

Ambleside Conservation Area Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



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AMBLESIDE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Summary of special interest

The special interest that justifies the designation of Ambleside Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

- ❑ Origins as an early medieval settlement on the brow of a small promontory between Stock Ghyll and Scandale Beck;
- ❑ Second phase of development in the 17th century at the foot of the hill, based on the town's extensive wool trade and burgeoning water-powered industrial economy;
- ❑ Victorian expansion of the town south- and westwards following the growth of the tourist trade stimulated by construction of turnpike roads from the 1760s and the arrival of the railway in Windermere in 1847;
- ❑ Complex street pattern partially overlaid and extended by later 19th century routes comprising a network of roads, streets, narrow lanes, ginnels and back lanes;
- ❑ Rural setting of the town nestling closely under the fells with a sunny south-facing aspect surrounded by fells to north, east and west and a lake to the south;
- ❑ Varied townscape reflecting the town's three main phases of development;
- ❑ Haphazard intimate layout of cottages and former farm buildings clustered in islands formed by a network of narrow roads and footpaths north of Stock Ghyll – 'above Stock';
- ❑ The former 17th century market place, now Market Place, altered and encroached upon by mid-19th century development but still retaining its original shape;
- ❑ Formal, planned 19th century redevelopment of the town centre together with suburban expansion of villas, semi-detached houses and terraces of Victorian stone built houses;
- ❑ Varied informal collections of historic buildings with high group value;
- ❑ Attractive outward views to surrounding fells, especially Loughrigg Fell;
- ❑ Architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, including 38 listed buildings dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries;
- ❑ Good examples of Lakeland local vernacular architecture, plain 18th century dwellings and Victorian suburban building;
- ❑ Large purpose-built hotels and guesthouses as testimony to the 19th-century tourist industry;
- ❑ Scale How, formerly Charlotte Mason College, and its open grounds;
- ❑ Stock Ghyll, a fast-flowing tributary of the River Rothay which supported many different waterwheels and mills for 700 years;
- ❑ Picturesque views of Stock Ghyll, which retains a wild quality despite its urban location, up- and down-stream from the two bridges;
- ❑ Historic associations with many notable figures including William Wordsworth, Charlotte Mason and Harriet Martineau;
- ❑ Prevalent use of local stone, reflecting the underlying geology of the area, used for walling, roof slates and boundary walls;
- ❑ Former mill buildings on either side of Stock Ghyll, a mainstay of the town's economy until the end of the 19th century;
- ❑ Spire of St Mary's Church, a local landmark;
- ❑ Green open space of St Mary's churchyard and the University of Cumbria site;
- ❑ Trees in public open spaces and private gardens;
- ❑ Isolated areas of historic floorscape including stone setts, flagstone paving and cobbled water gullies;
- ❑ The Market Cross and small items of street furniture that add to Ambleside's local identity e.g. iron street name signs, old letter boxes, stone slab boundary walls;

1 Introduction

Ambleside is a small town in the Lake District National Park. It occupies an important position at the centre of the Lake District's road network. The town originated with an early medieval settlement above Stock Ghyll, a fast flowing tributary of the River Rothay. Development later moved southwards to nucleate around a 17th century market place, today's Market Square. Industrial activity, powered by water mills alongside Stock Ghyll, was the focus of the town's economy until the mid-18th century.

The coming of the railway to Windermere in 1847 opened the floodgates to what was already a growing tourist trade, and this in turn stimulated expansion to the south and east of the town, creating a virtually new Victorian town with church, assembly rooms, police station and detached and terraced houses.

The Ambleside Conservation Area encompasses the pre-1914 phases of historic development of the town from its initial c.10th century foundation on a low promontory between Stock Ghyll and Scandale Beck through to its Victorian expansion on the level Rothay valley bottom. Areas of open space on the edge of the built development have also been included as they form a vital part of the town's landscape setting.



Fig. 2 The Market Hall and Clock Tower, dated 1863. This was the Mechanics Institute in the 1900s with billiard & reading room & library.



Fig. 1 Stock Ghyll provided water power for the town's mills until the end of the 19th century.

The Ambleside Conservation Area was designated in 1980 by the Lake District National Park Authority. Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and identifies

opportunities for enhancement. These features are noted, described and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map along with written commentary on how they contribute to the special interest of the conservation area. While the descriptions go into some detail, a reader should not assume that the omission of any characteristic, such as a building, view or open space, from this Appraisal means that it is not of interest.

The document conforms with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (August 2005) and *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5).

This document seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the Appraisal);
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement (in the form of the Management Plan).

This document therefore provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Ambleside Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider adopted development plan policy framework produced by the Lake District National Park Authority. These documents include:

- (i) *The Lake District National Park Local Plan (adopted 1998)*: Chapter 3 addresses the conservation of the built environment;
- (ii) *The Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan 2001–2016* (adopted 2006): Chapter 6 provides strategic guidance for the environment for the period to 2016. Policies E38 and E39 cover the historic environment.

In 2007 there was been a masterplanning exercise within the town to improve the quality of this popular destination for local people and visitors alike. The resulting Masterplan has highlighted a number of key opportunities for enhancement to improve the town and has led to some important projects coming forward for delivery.



Fig. 3 The Queens Hotel, Market Square displays fine stonework and typically Victorian gables and decorative bargeboards.



Fig. 4 Stock Cottage, North Road. A Georgian frontage to a colourwashed stone rubble building with slate roof (grade II).

2 Location and setting

Location

Ambleside is located centrally within the Lake District National Park. The town stands on the A 591 about half way between Kendal (14 miles) and Keswick (16 miles). This road is one of the few east-west main routes through The Lakes and the town becomes exceedingly congested with traffic during the summer months. Lesser roads lead west from Ambleside to Hawkshead, Consiton and the Langdale valley. A tortuous narrow road rises, northwards from Ambleside to the Kirkstone Pass (c.1, 500 feet) from where the road descends to Patterdale, past Ullswater to Penrith (18 miles).

The town lies 3 miles southeast of Grasmere and 5 miles northwest of Windermere, both of which are popular tourist destinations. Waterhead, a small collection of waterside hotels, cafes, tourist shops and boat landings, is at the head of Lake Windermere, a mile to the south of the town.

Local buses serve the town but the service is restricted outside of the holiday season. The nearest main-line railway station is Oxenholme (2 miles southeast of Kendal) from where a branch line connects to Windermere. A summer ferry runs from Ambleside Pier (Waterhead,) to Bowness and Lakeside.

Ambleside lies within the Lakes Parish in the administrative county of Cumbria, in that part which comprised the historic county of Westmorland.



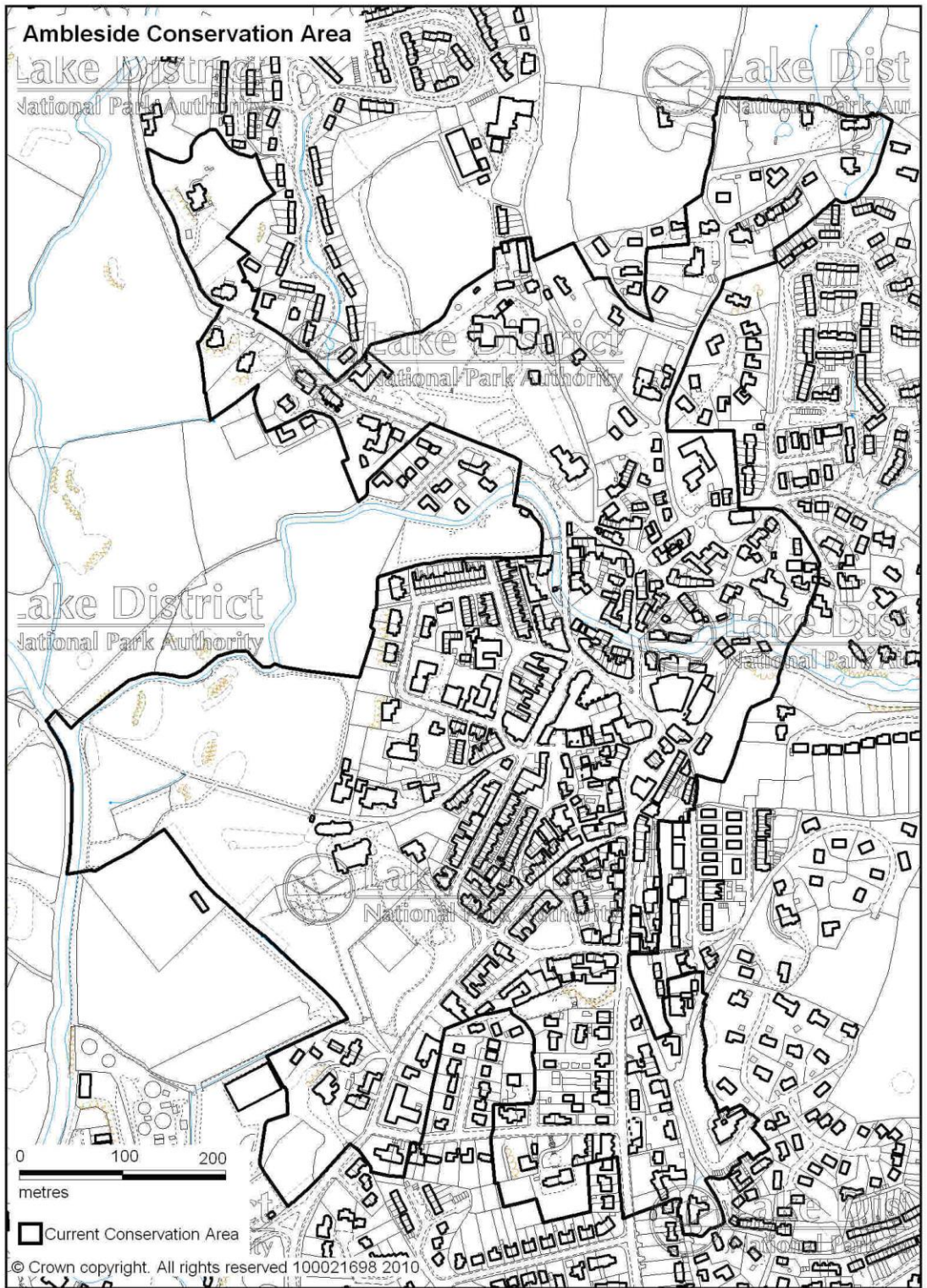
Fig. 5 Part of Ambleside's lively roofscape of stone chimneystacks, clay pots, gables and ridge tiles.



Fig. 6 The Market Hall's clock tower and bellcote add to the interesting roofscape.

Boundary

The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to encompass the three main phases of the town's historic development: (1) the original site of the settlement east of Rydal Road between Stock Ghyll and Kirkstone Road; (2) 17th and 18th century development of the town following the granting of a market charter in 1650, south of Stock Ghyll; (3) Victorian development mainly to the west and south of the town which dates from the mid/late 19th century expansion of the town facilitated by road improvements and the coming of the railway to Windermere.



To the north the boundary has been drawn to include all of the original site of the pre-Norman collections of homesteads focused around How Head. In addition, to the west, the boundary includes green open space beside Rydal Road, once the grounds of Scale How, which provides a fine setting for the former Charlotte Mason College. Late 20th century development e.g. Kirkfield Drive is not included, as it does not contribute to the area's special interest.

The western boundary runs along the rear property boundaries of Victorian houses in The Millans. These separate this Victorian expansion from a modern car park and Rothay Park. Further south the boundary includes St Mary's Church and its large churchyard and the well tree'd grounds of Ambleside Lodge.

The southern boundary has been drawn to include the most representative examples of Victorian building in Lake Road. From here, the eastern boundary follows a roughly north-south alignment excluding late 20th century hillside development but including the site of the historic market square, now Market Square, and Market Cross. A bank of trees beside Stock Ghyll Road, east of The Salutation is vital to the setting of the conservation area and is also included.

A short length of Stock Ghyll falls within the conservation area and, on either side, that part of the town that housed the town's medieval, and later, industrial activity powered by the beck's fast-flowing waters – a crucial part of Ambleside's economic development.



Fig. 7 'The Struggle', the steep incline at the start of the ascent from Ambleside to Kirkstone Pass.



Fig. 8 Stock Ghyll still retains a wild and picturesque character, especially in the eastern part of the conservation area.

Topography and landscape setting

A publication of 1851 described Ambleside as located in a "romantic situation, amidst lofty mountains, on the declivity of a hill, commanding pleasing views of the beautiful vale of Rothay, in which it stands...". Despite changes to the town over the past 150 years, this description of its setting still rings true.

Ambleside nestles closely under the hills with a sunny south-facing aspect surrounded by fells to north, east and west and a lake to the south. The town stands at the foot of Wansfell Pike, where the Stock Ghyll and the Kirkstone Pass enter the green valley of the River Rothay, a mile above the head of Lake Windermere.

Enclosed by Wansfell Pike (482 m) on the east, it is faced on the north by fells which hold the upland valleys of Rydal and Scandale and lead up to the summits of the Fairfield range (Red Screes 776m). In the west is Loughrigg Fell (289m), which blocks the head of the lake with the River Rothay on one side and River Brathay on the other.

The oldest part of the town, north of Stock Ghyll, stands on the brow of a small promontory between Stock Ghyll and Scandale Beck. From St Anne's Court, the highest point in the conservation area, the land falls southward and westward to a bend in the westward-flowing Stock Ghyll. South of Stock Ghyll, the commercial core of the town lies on more level ground but a slight undulation in the land gives prominence to the Salutation Hotel from where the land falls gently north-westward down Market Cross and more steeply south-eastward down Market Square.

Geology

The central core of the Lake District is a hard knot of Ordovician and Silurian rocks. Ambleside lies within this geological area, which is known as the Borrowdale Volcanic Series. These rocks form the heart of the Lake District and contribute to the area's spectacular scenery. Their character is shown in materials used for the construction of roofs and walls in the village. There are also pockets of numerous minerals and metal ores. Like the slates, these formed during a period when volcanic deposits were later subjected to heat and pressure.

Archaeology

In a settlement such as Ambleside, which has a history of small-scale industry and manufacturing, it is very probable that archaeological deposits underlie many of the dwellings and former mills of the conservation area; the area around the former mills may well contain interesting features of industrial archaeology. Many of the buildings within the conservation area are themselves of archaeological interest, and are likely to retain evidence of their age, use and construction that is only likely to be uncovered during building work.

3 The historical development of the hamlet

The Roman remains at Galava, a fort in the meadows at the head of Lake Windermere, close to Waterhead, are the first archaeological evidence of settlement in the immediate vicinity of today's Ambleside.

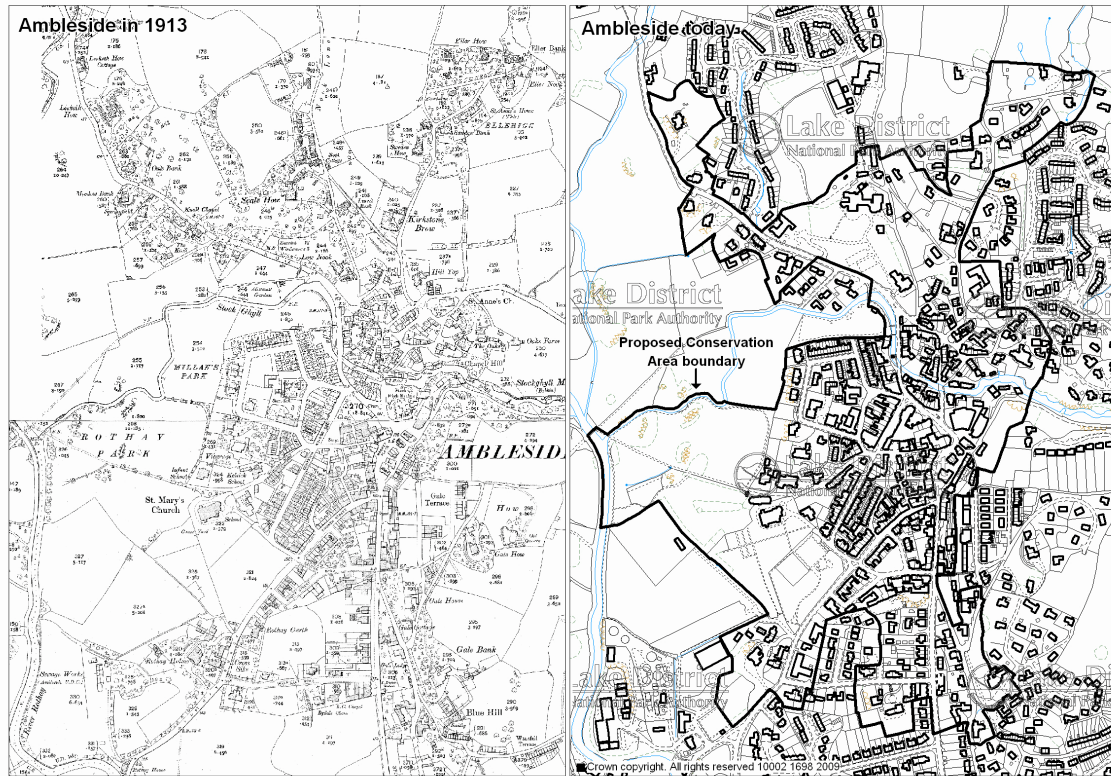
The first fort was constructed around AD 80 as one of a series of fortified structures to protect the trade routes through Cumbria. This initial fort was soon abandoned but was redeveloped early in the 2nd century AD when a second fort, built in stone, was constructed on an artificial platform making use of its strategic location protected on two sides by water.

The origin of Ambleside's name is unclear. It may come from the Old Norse *a-mel-saetr* meaning "the pasture by the river sand banks" or the Old Norse *Hamala saetr* meaning "Hamal's clearing". Since the oldest part of Ambleside lies well above the river, the latter definition is more likely to be correct. It is therefore suggested that Ambleside originated in the 10th century when a settler, Hamal, made a clearing for his stock on a rise in the land between Stock Ghyll and Scandale Beck.



Fig. 9 Howe Head, one of Ambleside's oldest buildings exemplifies Lakeland vernacular by its small square windows, pitched roof, cylindrical chimneystacks and use of local stone for walling and roof.

At that time the lower valley was wooded and unsafe so development moved down the valley only gradually as forest was cleared. As the settlement grew, it began to derive wealth from the wool industry, dependent on local Herdwick sheep. The wool trade was greatly stimulated by the foundation in 1123 of Furness Abbey, a Cistercian abbey near modern Barrow-in-Furness. Ambleside served as the administrative centre for the northern part of the extensive estate owned by Furness. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1532 and the ensuing breaking up of the monastic wool monopoly, many Lake District towns like Ambleside begin to grow. From the 16th century wool processing became Ambleside's major industry.



There is evidence that a chapel existed on the site of St Anne's Church (now St Anne's Court) from about 1550. At that time the manorial and parish boundary, running along Stock Ghyll, divided inhabitants of the settlement between those 'above Stock' (in the Parish of Grasmere) and those 'below Stock'. A marker stone dividing the two can be seen on Stock Low Bridge.

From the 14th century onwards the region's fast-flowing streams were being harnessed to drive the hammers of fulling mills, used to beat and thicken cloth, replacing manual techniques such as treading the cloth or beating with wooden clubs.

The first recorded mill in Ambleside was in 1324. This corn-grinding mill and an early fulling mill (1453) were built high up the Stock, close to Stock Ghyll Falls. The fulling mill worked until the early 19th century. By the early 16th century, five mills were supported by the Stock and by the 19th century, nine mills had been powered by it.

Ambleside was well known for the production of a cloth called 'linsey-woolsey', made up from both linen and wool. In 1650 a Royal Charter established a wool market in the town, recognising the value of its wool trade. This led to further development on the more level ground south of Stock Ghyll. By the end of the 17th century the town is reported as having five ale-houses and a weekly market, an indication of a busy economy.

Waterpowered mills continued to provide industry for the town well into the 19th century. Although the wool industry began to decline in the 19th century, the local wool- and cloth-based economy was supplemented by mills crushing bark to produce tannin, the turning of wood and the making of bobbins.

In 1825 Ambleside's wool market closed and the remaining fulling mills began to be put to other uses. The boom in textile industries in the north of England created a huge demand for wooden bobbins. Bobbin making began in Ambleside when a mill known as 'Stock Force' was built in 1810 and bobbin making became a mainstay of the economy for the next 70 years.

Tourism not industry was to drive the town's economy and subsequent expansion through the 19th and 20th centuries. Encouraged by contemporary literature, particularly Wordsworth's eloquent descriptions of the Lake District's landscapes, the newly rich middle classes of the industrial north, aided by improved transport systems, came to the town as a holiday resort. A turnpike road reached Ambleside in 1761. The Salutation, The White Lion and The Royal Oak were popular coaching houses of the 18th century that took advantage of tourism and increased mobility.

The turnpiking of the road occurred just as the Lake District was becoming a popular destination for the 'Romantics' in search of picturesque and inspirational landscape. However, it was the opening of the Kendal to Windermere railway line in 1847 that opened the tourist floodgates making the area accessible and affordable to working people as well as the wealthy and educated.



Fig. 10 The White Lion is a former 18th century coaching inn. The space in front was once used for carriages and horses.



Fig. 11 An unusual 19th century two storey glass shopfront. The building on the right is The Stamp House, office of the poet William Wordsworth.

By 1851 a trade directory noted that "...the town is for a considerable time made the head quarters of tourists, for whom there are...hotels, inns and lodging houses. Many of the latter have been erected within the last few years."

In 1723 an educational trust was set up by John Kelsick to start a school for boys. In 1892 the town acquired a College of Education for young ladies, founded by Charlotte Mason, now recognised as a notable educationalist, establishing the college at Scale Howe and a "practicing" school at Fairfield (both on Rydal Road) for would be teachers, to which the children of Ambleside could attend without charge. Harriet Martineau, a feminist journalist moved to the area in the 1850s, purchasing The Knoll, also on Rydal Road. Despite the town's expansion she found poor standards of nutrition, sanitation and housing amongst the local population.

Ambleside's rapid expansion in the mid/late 19th century doubled the size of the town. Many buildings in Market Square were rebuilt in c.1860. The Millans area was constructed between 1880-1910. St Mary's Church was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and consecrated in 1854. It was built to replace St Anne's Church near How Head which, within 40 years of its construction in 1812, had become too small to accommodate the increased number of worshippers. A Wesleyan Chapel was opened in The Millans in 1899 and a Roman Catholic Church was opened on Wansfell Road in the 1930s.

During the 20th century as tourists have continued to visit Ambleside, the town has become one of the main tourist centres of the Lake District National Park. The town's housing stock has been increased as both local authority and private housing estates have been built on the elevated eastern side of the town (not included in the conservation area). In the 1990s a shopping centre was built on the site of a 1930s bus station in the centre of the town.

4 The character and appearance of the conservation area

Historic layout and street pattern

The town's street pattern has evolved gradually, reflecting the town's gradual evolution and changes in transportation. Initially the town served as a crossing of trade routes for packhorses. These roads needed little width and routes were constrained by known bridges or fords and the steepness of inclines ('The Struggle' aptly describes the steep ascent out of Ambleside to the Kirkstone Pass). Where possible they followed the contours alongside the valley bottom. A pack horse route north to Keswick went via Nook End whilst the route westwards went via Stony Bridge to the ford at Miller Bridge. Nook Lane was also the start of the old 'Corpse Road', now signposted as the Coffin Route, along which the deceased were carried to St Oswald's Church in Grasmere for burial.

By 1763 roads connecting Kendal with Ambleside, Keswick, Cockermouth and Ulverston had all been turnpiked, emphasising the importance of Ambleside as a market town. Smithy Brow was the route of the old coaching road from Keswick before the turnpike road was constructed. North Road was the original coaching road through Ambleside and the site of the first ford over the beck. Similarly Old Lake Road is the historic route to and from the town to the south. Older parts of the town contain short alleys or 'ginnels' that interlink between the main routes.

Victorian development is characterised by planned straight roads, for example Lake Road, in startling contrast to the tortuous routes in the Chapel Hill area. Rydal Road was built as a turnpike to bypass North Road in 1833. Church Street was formerly the main road through the town (a row of 18th century cottages remain, listed grade II) until the construction of Lake Road in the mid-19th century. Compston Road and The Millans were laid out and built at the end of the 19th Century.

Today, a one-way system controls traffic flow through the town but none of the pre 20th century roads are capable of enabling free flow of the high levels of traffic experienced during the summertime holiday season.

Townscape analysis – character areas

The Ambleside Conservation Area can be divided into at least five areas of distinctly different character. The distinctiveness of each character area derives from its formative period of development, topographical location and layout. The character areas are broadly defined and may overlap. The five areas are:

- ❑ **1. Chapel Hill and How Head - ‘Above Stock’;**
- ❑ **2. Charlotte Mason College and environs, now University of Cumbria;**
- ❑ **3. Former area of mills and industrial activity beside Stock Ghyll;**
- ❑ **4. Market Cross and Market Square – ‘Below Stock’;**
- ❑ **5. Victorian expansion to west and south.**

The following examines the characteristics that distinguish each area. In addition, the Townscape appraisal map (see below) provides details of important aspects of each character area.

Chapel Hill and How Head - ‘Above Stock’

This is the site of the original development of the town on a hill above Stock Ghyll. This area is characterised by small-scale development of cottages and houses clustered in ‘islands’ defined by a roads and footpaths. These islands may be based upon the irregular farmyards of the Norse settlers.

Whilst this area contains a number of listed buildings, it is the varied informal collections of buildings and their group value that contributes to the overall intimate character and sense of enclosure. The network of minor roads, ginnels and pedestrian paths makes the area unusually permeable and adds to a sense of confusion between public and private spaces. Away from the town centre’s traffic, one can hear birdsong.



Fig. 12 This row of 18th century cottages is now listed grade II.



Fig. 13 Roughcast or colourwashed houses are characteristic of the area north of Stock Ghyll.

The built form is primarily comprised of short rows and terraces, two storeys is the norm. Gardens are small, squeezed into the angles between buildings. Open space is mostly to be found at road junctions or around the area’s two significant detached buildings, St Anne’s Court (a former church) and Hill Top (a Victorian dwelling now part of the University of Cumbria). Howe Head is possibly the most memorable building in the area,

forming the north-east half of one of the “islands”. This former manor house and part school, much extended, sub-divided and adapted, has typical Lakeland vernacular form and details. Its location, fronting the street on three of its sides, has a dominant influence on the local townscape. Opposite, St Annes Chapel, with its tower somewhat crowded by large conifers, is a local landmark occupying the crown of the hill.

Stone boundary walls are a feature of the area. Because of the steep slope of the land and low height of many buildings, roofs, gables and chimneystacks are prominent in the streetscene, creating a lively roofscape, occasionally spoiled by an untidy plethora of overhead wires. Being the highest part of the conservation area, there are good views across rooftops to distant fells and the lower Rothay valley.

The area is primarily residential, including holiday accommodation, but there is also a car workshop and two pubs.

□ **2. Charlotte Mason College and environs, now University of Cumbria**

The key to this area is the 19th century building once known as Scale How, and its former grounds and outbuildings, also known as Charlotte Mason College and now part of the University of Cumbria. Of equal importance is Nook Cottage, a late 17th century listed building beside Nook Lane, an old westward route from the town. Nook Lane and Sweden Bridge Lane are former trade routes which today form attractive walled links to the older core area on Chapel Hill. Victorian villa development, exploiting views of Lake Windermere and surrounding fells, climbs the hillside now forming a quiet, leafy residential enclave in contrast to the hustle and bustle elsewhere in the town.

Charlotte Mason College is a large 19th century building with historic outbuildings to the rear. In 1892 Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) opened a ‘House of Education’ elsewhere in Ambleside which moved here in 1894. The grounds, falling gently from the house down to Rydal Road, form a mature setting for this prominent grade II listed building and, on the northern approach to Ambleside, provide a green foil to the hillside collection of buildings in the Chapel Hill area. Marking the edge of the polite expansion of the town close to Smithy Brow is Low Nook, formerly a 19th Century villa within its own grounds but now part of the campus, a building with distinctive Westmorland character which retains its spacious villa setting. A more recent and well designed extension to the south, in local style and materials, houses the Armitage Museum.

The grounds contain mature trees and grassy slopes but the landscape quality of the area has been eroded by the introduction of tarmac parking areas.



Fig. 14 Charlotte Mason College stands in an elevated location above Rydal road. Its former grounds are an important green open space close to the town centre.



Fig. 15 A neo-Gothic Victorian villa in Nook Lane. The circular datestone reads 1860.

□ **3. Former area of mills and industrial activity beside Stock Ghyll;**

This area includes the beck and former mill buildings on either side of Stock Ghyll. Stock Ghyll was successful for water mills because of the natural fall and force of the water which could support many different waterwheels.

The beck still has a picturesque wild quality and there are good views up- and down-stream from the two bridges. The sound of rushing water can be heard above the bustle of the town.

Stock High Bridge was the main crossing point of the deeply incised Stock Ghyll and caused the channelling together of the old trade routes as well as forming an industrial sector around the water mills. Stock Low Bridge dates from the early 19th century construction of a new road bypassing Smithy Brow and North Road.



Fig.16 The view from Stock Low Bridge includes former mill buildings on either side of the beck.



Fig. 17 Former mill building beside Rydal Road.

The built form is characterised by old stone-built mill buildings directly abutting the waterside. Their siting has been dictated by a working relationship with the beck rather than with the road. None remain in their original use. These buildings have been built, altered, rebuilt and adapted during the past 700 years and have been used for grinding

corn, washing, fulling and weaving wool, crushing bark and bobbin making. Full details and dates can be found in "The Mills of Ambleside", a publication from the Armit Museum.

Bridge House, Rydal Road, (Grade I Listed Building) is a tiny building and a popular tourist curiosity. It was built in 1854 as a garden house originally to span Stock Beck and to connect the gardens of the former Ambleside Hall to the orchard that lay on the other side of the beck.

□ **4. Market Cross and Market Square – ‘Below Stock’**

This area contains the commercial core of the conservation area. It carries a high footfall and has a vibrant busy atmosphere by day. Its two main features are Market Square and Market Cross. Although much altered and redeveloped during the late 19th century (and earlier), the earlier pattern of buildings and interlinking spaces and alleys has been retained (e.g. The Slack) as much of the rebuilding in stone that took place was done 'in situ'.

Market Square was the site of the town's market through the 17th, 18th and part-19th centuries. It still retains its original form although shops in the ground-floor frontages of many 19th century buildings today carry out its commercial function. (A weekly outdoor market is held in King Street). Julius Ibbotson's 1817 painting of "The Market Place, Ambleside" illustrates a much more open space which then included the Market Cross, now relocated. The space has been reduced by the encroachment of the Market Hall and the Old Court House, civic buildings which give a formal presence to the area, as also do the two imposing Victorian bank buildings at either end.

Today the former market square has an enclosed atmosphere due to the tall Victorian buildings which surround the space. Storey height varies between two and three storeys. The eastern side of the space features a varied skyline of turrets, pinnacles, chimneystacks, and finials. The western side has less architectural embellishment. There is a fall southwards in the land but as one proceeds down the hill, the feeling of enclosure is broken by the gap between the Old Court House and the White Lion Hotel.

Market Cross is the creation of late 19th century building (Central Buildings, on the north side) and late 20th century commercial development (Market Cross Shopping Centre). These two developments, the former tall, gabled and with a cliff-like frontage of grey stone, the latter low-lying and dominated by bright glass shop frontages, face each other across the town's main thoroughfare.



Fig. 18 The Victorian Court House, once the site of the Market Cross.



Fig. 19 Central Buildings retains 19th century shopfronts at ground floor and many ornate Victorian building details.

A public space lies in front of each development, one on each side of the road. To the north is a public open space with benches beside the Market Cross and, on the southern side of the road, a level pedestrianised area in the angle of the modern shopping centre. The Salutation, elevated above and set back from the road behind a steep front 'garden', overlooks this open area. The spacious atmosphere of this area (for long an open space known as Dick How) is marred by traffic but the spaciousness allows views to the fells.

□ 5. Victorian expansion to the north, west and south

This character area is distinctively different to the town's pre-1800 development. The 19th century incomers brought with them new ideas about town planning and building. Although the Victorian expansion of the town lacks the specific Lakeland identity and sense of place that characterises the older areas, the architectural detailing, craftsman-like use of local materials and cohesive 'Victorian suburb' feel of the outer parts merit inclusion within the conservation area. Many of these buildings were sited to exploit views of the surrounding fells and across the town. Ambleside virtually doubled in size during the late 19th century, its Victorian built heritage is a vital part of the town's special historic and architectural interest.

The area is primarily residential but also includes some of the functions of what was almost a new town, e.g. St Mary's Church (1854), Assembly Rooms (1894)(now Zeffirelli's), Police Station (1888) and Conservative Club (1895). The area also includes a primary school, library and the Ambleside Parish Centre, opened in 2007. To the west toward the River is Rothay Park, set out on valley floor with mature planting and a glaciated outcrop as a natural focal feature. A path across the path leads the scenic stone arched Miller Bridge.

The Victorian development of Ambleside began with the construction of large villas, for example Ambleside Lodge. Within the town centre are a number of public and civic buildings in an exuberant neo- Gothic style with fine stonework detailing.



Fig. 20 Gables, ridge tiles, finials, dormers and two storey canted bay windows are typical of the town's Victorian expansion.



Fig. 21 These semi-detached houses in The Millans turn their back to the road in order to take advantage of the views to Loughrigg Fell.

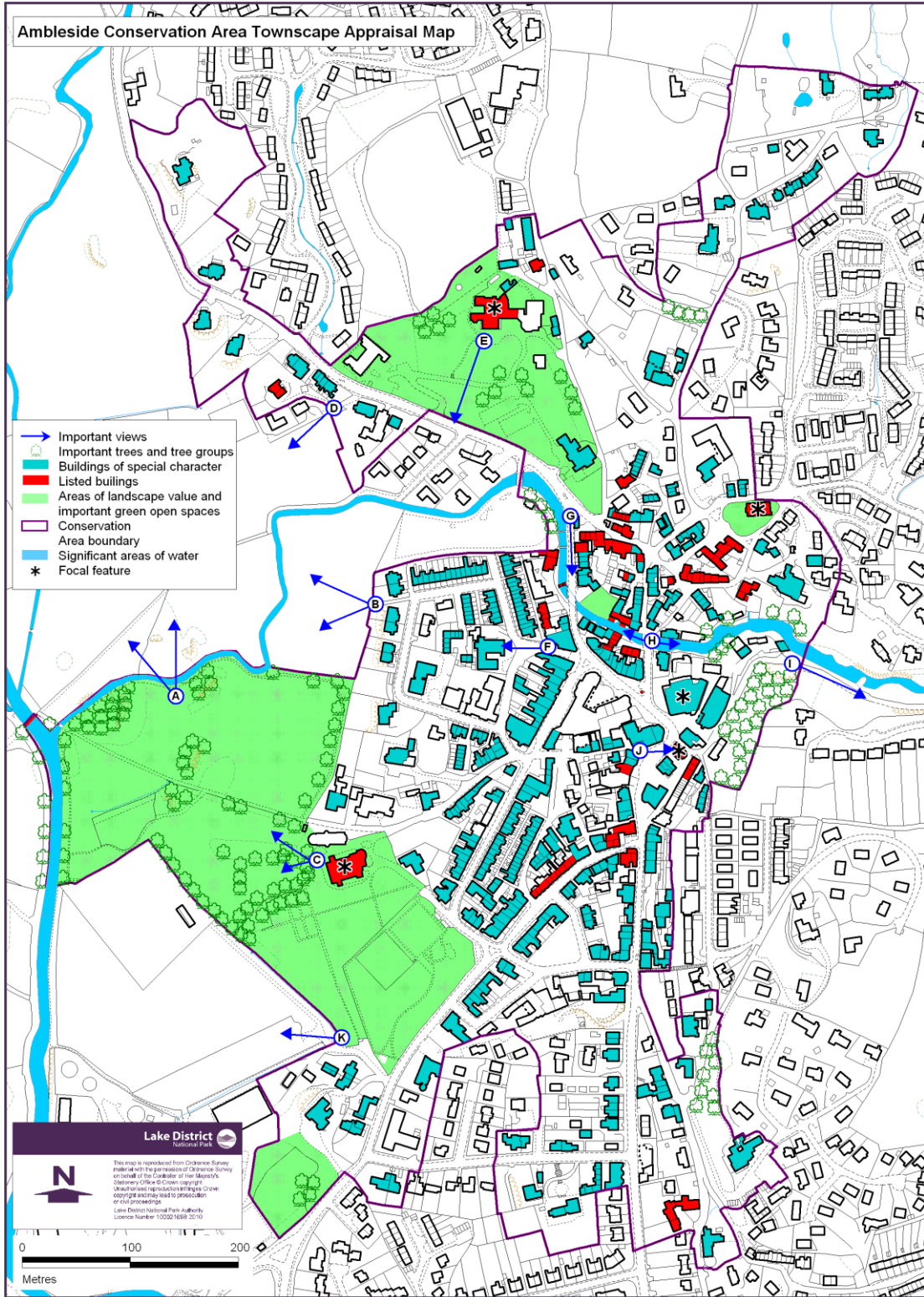
Away from the commercial and civic centre of the town, short rows or terraces are typical, for example Compston Road and Compston Street. The Millans, having been built as a planned development over a short period of time at the end of the 19th century, has a cohesive architectural character. Well-detailed semi-detached houses such as those in The Millans that overlook Rothay Park are exemplary Victorian building of their type.

The Victorian suburb is easily distinguishable from earlier development by its straight roads and streets and strongly held building line. Lake Road is a good example. At its northern end, the narrowness of the street and tall height of the buildings creates an enclosed canyon-like effect but, proceeding southwards, the road soon opens out and widens (trees once lined the western side). In general, houses are set back behind a low stone boundary wall and small front garden. The regular building width and consistent height of each row or terrace sets up a repetitive rhythm that is quite unlike the variety in plot size and building height found in the predominantly 17th and 18th century parts of the town. Density decreases as the distance from the town centre increases.

To the north of the conservation area, the conservation area includes some 18th and 19th century buildings on the north and south side of Rydal Road, some of which are of historical significance to the town. These include a former Congregational chapel (1840); Fairfield, purchased by Charlotte Mason as a school in 1892 (although not the modern building currently called Fairfield); Harriet Martineau's house, The Knoll (1846, grade II listed) and Springfield, a fine Victorian villa where Charlotte Mason first established her college. Many of these now form part of the University of Cumbria. These buildings represent historic ribbon development and comprise an interesting and varied mix of building forms and types, ranging from humble cottages to substantial villas in spacious grounds. While the villas are set back from the road exploiting views to the fells, with their mature garden providing important greenery, the cottages, chapel and imposing University buildings are close to or on the pavement. As with Lake Road, the effect is to strongly enclose the street and to provide an attractive and notable sense of arrival into the town.

To the south Old Lake Road is the historic route to the south of the town before the building of Lake Road. It is an intimate and narrow road under the slope of the hill,

characterised by its large retaining walls and historic buildings of the Victorian period and earlier, these buildings enclosing the confined space still further. There are fine views across the roofs toward the surrounding fells.



Focal points, views and vistas

Ambleside's location surrounded on three sides by fells, gives rise to many expanding views of the local fells, particularly to the west where Loughrigg Fell can be seen rising above the level Rothay Valley.

Looking up along a street or between buildings to a sight of the fells gives the town its distinctive local identity. Attractive outward views to surrounding countryside are one of the principal defining features of the conservation area.

The topography of the town, sloping upwards to north and east, prevents long views in these directions but, conversely, enables long views south and westward from highpoints such as Belle Vue Lane and St Anne's Court.

The street pattern of detached, semi-detached but mainly terraced building restricts long views to key buildings but the greater width of Market Cross and Market Square gives a landmark quality to the Salutation Hotel and the adjacent building now occupied by Barclays bank.



Fig. 22 The spire of St Mary's Church, a local landmark, rises above the weekly market in King Street.



Fig. 23 This view up Stock Ghyll Lane from the edge of the conservation area shows the abrupt transition between the town and surrounding countryside.

The town's piecemeal and haphazard development until the mid 19th century does not include any planned vistas but picturesque views up and down Stock Ghyll have pleased visitors for over 200 years and still retain a rustic charm. Bridge House (Grade I Listed Building), a curious and quaint little stone building set upon a single span stone bridge has made it what tourist guides call "the most photographed building in the Lakes".

When completed in 1854, the spire of St Mary's Church (design by celebrate architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and a Grade II* Listed Building) formed a focal point for the town's expansion away from the Market Square and Chapel Hill. Although unpopular at the time of erection, it is now one of the landmarks in the town, especially as seen from a distance on the fells. By chance or design, the façade of the former non-conformist chapel in The Millans neatly closes the view westward from the Compston Corner.

Significant views are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map, as follows:

- A – to the north from Rothay Park
- B – to west toward Loughrigg from Millans Park
- C – to west toward Rothay Park from St. Mary’s Church
- D – to SW of Rothay Park and surrounding fells from Rydal Road
- E – to the south from Charlotte Mason College
- F – view of Wesley Court from the east
- G – entrance into town centre from the north
- H – views of Stock Ghyll from Stock High Bridge
- I – to the east from Stock Ghyll Lane
- J – View of Market Hall from Market Place
- K – to Loughrigg to the west from Rothay Holme

In addition there are many other significant views from and into the conservation area given the nature of the surrounding topography and these are too numerous to mention within the appraisal.

Current activities and uses

Ambleside is by far the most urbanised of the five wards (Ambleside, Troutbeck, Rydal, Grasmere and Langdale) that make up the Lakes Parish. It is a busy vibrant town with a fluctuating population of just under 3,000 affected by temporary residents working in the tourist industry and students attending the University of Cumbria. Its population in 1850 was recorded as about 1,700.

The town has easy access to popular walking and cycling areas, notably the Langdale valley to the west. Since the early 19th century the area has been a popular tourist destination and today, Ambleside’s economy is mainly derived from tourism. The town is filled with bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation as well as a high proportion of self-catering holiday cottages/houses.

There are a large number of pubs, shops, cafes and restaurants catering for the large numbers of visitors, especially in the high season between Easter and October. In addition there is a post office, library, three banks, a weekly market, a school, places of worship, a fire station, a tourist information centre and a small cinema. The Armit Museum is a combined museum, art gallery and library that explores the history of Ambleside and its surroundings.

The town’s range of shops and services is notable for the high proportion of retailers selling outdoor clothing and equipment, and local craft shops and galleries. The Lakes Parish Plan (2005) reports: “some [residents] feel that the businesses are too focused on visitors.”



Fig. 24 Open space at the junction of narrow lanes in the Chapel Hill area.



Fig. 25 St Anne's Court stands at the highest point in the conservation area with fine views to surrounding fells.

Open spaces, landscape and trees

The haphazard nature of the town's earliest development north of Stock Ghyll results in an area characterised by small intimate enclosed spaces contrasting with more open spaces at road junctions. An example of the former is The Pinfold and of the latter is the junction of North Road and Smithy Brow. The most noteworthy open space in this area is the area between St Anne's Court and How Head. Trees in the former churchyard, a grassy triangle between the road intersections and a small lawn enhance this space, elevated above the town centre. Unfortunately this space, which could be providing an open and attractive setting to both former church and How Head (grade II) is, understandably but regrettably, used for parking.

The commercial core of the town has a more formal layout than the upper part of the town and storey-height is consistently taller. Both Market Cross and Market Square have the feel of urban squares in which a busy well traffic'd thoroughfare and adjacent paved pedestrian areas are surrounded by built development with shopfronts on the ground floor. The Market Square was formerly the site of the 18th/19th-century market, now reduced in size by Victorian encroachment. A weekly market is now held at another of the urban area's few open spaces beside King Street, which at other times is used as a car park. Market Cross is a Victorian creation based on an old open space, nowadays flanked by 'Central Buildings' c.1890 and the 20th century Market Cross Shopping Centre. Another feature of this area is the spaces in front of, for example, The Salutation and the White Lion, formerly used by carriage and horses.

Stock Ghyll cuts a narrow curved swathe of open space through the town. At the western and eastern extremities of its passage through the conservation area it has a much more open quality than its pinched and enclosed route between Stock High and Stock Low bridges, although even here there is an open green terrace to the west. At the eastern end (within the conservation area) Stock Ghyll, still falling steeply, has a rugged, rural appearance but at the western end, in front of The Armit Museum, the stream follows a level course, tamed by roadside embankments.

The conservation area, which does not include the whole of the town, is bordered by modern developments to the east, north and south and by the open, green valley bottom of the River Rothay to the west. There are three significant open spaces on the verge of

the conservation area that mark the transition between the built development of the town and the open countryside beyond. These sensitive areas are important to the setting of the conservation area. They are: the grounds of Charlotte Mason College, the churchyard of St Mary's Church and a bank of woodland beside Stock Ghyll Lane. The garden of Ambleside Lodge and rear gardens of properties in The Millans (those that abut the playing fields and Rothay Park) play a similar but lesser role.

Trees are a feature of the three afore-mentioned transitional areas but are not a particular feature of the built-up areas, but this makes their presence all the more welcome. Old photographs show that an avenue of trees once lined Lake Road but today, however, although there are some notable specimen trees in the urban core, the most significant trees are to be found in the churchyard, the grounds of Charlotte Mason College and in private gardens.

Public realm: floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

Ambleside's public realm is mainly functional but is not inappropriate to its primarily urban setting and is unobtrusive. Street lights in the commercial core of the town are standard 'hockey stick' steel lighting columns but in the older Chapel Hill area, where the scale of development is much less tall, single black columns with a lantern are prevalent.

Ambleside's floorscape is modern. Pavements are mostly of tarmac with concrete kerbs but stone kerbs are also present especially in the 19th century areas. However, isolated areas of local paving materials such as stone flags or setts can be found in side streets, alleys or rear yards. Cobbled water gullies, for example beside Peggy Hill are a distinctive feature.

Street furniture is modern and consists of the occasional bench, bus shelter and litter bin, again of functional design. Timber bollards in Market Cross are showing signs of wear. The Market Cross is the most noteworthy item of historic street furniture. Also of note are a war memorial beside St Mary's Church and a stone on Stock Low Bridge which marks the old delineation between 'above' and 'below Stock'. Red post boxes, Victorian and Edwardian, and cast-iron street name signs enhance the conservation area.



Fig. 26 Recently enhanced public open space beside the Market Cross.

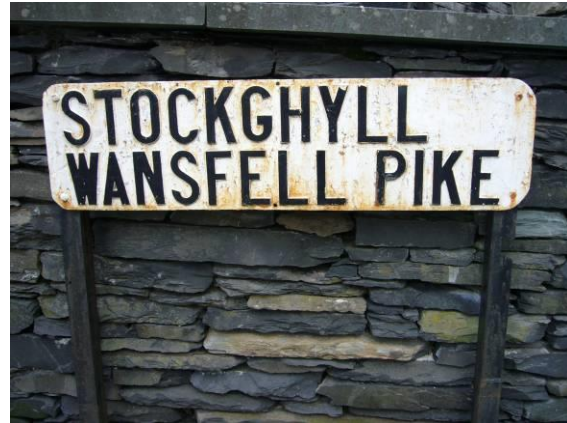


Fig. 27 Iron street name signs are a distinctive feature of Ambleside Conservation Area.



Fig. 28 Stone slab wall to the rear of Corbrig and Planetree House.



Fig. 29 Nook Lane, an old westward route out of the town, is bounded by high stone walls.



Fig. 30 An area of stone flags and setts in Bridge Street.



Fig. 31 Stone floorscape in a yard off The Slack

5 The buildings of the conservation area

Architectural styles, materials and detailing

Buildings within the Ambleside Conservation area are very varied. They date primarily from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Good examples of many building types are present including: cottages and houses, places of worship, civic and administrative buildings, banks, coaching inns, hotels and boarding houses, mills and at least two examples of the typical Lakeland 'bank barn' (i.e. a farm building with upper floor for fodder storage and lower level for animal quarters).

The architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner in the 'Buildings of England - Cumberland and Westmoreland' says of Ambleside: "The little town of grey slate houses with grey slate roofs has no architecture of distinction." In the light of the conservation area's 38 listed buildings, this statement might be questioned. However, despite an apparent lack of architectural distinction, the special architectural interest of the place lies in the variety and grouping of historic buildings and its particular Lakeland sense of identity and place. Even the post-railway Victorian development of the town has a distinctive atmosphere derived from the use of local materials and craftsmanship.

Architectural style can be summarised within three phases: the local vernacular style of those buildings constructed before c.1800, a debased Georgian style of 18th century buildings, and the robust, well detailed formality of the town's 19th century Victorian expansion.



Fig. 32 Howe Head - cylindrical stone chimney stacks and stone flag roofs are particular features of vernacular Lakeland buildings.



Fig. 33 The ground floor of this Victorian bank building uses an 'imported' brown coloured stone to contrast with the locality's dark greys.

Howe Head typifies the local vernacular. It is said that the walls incorporate stone from the Roman Fort at Galava and river cobbles. Indeed, many pre-19th century buildings used 'surface-gathered' stone as opposed to quarried stone. Characteristic local vernacular details such as stone flag roofs, large cylindrical chimneys, deep doorways and small deeply recessed window openings are to be found on several of the 17th century cottages in the vicinity, notably Ash Tree Cottage which has a large external stepped chimney stack and a stone drip-mould. The building (listed grade II) known as Albert Moore's Barn, North Road has an open cruck timber frame, a 17th century or earlier form of roof construction.

Eighteenth century buildings have a higher degree of formality than the early vernacular buildings but still rely on local stone walling and slate roofs. Many 18th century buildings are rendered. Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Cheapside (grade II listed) typify many 18th century features: tall sash windows (a single bow window), near-symmetrical façade. Nos. 3 to 6 Fairview Road is a row of less prestigious cottages with small window openings and a stone flag roof. Many of the town's central 18th century buildings were swept aside to make way for the Victorian redevelopment of the market place.

The town's Victorian architecture might be said to be neo-Gothic in style typified by a riot of pointed gables, ornate bargeboards, steeply pitched dormers, turrets, ridge tiles and finials. Stone continues as the prevalent walling material, under roofs of slate, and there are examples of finely crafted coursed stonework in contrast to the random appearance of 18th century and earlier stonework. Stone of differing colour, 'imported' from further afield, is used to complement the local grey/black stone at, for instance, the HSBC bank building at the south end of Market Square. The marked contrast in style between unornamented plain 18th dwellings and embellished 19th century premises is well illustrated in Church Street where a low lying row of plain two storey rendered cottages (nos. 2 to 11 Church Street, grade II listed) stands in opposition to ornate three storey stone-built Victorian development.

The most prevalent building material is local stone - used for walling, roofs, boundary walls and paving. This stone was relatively cheap and accessible. For expensive buildings stone could be carefully shaped but most buildings of this stone are roughly textured. In some instances the building stone is concealed behind a coat of roughly textured render.

Local slate is the most prevalent roofing material, particularly in the 19th century areas. The palette of building materials reflects the underlying geology of grey and black stone, with the occasional use of contrasting blue grey detailing for quoins, window and door surrounds, drip moulds and chimneys. The sombre stone colours are distinctive but can be seen as dour and unattractive.

Timber windows would have been the norm, although many have been replaced with UPVC. Seventeenth century window openings are small in relation to the building frontage but, as improvements to glass were made, openings became larger and from the 18th century onwards, the popularity of sliding sashes resulted in a predominantly vertical emphasis in windows. Dormer windows are common on Victorian dwellings.

Stone boundary walls are a feature of the Ambleside Conservation Area especially in the earlier residential areas north of Stock Ghyll, for example Nook Lane. Of note are the stone wall in front of The Royal Oak and the slab stones marking a boundary behind to the rear of nos. 1-5 The Millans. These are both relics of Ambleside's rural origins. The growth of ferns in old walls adds to the rural ambience of the area.

Listed buildings

A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from the Lake District National Park Authority before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. Listed buildings are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. These are:

1. Old Mill Studios, Bridge Street	grade II
2. Nos. 2 and 3 Bridge Street	grade II
3. No 4 Bridge Street	grade II
4. Nos. 5 and 6 Bridge Street	grade II
5. Ghyll Side, Bridge Street	grade II
6. Chapel Hill House, Chapel Hill	grade II
7. Ash Tree Cottage, Chapel Hill	grade II
8. Old School House, Chapel Hill	grade II
9. No. 1 Cheapside	grade II
10. No. 2 Cheapside	grade II
11. No. 3 Cheapside	grade II
12. Nos. 2 to 11 Church Street	grade II
13. Royal Oak Hotel, Church Street	grade II
14. Glen's Grocer Shop, Church Street	grade II
15. Birkett's Shop and Old Stamp House, Church Street	grade II
16. The Cottage, Fairview Cottage and nos. 3 to 6 Fairview Road	grade II
17. Raesbeck, Little Beck, Ashton Cottage, Fairview Road	grade II
18. The Haven, The Green	grade II
19. Brown's Booking Office, Market Place	grade II
20. Market Hall, Market Place	grade II
21. Scale How (Charlotte Mason College), Nook Lane	grade II
22. The Nook Cottage, Nook Lane	grade II
23. Stock Cottage, North Road	grade II
24. North Syke, North Road	grade II
25. Albert Moore's Barn, North Road	grade II
26. The Knoll, Rydal Road	grade II
27. Bridge House, Rydal Road	grade I
28. Corbrig and Planetree House, Rydal Road	grade II
29. Mill Cottage and Mill stream, Rydal Road	grade II
30. Friends' Meeting House, Rydal Road	grade II
31. Cross, Rydal Road	grade II
32. Golden Rule, Smithy Brow	grade II
33. The Old House, Smithy Brow	grade II
34. North View, Smithy Brow	grade II
35. Nos. 1 to 3, Smithy Brow	grade II
36. Nos. 1 to 4 Tom Fold	grade II
37. Kirkstone Foot Cottage, Tom Fold	grade II
38. St Mary's Church	grade B
39. Miller Bridge	grade II



Fig. 34 No. 4 Bridge Street (grade II).



Fig. 35 Friends Meeting House, Rydal Street (grade II).

Significant unlisted buildings

A number of unlisted buildings have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map as being “Buildings of Special Character”. These buildings vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded.



Fig. 37 Former Assembly Rooms, Compston Road – a building of special character.



Fig. 36 Former Wesleyan Chapel, The Millans – a building of special character.

6 Negative features and issues

❑ Loss of historic interest

Some of the buildings within the conservation area are suffering from an incremental loss of architectural detail. The use of inappropriate modern materials, such as the replacement of original timber windows with uPVC is adversely affecting both the listed and the unlisted buildings in the conservation area.

❑ Inappropriate alterations

There are instances where buildings have been extended in a manner which neither reflects nor harmonises with the traditional design of the buildings in the town, nor utilises a palette of traditional construction materials. There have occasionally also been alterations to door and window openings that have upset the composition of a frontage. The use of non-traditional stains to timber joinery has severely eroded the appearance and character of original features.

❑ Obtrusive installations: extractor vents, alarm boxes, fire escape stairs

Accretions such as extractor vents and alarm boxes have been installed on several historic buildings. External metal fire escapes, though essential, detract from the appearance of the host building. Such additions to a historic building can, if not carefully considered, severely detract from a building's character and appearance and the wider conservation area.

❑ Unsightly storage of waste and recycling bins

Wheelie bins and unsecured items of waste and rubbish can be unsightly and detract from the character of the historic environment. The town's pattern of development in which back lanes allow clear views of the rear 'yards' of many buildings can make such eyesores highly visible.

❑ Shopfronts and signage

Ambleside retains many good examples of typical 19th century shopfronts comprised of timber stallriser, pilasters, corbels and fascia. Most of the signage in Ambleside is modest and appropriate and there is interesting variety in design of external hanging signs. However, there are examples of garish coloured fascias and advertising that detract from the historic streetscene.

❑ Poorly designed dormers

Flat roofed dormers, some almost creating an extra storey, disfigure the host building and can obliterate the characteristic steeply pitched roofs in the area. Dormers are a typical feature of many of the Victorian properties but there are instances of recently inserted dormers that do not follow an appropriate and matching scale, design and materials.

❑ Temporary signs: A-boards, freestanding blackboards and banners

The popularity of Ambleside as a tourist destination has resulted in a large amount of temporary signage. Competition for custom and a desire to attract visitors through the town's network of paths and streets has resulted in the overuse of temporary signage such as A-boards, blackboards and banners. These can obstruct the flow of pedestrians, spoil the appearance of buildings and degrade the town's special historic character.

❑ **Poor quality public realm and traffic management**

Poor quality paving and tarmac typify an uninspiring public realm with an uncoordinated range of materials. This provides a disappointing setting for many of the town's historic buildings and inadequately highlights back lanes and ginnels which lead to hidden areas of interest within the conservation area.

The popularity of this part of the Lake District means that the A591, which passes through the centre of the town, brings a high level of traffic into and through the town. Pedestrians feel threatened by passing vehicles, especially due to narrow pavements, some difficult junctions and crossing points and traffic can be intrusive in terms of noise. Parking within the town can be difficult at peak times and, Above Stock, parking is problematic and haphazard.

❑ **Street clutter**

Highway signage and traffic control apparatus such as traffic lights and control boxes can detract from the quality of the public realm, particularly at Compston Corner. The conservation area's lively roofscape, which derives from the hilly topography of the northern part of the town and the numerous and varied rooftop features beloved of the Victorians (gables, dormers, bargeboards, finials, roof tiles) is often marred by a plethora of overhead wires and cables.

❑ **Gaps sites and poor quality buildings to rear of main streets**

There are a number of poor quality sites and buildings, mainly away from main street frontages, that would benefit from re-development or enhancement. There is significant potential along rear lanes and ginnels to improve the local environment for the benefit of local people and visitors alike.



Fig. 38 An array of traffic lights spoils the appearance of the historic environment, Compston Corner.



Fig. 39 Wheelie bins and rubbish can be unsightly.



Fig 40 Garishly coloured fascia sign (left) mars the appearance of the host building.



Fig. 41 Altered and enlarged window openings upset the balance of a row.



Fig 42. Replacement windows can change a building's historic character and appearance.



Fig. 43 Traffic can be threatening to pedestrians.

PART 2 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the management plan

The designation of a conservation area is a means to safeguard and enhance the sense of place, character and appearance of our most valued historic assets and places. However, we also recognise that conservation areas are living environments that will continue to evolve and adapt. Designating a conservation area does not prohibit change or new development. However, it does involve carefully managing changes to ensure that the character and appearance of these areas is safeguarded and enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations.

The local community has a vital role to play. We appreciate that the special character of an area is often the reason why people chose to stay and live in the area in the first place. The area cannot be managed without a shared understanding of what is important and what needs to be done. Conservation Area status actually brings very few additional legal controls and the involvement of residents and businesses is essential to realise the benefits of designation. Maintaining the character of the area is, therefore, a joint endeavour between ourselves and anyone who is responsible for proposing new development or undertaking repairs, maintenance, enhancement and minor alterations. This includes the highway authority (Cumbria County Council), the district council, parish council, civic societies, local businesses and residents.

1.2 The benefits of designation

Conservation Area designation brings the potential for significant benefits by protecting the interests of the whole community. The benefits of designation can be summarised as follows:

- the potential to identify and protect existing features or buildings to retain an area's unique and special character.
- the more sensitive design of new development and protection from unsympathetic and damaging change
- ensuring that important historic buildings are protected from demolition
- preventing the loss or damage to trees which contribute positively towards the area's special character
- the promotion and co-ordination of desirable enhancements
- encouraging an understanding of an area's history
- ensuring that an area's sense of place is conserved, particularly the significance, memories and associations it has for local people,
- promoting the use of local and traditional craft skills

- encouraging the use of local and traditional building materials. These are often more environmentally friendly and sustainable than modern products.

The purpose of the management plan is to help deliver these benefits. It presents proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area's special character, informed by the appraisal and forms the basis to involve the local community in these proposals.

1.3 Legislative background

The designation and appraisal of any conservation area is not an end in itself. The purpose of this document is to present proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area's special character, informed by the appraisal, and to consult the local community about these proposals. The special qualities of the area have been identified as part of the appraisal process in the first section of this document and both will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis.

These special qualities of the area have been identified as part of the appraisal process. The Management plan seeks to preserve and enhance these special qualities and realise improvements and resolve the negative features and issues, which are identified on Section 7 of the appraisal. The document satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990* namely:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas."

Section 69 [2] also states:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions ... and determine whether any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas"

The management plan reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: *'Planning for the Historic Environment'*, English Heritage guidance titled *'Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas'* (August 2005), best practice guidelines, policies within the Lake District National Park Local Plan (1998) and any policies which supersede this in the Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan 2001–2016 (2006) and the emerging Local Development Framework, together with such guidance leaflets as *'Converting an old building?'* and *'Outdoor advertisements and signs'*.

PPS5 requires local planning authorities to address climate change and its mitigation and adaptation and this overarching policy statement applies to all the proposed management proposals in this document.

In implementing this policy framework, our development management service aims to preserve and enhance the special character of the conservation area. We recognised that any such improvements do not have to be initiated and co-ordinated by us. The valuable contribution of local environmental and community groups to positive

enhancement works and the role of the Parish Plan are also essential to enhancement. Other agencies and funding bodies also have a vital role to play.

1.4 Public consultation

The Ambleside Conservation Area and Management Plan has been created by collaborative working between heritage consultants. The Conservation Studio, the Lake District National Park Authority and the local community. The appraisal and management plan has been subject to a 4 week period of public consultation commencing in December 2009 and re-consultation on revised boundaries in June 2010. This included sending consultation letters to 1200 residents and businesses placing the document on the Authority's website and the provision of a public exhibition at Ambleside Parish Centre. The document has subsequently been amended to incorporate relevant suggestions and comments. It was approved at the meeting of the Park, Strategy and Vision Committee on the 12 August 2010.

1.5 Designation and extension

The appraisal examined the original 1980 conservation area boundary and identified that the 19th century expansion of the town to the south and west of its historic core merited inclusion within the conservation area. This includes the Grade II* Listed St.Mary's church; the highly attractive adjoining parkland which extends down to the river and the Grade II Listed Miller Bridge; and Victorian and Edwardian suburbs which include some good quality stone built terraces and some very fine and substantial villas. There are also a mix of attractive 18th and 19th Century buildings to the north and south of the town, situated around Ellerigg Road and Old Lake Road which merited inclusion within the conservation area.

1.6 Effects of designation

Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the "*preservation and enhancement*" of the area. These include requiring Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of any unlisted building, restrictions on advertisements, and requiring notice for proposed tree works. We will seek to ensure that all development within the conservation area preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.

1.7 Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are protected by law as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The listing covers both the inside and outside of the building, and any structure or building within its curtilage which was built before 1947. "Listed Building Consent" is required from the Authority for any work which affects the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. There are presently 38 listed buildings within the conservation area.

Extensions and alterations to listed buildings should conform with the policy context outlined in section 1.3 and should generally:

- Take into account the prevailing forms of development;
- Complement the form and character of the original building;
- Be subordinate in bulk and scale to the principal building;
- Use high quality materials and detailing;

- Pay particular attention to roof lines, roof shape, eaves details, verge details and chimneys.

We will seek to ensure that all works to a listed building have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

1.8 Significant Unlisted Buildings

In addition to the listed buildings, there are many individual and groups of buildings and associated features which are of considerable local interest and make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, and these are shown as '*Significant Unlisted Buildings*' on the Townscape Appraisal Map. A high proportion of the buildings within the conservation area were identified by the townscape appraisal to be Significant Unlisted Buildings. There is a presumption that all such buildings will be retained, in accordance with Policy BE12 of the Lake District National Park Local Plan (1998). We will ensure that the contribution that they make to the character and appearance of the conservation area is carefully considered in relation to all applications for extension, alteration and demolition of these buildings.

1.9 Enhancing and protecting the local character and historic features within the conservation area

There is an opportunity to maintain and improve the character and appearance of the conservation area simply by ensuring that day to day improvements, alterations and maintenance of properties, however minor, are carried out sympathetically using good quality materials and details and that buildings are regularly repaired and maintained. The local community has a big part to play in this and, over time, the benefit to the conservation area can be very significant.

The appraisal identified that the following alterations can, cumulatively, seriously affect the special character of the area and therefore need to be considered very carefully:

- loss of timber windows and doors to uPVC alternatives
- the replacement of traditional windows and doors with non-traditional and anachronistic designs;
- alterations to window/door openings;
- inappropriately designed dormers;
- minor installations e.g. air conditioning equipment, alarm boxes;
- alteration of boundary walls;
- rooflights in prominent roof slopes or highly visible positions;
- aerials, satellite dishes, alarms, downpipes and wires in prominent or highly visible positions;

To help retain and conserve traditional features and to prevent harm to single family dwelling houses through alteration and extension we will consider introducing an Article 4 Direction. This would remove permitted development rights which allow unsympathetic alterations to be made without planning permission. Such a Direction would require consultation with the local community. We will also work with the local community to ensure that buildings are repaired and maintained in a timely manner and consider the use of Urgent Works Notices amenity notices under section 76 and 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where appropriate.

1.10 Trees

Within conservation areas, anyone intending lopping or felling a tree greater than 75mm diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground must give us six weeks written notice before starting the work. This provides us with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served. The impact of trees on views, residential amenity and historic structures will be part of this assessment. The appraisal identifies that trees in areas of public open space and within private gardens may make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. We will seek to consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate circumstances where a tree has significant amenity value and is considered to be potentially under threat.

1.11 Enhancing and protecting views & the setting of the conservation area

The setting of the conservation area and views within, into and from the area are essential elements to its character and appearance. It is important that development, enhancement and public realm work takes account of the setting of the conservation area and important viewpoints and that these are preserved or enhanced so that the special character of the conservation area is retained. Important views are identified on the Townscape Appraisal map in the character appraisal.

1.12 Enhancement through new development, alterations and extension

While there are few opportunities for large-scale redevelopment within the conservation area, some improvement or enlargement of the existing buildings may be possible subject to sensitive design and good quality materials and details. There may occasionally be sites where completely new development is acceptable, particularly on poor quality gap sites to the rear of the main streets. As the quality of the general environment within the conservation area is already acknowledged by designation, the Authority will encourage good quality schemes that respond positively to their historic setting. This includes the encouragement of high quality contemporary design and materials.

1.13 Enhancing the public realm and mitigating the impact of traffic

This appraisal has noted that highway signage and traffic control apparatus such as traffic lights and control boxes can detract from the quality of the public realm. The appraisal has identified that areas of historic cobbled and flagged floorscape within the conservation area merit protection and some parts of late 20th century enhancement schemes are in need of upgrading. There is significant potential to enhance and upgrade the quality and consistency of paving materials and design, ideally within a comprehensive scheme which deals with the whole of the historic core. Alternatively an appropriate specification and standard of materials and detailing, that is sympathetic to the character of the conservation area, should guide improvements that are more incremental in nature.

Public realm enhancement is one of the key ways to deliver a better quality of environment for pedestrians and cyclists and mitigating the impact of vehicles which pass through the town. Enhanced and wider pavements, improved crossing points, cycle routes and provision of measures to slow traffic, such as traffic calming, are all

important elements to such improvements. Improvements in parking arrangements and management of wheelie bins should be reviewed, particularly for the Above Stock area. We will work with Cumbria County Council and other relevant agencies to ensure that any highway works should bring a positive improvement to the area.

1.14 Shopfronts, advertisements and signs

The appraisal has noted that some shopfront signage is garish and out of character with the historic environment. Temporary signage such as A boards and banners can be hazardous and unsightly. The use of such signs needs to be carefully monitored and controlled with regard to siting, size, design and materials so that they do not harm the conservation area and we will resist proposals fails to respect its character and appearance. Where original historic shopfronts exist these should be conserved.

1.15 Retaining and enhancing historic boundary treatments

Traditionally, most boundaries in the conservation area are defined by stone walls. There is a small loss of these walls where routine maintenance and rebuilding of fallen sections has not taken place. We will encourage the maintenance of traditional stone walls and seek their retention rather than their replacement with new non- traditional boundary treatments.

2 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The following actions are recommended to ensure that this appraisal and management proposals are accepted and acted upon by the local community:

2.1 Boundary review

We will seek to review the boundary of the conservation area in accordance with best practice and guidance on the management of the historic environment

2.2 Document review

This document should be reviewed every five years. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area and boundaries;
- An assessment of whether the detailed management plans in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and proposed actions and amendments;
- Public consultation on the review findings, any proposed changes and input into the final review.

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