

# THE PRESSURES

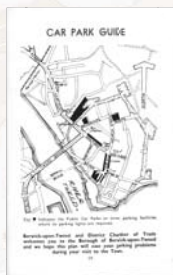
## CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Berwick has known periods of intense development before, and the signs are that the twenty-first century may well leave its stamp on the town too. However, the patterns we find pleasing about historic towns in retrospect were often the result of periods of dramatic change or instability that were stressful to live through.

The factors driving development pressure at present are overwhelmingly economic. Over the past few years, national property values have shot up and are still climbing, but Berwick incomes are low and local employment conditions are still fairly static.

In the long run, and if it is managed successfully and sensitively, developer interest and a population influx could represent a huge positive opportunity. This, though, relies on the town's ability to rise to the changes, welcome them and respond actively to the pressures they cause. How has it been doing?

'Sandwich's strengths lie in its sense of history, the quality of its architecture, its unifying compactness, the attraction of the river, and the skills of its people. The town has identity, and has to change to create a life for itself. Complacency is not an option.' CPRE survey



Again, the issues of today were already here fifty years ago, but the pressure of traffic is far more intense in the twenty-first century.

'Good judgement is needed in allowing sympathetic development that the infrastructure of a town can support and that is not just focused on housing but allows local employment levels to rise proportionately as well.' CPRE, Market Towns: Losing Their Identity?

### BERWICK'S OWN DEMOGRAPHIC TIMEBOMB

'Some rural districts - including Berwick-upon-Tweed, West Somerset, North Norfolk, East Lindsey, West Dorset and South Lakeland - are set to have three out of five of their residents aged over 50 by 2028.



'The ageing population is largely a result of younger people moving out of the countryside for education/work and affordable housing, and older people moving into rural areas at or before retirement age. The largest rural population gains are of people in their 30s or 40s and their children - and while the children often move away when they grow up, their parents remain.'

Medical News Today, April 2006

## BARGAIN BERWICK?

Berwick property and land prices have historically been low, in line with local earnings, so in recent years they have translated into lucrative opportunities for the development and marketing of holiday or retirement properties for buyers from more affluent areas.

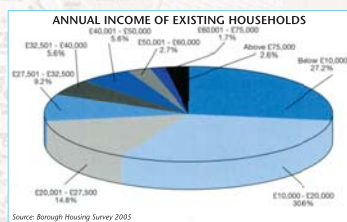
As prices and purchasing power rise elsewhere, so incoming buyers can afford increasingly more than local people, and the gap widens.

### THE DOUBLE WHAMMY...

'Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northumberland is the most popular destination for a second property outside London and the south-west, with 9.4% of property owned by people who live elsewhere, followed by North Norfolk at 9.1% and South Lakeland in Cumbria at 7.6%.' BBC, 2005

'Across Great Britain full-time weekly pay is highest in Kensington & Chelsea (£1,252) and lowest in Berwick-upon-Tweed, at £302 per week.' HBOS report based on data from the Office of National Statistics, 2005

### HOW MUCH DOES BERWICK EARN ?



### Effects on the environment and the community

While residential property remains the most profitable development sector:

- Sites sell quickly and do not become available for amenities such as hotels, parks, leisure facilities, restaurants, museums or attractions
- Design quality can suffer, with a tendency to plan cramped and densely packed schemes that are too high or sit awkwardly on their site
- Unless developers themselves are made to provide it, the rise in dwellings will not be matched by a rise in communal spaces or green space

### The parking 'loophole'

The old parts of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal are conservation areas, in which minimum parking requirements for new developments are waived. This encourages development in the centre rather than around the edge, but it has other effects too, and requires good public transport and central facilities.

### AFFORDABILITY AND ALLOCATIONS

Each area in the region is allocated an annual quota for new housing. Berwick is allowed 60 new dwellings per year, but demand from applications is far greater than this.

Most of these applications are for high-end developments, but according to Berwick Borough Council's 2005 housing survey almost 60% of households in Berwick earn only enough for a mortgage on a one-bedroom flat, assuming they could provide a 5% deposit. There is a huge demand for affordable housing.

Housing allocations in the North East are under review this summer, and Berwick may get a ring-fenced allocation for affordable housing over and above its quota of houses for sale on the open market.

## FEELING THE PRESSURE

### PRESSURE ON THE HIGH STREET



The rise of charity shops seems to have mirrored shopping moving further out of town, and traders report that the removal of parking in the central shopping area has meant falling trade.



Berwick Borough Council has approved a Tesco superstore and a retail park on this site on the edge of Tweedmouth, as well as an extension to the existing out of town supermarket, Morrisons. Some of these cases will go to a Public Enquiry in October. Meanwhile the trading estate opposite has vacant sites.

### PRESSURE ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



Planning permission for a restaurant and affordable flats was given on this corner site, but it has been sold on and there are now plans for a tall apartment building with ground-floor commercial premises.



The Governor's House and Garden is acknowledged to be of national historic importance, but the garden area has been sold off for housing, with plans up to 30 dwellings.

### PRESSURE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE ESTUARY



Recent developments in Tweedmouth and Spittal have focused attention on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these two communities, which have been overshadowed in the past by Berwick's higher profile.



### EDUCATION, EDUCATION - WHAT EDUCATION?

Berwick has lost out badly in terms of educational provision, perhaps because of its geographical position. There is no further education available in the town, and the travelling distance and time to the nearest colleges in South Northumberland and Scotland is a disincentive to enrol.

Young people who remain in the town often have low qualifications, and those who leave to seek further education tend not to return afterwards.

The absence of local educational prospects locks Berwick into the pressures that widen the affordability gap.