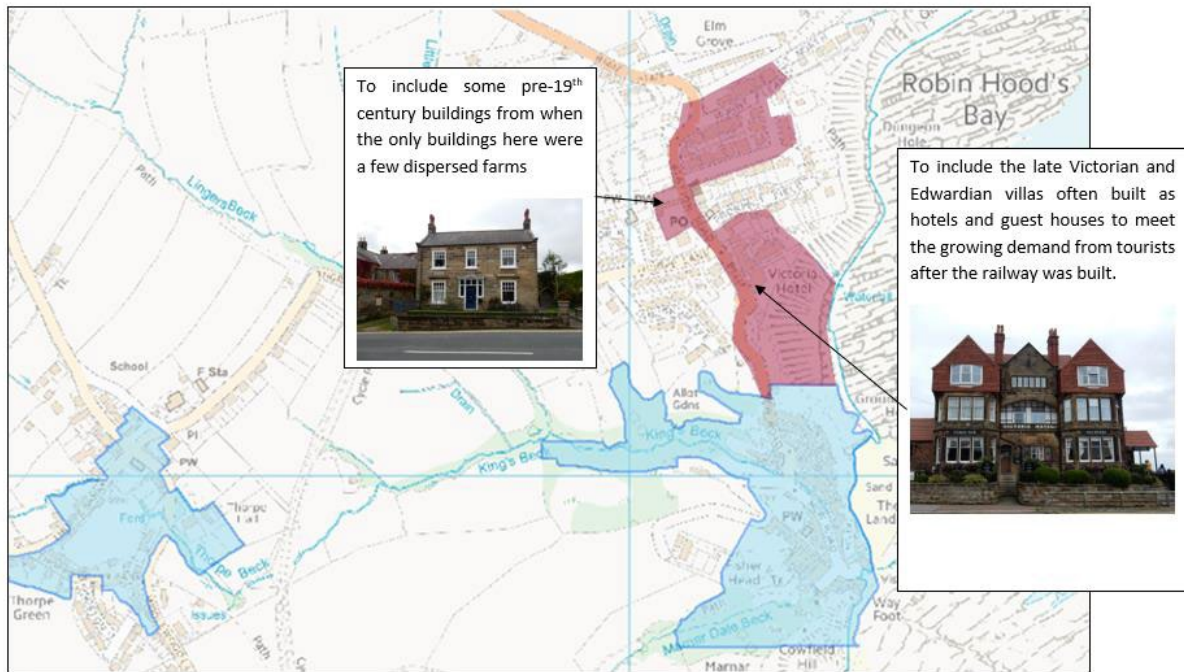


Figure 65. The blue areas represent the existing Fylingthorpe Conservation Area to the left and Robin Hood's Bay to the right. The red area could be an extended Conservation Area reflecting the Victorian and Edwardian expansion of Robin Hood's Bay, as well as two pre-19th century buildings.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal has also identified what the architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area is and how that contributes towards its significance. This process has flagged up a number of features which merit conservation and enhancement and which should be taken into consideration in any management decisions in the future. These 'opportunities to conserve and enhance' have been included in the main report so that it can be clearly seen why they are being recommended because they follow on from the statements of significance. For ease of use, they will be duplicated here.

## 11.0 Conclusion

Robin Hood's Bay Conservation Area was designated in 1995 for its architectural and historic interest. This is briefly summarised as stone built cottages tightly packed into the steep sides of a ravine, with narrow alleys running between the buildings. Curiously shaped buildings take advantage of tiny spaces and even the beck has been culverted to create more developable space. The buildings are predominantly 18th century in appearance and built of stone with red pantile pitched roofs and some Welsh slate. Dormer windows are common because of the need to extend upwards; these are sometimes imaginatively designed (such as some Queen Anne style dormers) and make a positive contribution towards the roofscape along with stone water tabling, chimneys and the variety of roof heights brought about by the steep valley sides. Many doors are brightly painted with quirky door knockers, the occasional surviving boot scraper and canopies to provide additional protection from the coastal weather. The narrow lanes are surfaced in a variety of materials, mostly traditional cobbles and stone and lined with

pots planted with flowers and shrubs. Views between the lanes invite exploration or frame views out to the sea. Redundant water stands and mooring rings all add to the historic interest.

The management plan makes a number of recommendations designed to help and conserve these special qualities. It has also flagged up that there is sufficient architectural and historic interest in the Victorian and Edwardian villas on land above Robin Hood’s Bay to extend the Conservation Area to include them. If it is agreed to extend the Conservation Area to include these buildings, they will form an additional character area and the appraisal and management plan will be altered to reflect their inclusion.



Figure 66. View of Robin Hood’s Bay nestled into the ravine.

## **12.0 Appendix and Acknowledgements**

National Planning Policy Framework

The Town and Country planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (69, 70, 71 & 72)

Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019)

North York Moors Local Plan (July2020)

Bulmer 1890 History and Directory of North Yorkshire

Farnhill, B 1966 Robin Hood's Bay. The Story of a Yorkshire Community

Pevsner, N 1966 The Buildings of England. Yorkshire and the North Riding

Whatley, S 1750 England Gazettee



## 13.0 Management Overview

### Development Management

The Local Planning Authority are dedicated to managing Conservation Areas in accordance with the above detailed Planning Policy and Legislation. Development in a Conservation Area is controlled under the requirements of the General Permitted Developments Orders, Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Advice on development within a conservation area is available on the Authority's website. It is also recommended to submit a 'pre-planning application' to determine if planning permission is needed and any constraints upon development, before submitting an application. Planning Enquiries can be sent to [planning@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:planning@northyorkmoors.org.uk).

### Archaeology

Developments on a small and large scale have the potential to impact upon archaeological remains. Any application for development will be subject to meeting archaeological requirements in the submission, determination and post-decision periods. The Authority's Historic Environment Records and their specialist archaeological advice team can be found on the North York Moors National Park Authority Website. Enquiries can be sent to: [conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk).

### Nature Conservation and Wildlife

The Authority will determine applications for development in accordance with the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, section 15 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment). Enquiries can be sent to: [conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk).

### Trees

Trees in the Conservation Area are protected by the designation where they have a stem diameter greater than 75mm (3 inches) when measured at 1.5 metres (5 feet) above ground level. Anyone wishing to prune or remove a tree must seek the necessary permissions from the Authority. Enquiries can be sent to: [conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk).

### Building Conservation

The current Conservation Area is covered by an Article 4 Direction, for further details on what this covers please find it on the website [northyorkmoors.org.uk](http://northyorkmoors.org.uk), or email the Building Conservation Team. The building Conservation team provide specialist advice on development to listed buildings and within Conservation Area. General enquiries can be sent to [building@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:building@northyorkmoors.org.uk) and applications for specialist pre-application advice can be submitted via the Authority's website. Information on Conservation Areas [www.northyorkmoors.org.uk](http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk).