

Blindcrake Conservation Area
Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
February 2011



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BLINDCRAKE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Summary of special interest

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

- Historic village with medieval origins located on a quiet rural road;
- Rural setting between Moota Hill and Clints Crag on a low ridge above the Derwent Valley;
- Distinctive linear settlement pattern comprising a series of 18th century farmhouses, barns and cottages laid out beside a mile-long main thoroughfare;
- Fossilised medieval strip field farming pattern to the west of the village, later enclosed with hedges and a few stone walls, described in 2008 as “undoubtedly the finest example of its type in the Lake District”;
- Unspoiled surviving relationship between historic village and medieval strip field pattern;
- Majority of buildings have architectural and historic interest, seven of which are grade II listed buildings, and many others which make a positive contribution to the area’s historic character and appearance;
- Well-preserved examples of local Cumbrian stone-built vernacular architecture, both domestic (usually rendered) and agricultural (usually stonework exposed);
- Several well-preserved examples of vernacular longhouses (i.e. conjoined farmhouses and barns), e.g. Low Farm, High Farm, Main Farm, Croft House and barn, and Grange Farm, all dating from the 18th century;
- Good examples of 19th century provincial dwellings, e.g. Greenbank (1832), Crabtree Cottage (1836), Meadow View (1847), Mountain View (c.1850) and Woodlands (1876);
- Extensive views to Skiddaw and the Buttermere Fells;
- Trees and small copses that enhance the setting of historic buildings and soften the streetscene, giving parts of the village a sylvan atmosphere;
- Attractive village green with a backdrop of mature trees and expansive southward views;
- Roadside grass verges;
- Prevalent use of local limestone and red sandstone as a walling material, under greenslate roofs, reflecting the underlying geology of the area;
- Surrounding countryside presses right up the side of the area’s spine road and to the rear of roadside plots;
- Small items that add to Blindcrake’s local identity and recognisable sense of place, e.g. village well, stone-walled pound, horse troughs, village iron finger post, datestones, cobbled street surfaces;
- Strong sense of quiet and tranquillity.

1 Introduction

Blindcrake is a small historic village which lies about 4 miles north-east of Cockermouth. It is a predominantly residential village, comprising four working farms and approximately 60 dwellings. The village contains a village green and several Lakeland vernacular farmhouses, barns and cottages with 18th and 19th century origins, seven of which are grade II listed. Stretching back from the individual farms is an extraordinarily well-preserved fossilised medieval field strip pattern. The village's archaeological, historic and architectural interest and quiet rural ambience create a place which well merits its conservation area status.



Fig. 1 Blindcrake Hall is one of seven listed buildings in Blindcrake Conservation Area.



Fig. 2 Limestone walls and gate piers are a typical form of boundary treatment.

The Blindcrake Conservation Area was designated on 22 May 2001 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.

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 assets 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 Blindcrake 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) *Lake District National Park Core Strategy (adopted 2010)*: The Spectacular Landscape chapter addresses conservation of the built environment

Survey work for this document and the accompanying townscape appraisal map was carried out during May and June 2010. While the descriptions go into some detail, a reader should not assume that the omission of any characteristic, such as a building, feature, view or space, from this appraisal means that it is not of interest.



Fig. 3 Historic dwellings are often rendered; two storeys is the norm with front entrances facing the highway.

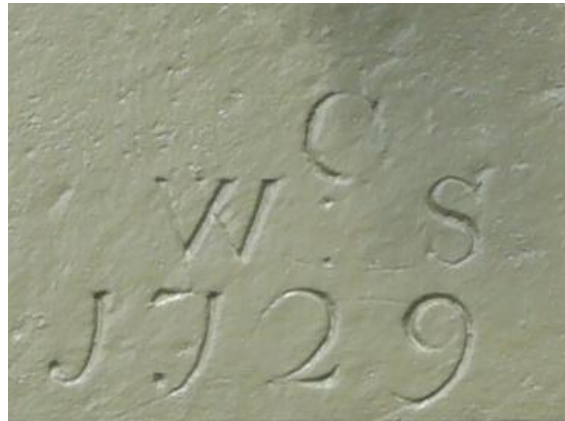


Fig. 4 Decorative datestones embellish some of the village farmhouses. This is at Low Farm, seen to the right of Fig. 3.

2 Location and setting

Location

Blindcrake is a small village which lies at the north-western limit of the Lake District National Park in Cumbria. It is situated about 4 miles north-east of Cockermouth and 22 miles south-west of Carlisle just off the A595.

Blindcrake and a neighbouring hamlet, Redmain, lie alongside a narrow, quiet back road that loops south of, and parallel to, the main Cockermouth to Carlisle road (A595). From the centre of the village a secondary lane branches downhill through woods to the River Derwent and the hamlets of Isel and Sunderland. Sunderland can also be reached on foot via a public footpath from the north end of the village.

Blindcrake lies within the Parish of Blindcrake, one of the smallest parishes within the Allerdale district of the administrative county of Cumbria, in that part which formerly comprised the historic county of Cumberland.



Fig. 5 The village lies nestled below a limestone outcrop known as Clints Crag.



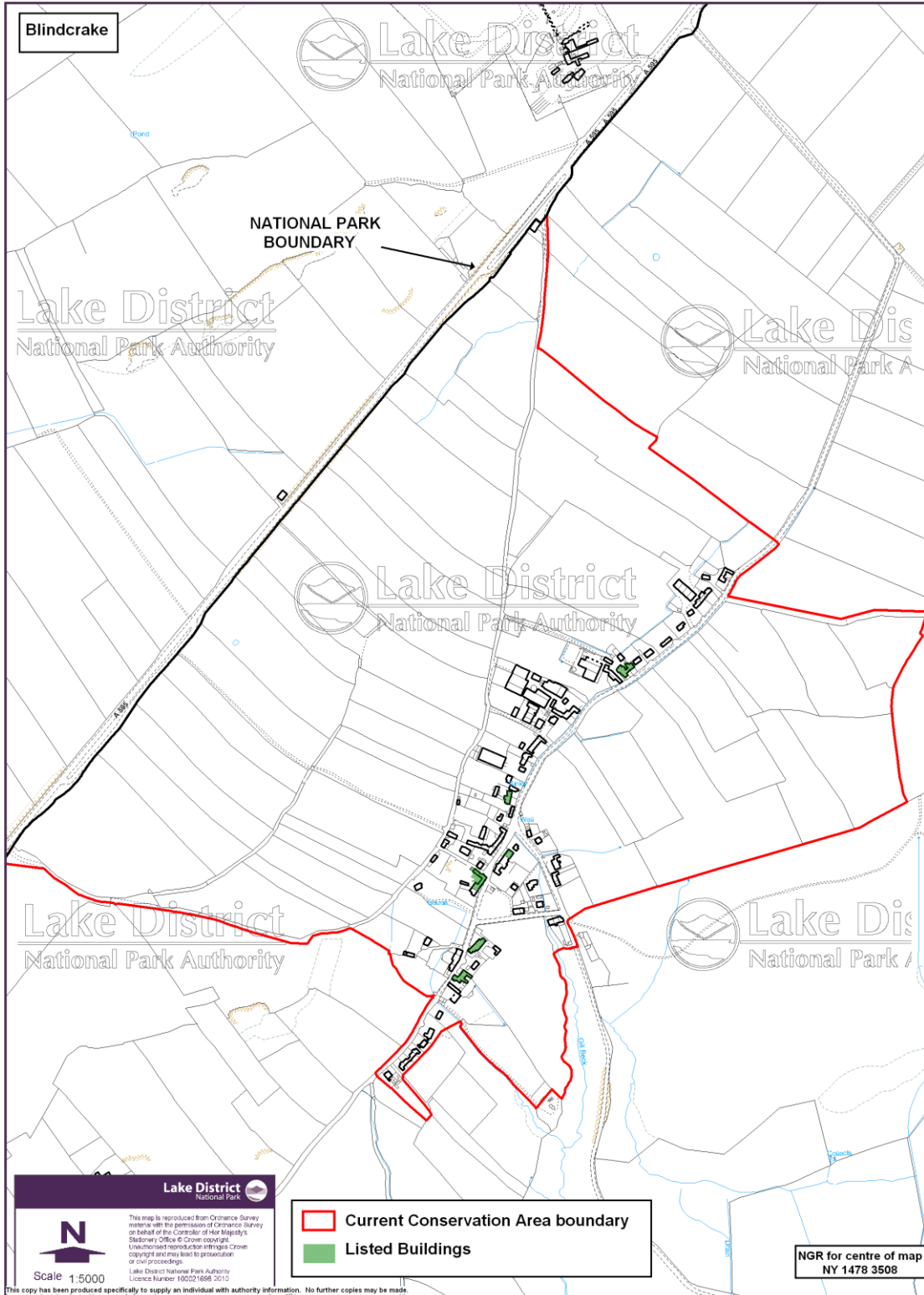
Fig. 6 Public footpaths connect Blindcrake to Sunderland and surrounding areas.

Boundary

The boundary of the conservation area (see map overleaf) has been drawn to encompass all of the buildings, historic and modern, that make up the historic linear village of Blindcrake (including the former Moota Inn) together with open pastoral land on either side of the main thoroughfare.

The built development of the village contains numerous historic buildings, seven of which are listed grade II, and a distinctive village green. Rural land surrounding the village is included in the conservation area principally because of the archaeological significance of the fields on either side of the main street, in particular the medieval strip field pattern to be found between the village and the old Roman road (today's A595). The surrounding open space also makes a significant contribution to the rural setting of the village which is elevated above the Derwent Valley between Moota Hill and Clints Crag.

Lake District National Park Authority: Blindcrake Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan



Topography and landscape setting

The area in general is characterised by gently rolling pastoral farmland divided by a network of low hedgerows and limestone walls which follow the rising and falling topography. Blindcrake has an elevated location about 150m above the Derwent Valley. From Clints Crags (240m), north-east of the village, the land falls in tiers down towards the valley of the River Derwent which flows westward from Bassenthwaite lake towards Cockermouth and its confluence with the sea at Workington.

The road through the village declines almost imperceptibly from north-east to south-west. The upper part of the village, north-east of the village green, lies between the two local highpoints of Moota Hill and Clints Crags. This 'upper' part of the village has a more enclosed atmosphere within the landscape than the 'lower' part of the village where there begins a distinct fall in the land towards the River Derwent, enabling long southward views to the distant High Fells.



Fig. 7 The south-westward view over the village from a highpoint on the footpath to Sunderland.



Fig. 8 Narrow slit windows for ventilation are characteristic features of the village's barns.

Geology

Blindcrake lies within a narrow band of carboniferous limestone which fringes the northern extent of the Lake District National Park. There is a working limestone quarry at Moota Hill. Clints Crags is a limestone outcrop a short walk from the village.

To the north and west of Blindcrake are areas of New Red Sandstone. To the south are the Skiddaw Slates, the oldest rocks in the Lake District, formed mainly as black muds and sands settling on the seabed over 500 million years ago.

Archaeology: strip field pattern and historic buildings

Blindcrake is especially notable for its fossilised medieval field strip pattern which stretches back from the individual farms on the west side of the main thoroughfare through the village. The long, narrow fields with slightly curving boundaries are a relic of the 'open field' system of agriculture that was prevalent in north-west England in the Middle Ages.

The open field system consisted of large unfenced fields of land around a settlement cultivated in strips by individual villagers or families. Neighbouring strips were divided by only a furrow or small ridge.

To the west of Blindcrake the former large open fields were subdivided into long, thin arable strips, at right angles to the village street. In most strips, there is good visual evidence of medieval 'ridge and furrow', an archaeological pattern of ridges and troughs created by ploughing with oxen. The practical needs of an ox and plough also give rise to the characteristic curved boundaries between strips. Both the broad medieval ridge and furrow (about 15 to 20 yards wide) and the 18th century narrow ridge and furrow (about 2 or 3 yards wide) are present.

A villager might have several strips in various fields, so that he had a share of both the better and the poorer land - an arrangement that, in Blindcrake, is perpetuated in the current fragmented arrangement of land ownership.

To the east of the village street the larger, rectangular fields and woodland were the demesne lands belonging to the lords of the neighbouring manor of Isel.



Fig. 10 The hedgerows on either side of this narrow field mark the boundaries of historic strip fields.



Fig. 11 Watery Lonning is an unsurfaced 'back lane' that gave access to medieval open fields.

In the 17th and 18th centuries private agreements were made between tenants and the lord of the manor to enclose the narrow field strips, mainly with hawthorn hedges, but some with limestone walls. This pattern of enclosure can still be seen on the ground today. Enclosure of medieval strip fields produced what the landscape historian Dr Angus Winchester describes as "one of the most distinctive elements of the north-west English landscapes: the narrow, strip-like fields that preserve in their outlines the shape of the lands and furlongs in the open fields".

The historic strip field system at Blindcrake is described in the Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment (2008) as "undoubtedly the finest example of its type in the Lake District".

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 might only be uncovered during building work.

3 The historical development of the hamlet

Little is known of the early history of the village. The name Blindcrake is an anglicised derivation of the old Celtic 'Blaen-craig'. 'Blaen' means summit and 'craig' means a rocky outcrop, probably referring to Clints Crag, a limestone outcrop above the village. (Both 'blaen' and 'craig' are modern Welsh words).

There is an Iron Age enclosure north of the village on the fell close to Moota Hill (Ordnance Survey Grid reference NY 141380) and there are two large stone fragments of an Anglo-Saxon cross shaft at the local parish church of St Michael and All Angels. This church, which dates from c.1130, is located in the hamlet of Isel about a mile south-east of Blindcrake. Whilst these few observations do not relate directly to the village of Blindcrake, they are testament to Iron Age, Anglo-Saxon and Norman activity in the immediate vicinity.

The derivation of the place name could indicate that the settlement pre-dates the First Century Roman invasion but this is speculative. The fossilised strip field system to the west of the village is characteristically medieval.



Fig. 12 Thorneycroft is reputedly the oldest house in the village with a datestone of 1613.



Fig. 13 The stone-mullioned window in this ruin suggests a 17th century date of origin.

There is a reference to 'Blencriac' in a 13th century document and a reference to "the town of Isall and Blencrayke" in a document of c.1530. 'Isall' refers to the nearby hamlet of Isel where Isel Hall, with its 14th century pele tower beside a bridging point over the River Derwent, was once the centre of the manor and parish. 'Blencrak' appears on John Speed's 1610 'Map of Cumberland and Carlisle' indicating that the settlement was well established by the start of the 17th century.

The oldest house in the village would appear to be Thorneycroft which has a datestone of 1613 (although this might be re-set from another property). Watergarth and Westgate Farm are the first known stone-built houses in the village, both early Elizabethan, but the former is now a ruin (with a surviving stone-mullioned window) and the latter burned down in 1700 (replaced by today's Westgate Farmhouse). Datestones and historic evidence indicate that all of the village's farmhouses date from the 18th century. During this time (c.1650-1750) the settlement developed from a collection of primitive timber and thatch dwellings to the linear layout of stone-built farmhouses that still exists today.

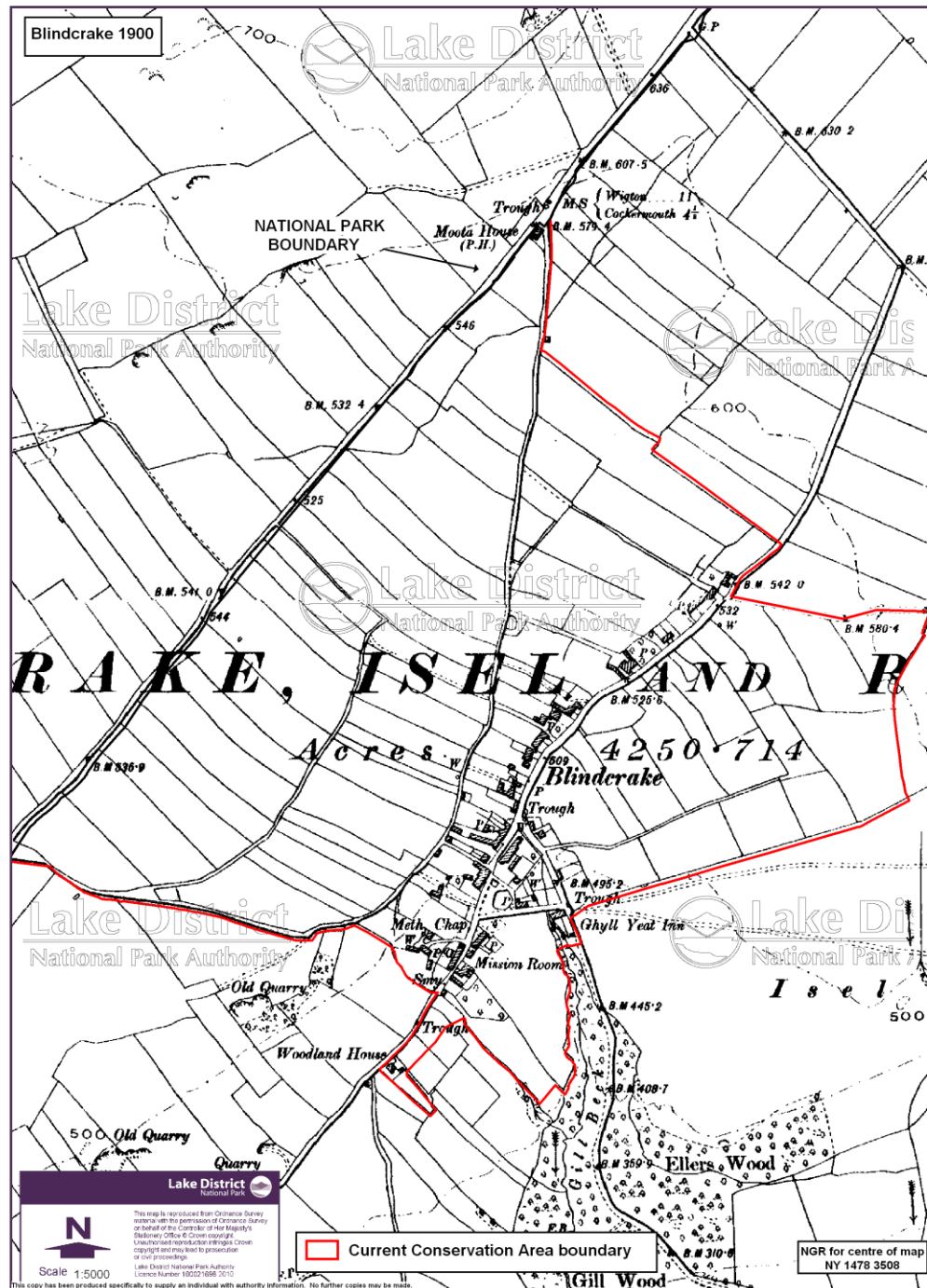
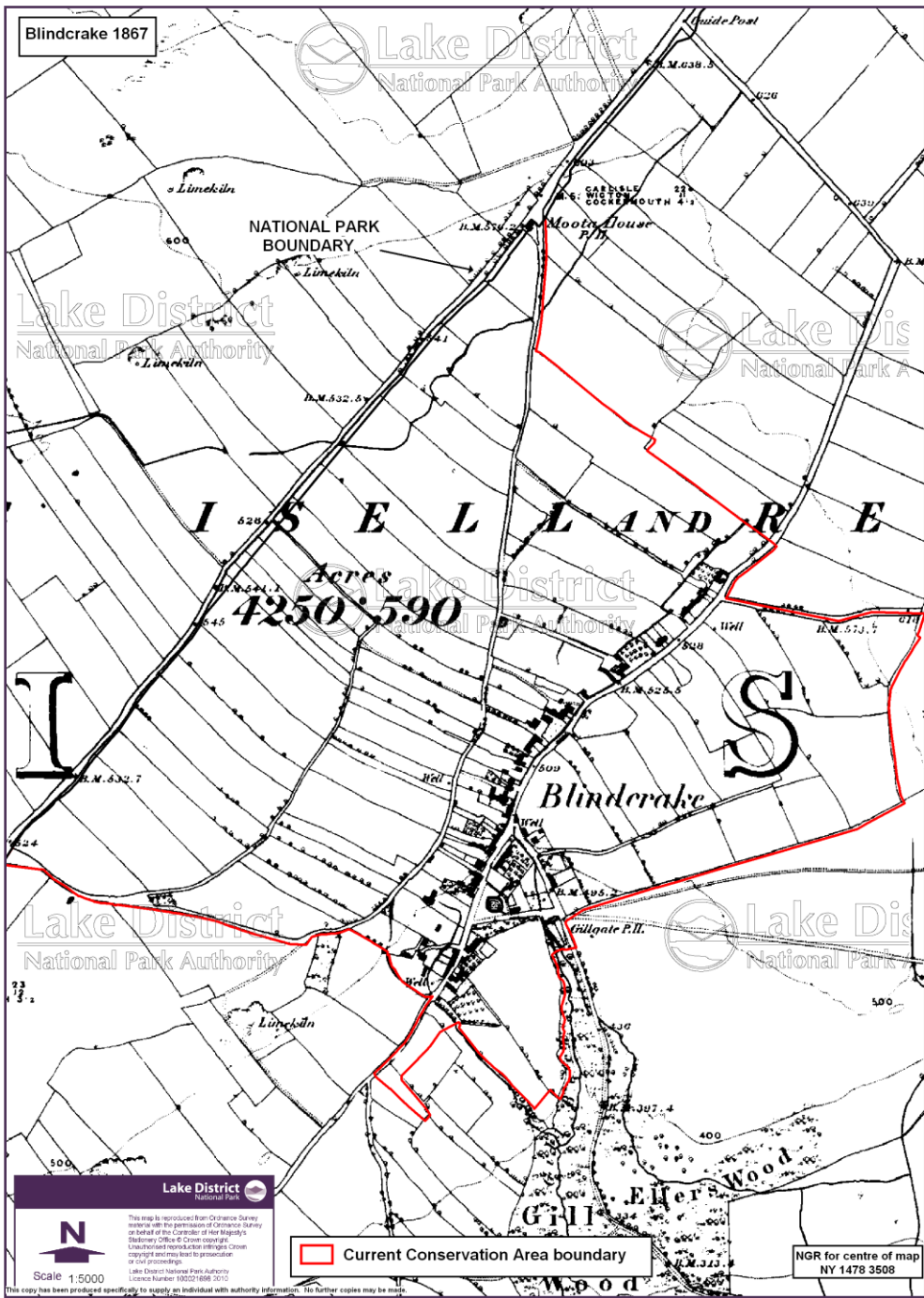


Fig 11a Blindcrake historic field system in 1867 and 1900. Compared to present day (see current conservation area map above) little has changed

The village economy was based primarily on agriculture. Water came from numerous wells. Barns were used for animals and storage. The village had a local quarry and limekiln, a smithy and, at one time, a local flax spinning industry (located at the site of today's Grove House where the datestone 'BII 1724' is set into the boundary wall).

The former Moota Inn stands alone at the edge of the conservation area beside the fast-flowing traffic of the A595. Its earlier name was 'Moothay Gate', it having been at one time been a toll house. Nearby, just outside the conservation area is a grade II listed late 18th century milestone (CARLISLE 22 MILES...) for the Carlisle to Cockermouth turnpike. At the start of the 19th century Moota Hill quarry was a source of 'white freestone'.

During the first half of the 19th century a small number of houses were built in the village, e.g. Greenbank, Crabtree Cottage, The Flaggs and London Row. Parson & White's 1829 Directory & Gazetteer contains an inventory of Blindcrake's occupations which include 3 victuallers, 1 schoolmaster, 2 shoemakers, 1 blacksmith, 1 tailor, 1 carpenter and 17 farmers. As the century neared its end a Mission Room and Reading Room (now the Village Hall) were created out of a row of old cottages. In 1894 a Primitive Methodist Chapel was built on the site of a cottage at the end of the same row.



Fig. 14 Hedges as well as limestone walls (see Fig. 15 opposite) are a common front boundary.



Fig. 15 Former agricultural barns converted to residential use.

The village green was formerly the site of the village pond, called Mortar Dub, which was filled in after 1900 having been blamed for recurring fevers in the village. The village pump was situated in the road boundary wall of Grange Farm. In about 1873 it was removed and a memorial tablet ('In memoriam C.L.1873') was placed in the wall at the same position. The village well, now grade II listed, was moved from the road to its present position c. 1920. It was used until the late 1930s when piped water was brought into the village. Electricity came to Blindcrake in 1954.

There was little new building development in the village in the first half of the 20th century. The Oaks were built by Cockermouth Rural District Council in 1949 but it was not until the 1960s that a phase of 'infill' houses began. Since c.1975 many old cottages have been altered and extended (some to the detriment of their historic interest) and disused farm buildings have been converted to dwellings. The last remaining village pub closed in 2001 and the chapel in 2000; both are now residences. Today there are about 60 dwellings in the village. The 2001 census recorded a population of 287.

A compact history of the village and its buildings can be found in 'A History and Survey of Blindcrake, Isel and Redmain' (1987) by H.E. Winter. The booklet is now out of print but is available from Cumbria County Council libraries.



Fig. 16 This simple Methodist chapel was created from a small 18th century cottage. Dated 1894, it is now a dwelling.



Fig. 17 The stone-walled village pond in the corner of the village green is probably a late 19th century addition to the village.

4 The character and appearance of the conservation area

Historic layout, field and street pattern

Blindcrake has medieval, and possibly earlier, origins. The conservation area encompasses both the medieval linear settlement layout and the associated medieval strip field pattern. Village and field pattern reflects over 500 years of evolution and the close relationship between settlement and supporting agricultural land is still visible.

Street pattern: The village has a distinct linear form with an 18th and 19th century building character. Farmsteads line the main street; most face south-east. Vernacular farmhouses, barns and cottages are spaced out sequentially on either side of a spine road of varying width and meandering flat curves. There was once a pond at the site of today's village green.

Most development is well set back from the road, particularly in the upper part of the village. North of the village well, there is no development at all on the east side of the road.



Fig. 18 Low Farmhouse (1729). The front boundary wall is a good example of a limestone wall; the footpath to the front door is cobbled.



Fig. 19 The main road through the village meanders gently. Here, in the upper part of the village, fields sweep up to the roadside.

Plots extend back from the main thoroughfare. On the west side of the road between Thorneycroft and High Farm, plots extend as far as a narrow back lane beyond which is the medieval field pattern. Elsewhere in the village, plots are much shorter and smaller.

In addition to the village's main street and the road to Isel, there are back lanes or 'lonnings' between the village and the old Roman road (A595). These once gave access to the strip fields. There is one public (tarmac'd) lane connecting the main street to Watery Lonning (unsurfaced proceeding westward) and Back Lane (metalled as far as the former Moota Inn). Other private access between the main street and Back Lane is available through farmyards.

Field pattern: The fields west of the settlement are remnants of an open field system of agriculture where there are visible earthwork remains of medieval farming. As noted in Section 2 (Archaeology) these medieval strip fields, later enclosed with thorn hedges and a few stone walls, have been preserved within the landscape pattern. The narrow strip fields stretch back from the farmsteads, nearly all of which are located on the west of the main thoroughfare.

The pattern of medieval strips is 'fossilised' in the enclosed fields, with the boundaries consisting of earth banks topped with hawthorn hedges and wire fences, with a few limestone walls.

The larger rectangular fields on the east side of the road were formerly part of the manor of Isel, probably enclosed in the 19th century for pasture. Their size, shape and rectilinear straight boundaries contrast markedly with the much earlier narrow curved fields laid out for the benefit of the plough to the west of the main street.



Fig. 20 The north-eastern approach to the village begins the gradual descent to the Derwent valley.



Fig. 21 A datestone re-set in a boundary wall from a demolished house known as Allison House.

Townscape analysis

Approaches to the village are bordered by hedgerows. From the west a copse of roadside trees opposite the village sign proclaims the start of the village but, with the exception of Woodlands (1876), the historic interest of the conservation area does not become fully apparent until after a pinchpoint in the road between two 18th century buildings on opposite sides of the road: the whitewashed former smithy (adjacent to Smithy Cottage) and the two-storey grade II listed barn at Westgate Farm. This marks the 18th century 'lower' limit of the village beyond which the road proceeds north-eastwards for about a mile to the 'upper' limit of the village at Elder Tree House, from where the road rises slightly between enclosing green hedgerows out of the village to open countryside.

The village is predominantly linear in form with cottages and farmsteads facing south-east with their long axis running parallel to the main through road. Two-storeys is the norm (modern bungalows are the exception). No single building stands out in the townscape.

The upper part of the village has a very spacious feel enhanced by generous gaps between buildings - although some spaces have been infilled in the late 20th century. Historic stone farm buildings stand close to the road between which, at the rear of the farmhouses, can be glimpsed large modern steel-framed agricultural sheds and silos. In general, stone boundary walls bound the roadside, although the Ghyll Beck, which flows beside the west side of the road, is cordoned off with a timber post and rail fence in the vicinity of Holm Farm.

The lower part of the village between Westgate Farm and The Flaggs can be read as two clusters of historic roadside buildings north and south of the village green. Each

cluster contains old cottages, farm buildings and former 18th century longhouses (i.e. long buildings that include a barn and a dwelling under one continuous roof). South of the green lies Croft House (longhouse) and Westgate Farm (longhouse) facing the former 18th century row of cottages that now houses the village hall and former chapel. North of the green lies Low Farmhouse (longhouse), Blindcrake Hall (longhouse), Main Farm (longhouse) and much altered 18th century cottages (e.g. Beech House and Skiddaw View). There are two contrasting areas of green open space between these clustered farmsteads: the mown and well-tended open village green to the east and, to the west, two unkempt marshy fields bounded by limestone walls. From here there are expansive views to Skiddaw.



Fig. 22 The village green is one of the defining features of the village.



Fig. 23 Grass roadside verges give the village a distinctly rural appearance.

The village green is made from the corner of a triangular piece of land formed between three roads: (1) part of the main thoroughfare alongside Blindcrake Hall, (2) the road beside which stands Greenbank and London Row, (3) the road beside which stands Ghyll Yeat and Mountain View. This piece of land is bisected by a narrow public footpath. There are no farmhouses in this eastern sector of the village which has, in summer, a leafy character and appearance.

Summary of townscape features

- Predominantly linear pattern of development;
- Small tracks link main thoroughfare to back lane;
- Historic stone and rendered residential and agricultural buildings alongside the thoroughfare;
- Two-storey development is the norm, generally well set back from the road;
- Absence of focal point or visually dominant building;
- Two distinct clusters of historic farmhouses, farm buildings and cottages north and south of the village green;
- North of the village well, development on west side of road only;
- Development more dense (concentrated) in the lower part of the conservation area, south of the village well;
- Village green;
- Ghyll Beck;
- Prevalence of stone roadside boundary walls;
- Modern farm buildings behind historic farmsteads beginning to break the pattern of development close to roadside;

- Unobtrusive 20th century infill;
- Enclosed 'green' approaches to village from all directions;
- Open fields sweeping directly up to the limit of the built environment;



Fig. 24 The back of Skiddaw can be seen in many westward views. Here it looms over Croft House.



Fig. 25 Trees are an important element in the area's townscape, forming a green backdrop to the village .

Focal points, views and vistas

The focus of the village is the village green but there is no single tall building or feature such as a church spire that catches the eye. Specimen trees in private gardens are the dominant element in the townscape.

The settlement has grown organically over 400 years without any formal planning and there is no planned vista. Buildings have been sited for agricultural or access purposes or to take advantage of the contours of the land or the southern sun. Apart from pleasing views of the frontages of the village's many vernacular buildings, the most significant consciously-designed architectural statement is the well-proportioned Georgian southern façade of Blindcrake Hall with its symmetrical array of deeply recessed sliding sash windows and central door. The house can be glimpsed from the road by London Row and from the public footpath that runs from Crabtree Cottage.

There are several opportunities for scenic views out of the conservation area to Skiddaw and the Buttermere Fells, particularly from the village green, from the back lane and from south of London Row. Views of these high fells are limited in the upper part of the village, where land rising from the road to Clints Crags restricts more distant views to the south and east.

A good overall view of the village in the landscape can be gained from a highpoint on the public footpath from Elder Tree House to Sunderland.

- A From Back Lane to Skiddaw
- B From Ghyll Yeat to Skiddaw
- C Panoramic view from the Village Green to Skiddaw
- D From Ghyll Yeat to Buttermere Fells
- E From Watery Lonning to Skiddaw
- F Panoramic view from the Village Green to Buttermere Fells
- G Across the Village Green to the frontage of Low Farm
- H From London Row to the Georgian façade of Blindcrake Hall

Current activities and uses

Though Blindcrake in recent history once contained a chapel, a shop, a pub and a post office, the village is now almost exclusively residential with four working farms. The only non-residential or non-agricultural building is the Village Hall. Most properties are privately owned or rented dwellings and there is at least one self-catering holiday cottage. Many former barns (and the aforementioned chapel, shop, pub and post office) have been converted to residential use.



Fig. 26 A large copper beech beside Greenbank, a mid-19th century dwelling with unusual slate-hanging on the gable end.



Fig. 27 The historic conservation area is primarily residential and includes some late 20th century infill dwellings.

The conservation area has a quiet ambience. Traffic flow along the local rural road network is minimal and therefore vulnerable to potential increases in traffic volume. The village features regularly in the annual Garden in Bloom awards and also holds its own open garden festival, the Garden Safari, every July.

The sound of sheep and birdsong is prevalent but one can occasionally hear the hum of machinery from the quarry at Moota Hill. Clints Crag gets a mention in Alfred Wainwright's 'The Outlying Fells of Lakeland' and Blindcrake is the start of a 25-minute stroll to the summit where there is a quarry and a limestone outcrop.

Open spaces, landscape and trees

The principal open space, and one of the defining features of the village, is the village green, an expanse of mown level grass enclosed around its north-eastern boundary by trees and historic development. The stone-walled pound in the corner of the green was used to impound stray stock. The absence of roadside kerbs or physical boundary to the green adds to its open atmosphere and village character. The green's unbounded aspect to the south permits fine views to the Buttermere Fells.

Though small in size, the wide roadside verge opposite The Flaggs serves as a tiny, secondary village green from whence there is a gate leading to the grade II listed village well. The space contains the village notice-board, a wooden bench, post-box and telephone kiosk.

Long lengths of roadside grass verges add to the village's rural ambience, and the absence of kerbstones further contributes to the conservation area's attractive appearance. The wide green verge beside the beck alongside the road past London Row is particularly noteworthy. The absence of a grass verge outside High Farm Cottage illustrates the positive impact of the other verges on the village's rural character and appearance.



Fig. 28 Small cobbled areas add to the area's local identity, notably here, at Low Farm, and at London Row.



Fig. 29 This small roadside area acts as a secondary village green. The grade II listed village well is behind the kiosk.

The only pavement is outside Blindcrake Hall where there is also, on the opposite side of the road, an area of roadside parking defined by white road markings. Many of the village's buildings are well set back from the road and pretty, well-tended cottage gardens are common.

Most development is located on the north-west side of the main thoroughfare; the way in which open countryside sweeps right up to the edge of the settlement firmly places the village within its rural landscape. This is especially notable in the upper part of the village and between the former chapel and Low Farm.

The boundary of the conservation area has been widely drawn to include open pastoral countryside to the north-west and south-east of the settlement. This is mainly to enclose the medieval field pattern, but the green open space is also a vital part of the rural setting of the village.

Trees are a special feature of the conservation area. Of note are the trees on the village green (and those in private gardens that form a backdrop to the green) and the copper beech at Greenbank.

Public realm: floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

Blindcrake's floorscape is prevalently rural in character, with a combination of unkerbed tarmac roads and unsurfaced lanes. There are few road markings or pavements but grass verges often border the roads, thereby softening the edges of the hard surfaces.

There are some surviving fragments of historic surfaces, mainly cobbled areas which add textural interest to the conservation area and are historic features in their own right, for example the cobbled areas at Low Farmhouse, London Row, Home Farm Cottage and The Barn. The cobbles, rounded by glacial or water action, may have been collected from the Derwent. Large stone flags in front of The Flaggs may have given this early 19th century row of houses its name. Street lighting is muted in design and the few elements of street furniture are similarly modern and unobtrusive (e.g. benches on the green and by the post-box).

Boundaries

Limestone walls are the prevalent boundary treatment both for field boundaries and to border domestic plots, adding to the village's distinctive stone-built character. Native species hedgerows are also common. Some stone walls have attractive rounded copings or crenelated stones (cock-and-hen) or are topped with hedges. Departure from the characteristic form of boundaries, such as the use of post-and-rail fence, does not harmonise with the appearance of the conservation area.

Local details

The distinctive local identity of the area is enhanced by a number of small features and historic elements that cumulatively help to give the conservation area a sense of place,



Stone horse troughs by the village pond.



1930s directional finger post.



Memorial tablet: 'In memoriam C.L. 1873'



Stone gate piers and iron gate.

Fig 30 Examples of local details and features that enhance Blindcrake Conservation Area:

for example the village well, the stone horse troughs on the green, water-pumps that survive at some private properties, the stone-walled pound, mounting blocks, stone gate piers hewn from a single block, the old iron finger post, stone walls and datestones. These items should continue to be nurtured and preserved.

5 The buildings of the conservation area

Architectural styles

Buildings within the Blindcrake Conservation date primarily from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The range of building type is small. Although there is a former non-conformist chapel the vast majority of buildings are either residential or agricultural. Pre-1800 buildings are vernacular in style, defined by R. W. Brunskill in 'Traditional Buildings of Cumbria' as: "the products of local craftsmen meeting simple functional requirements according to traditional plans and procedures and with the use of local building materials and constructional methods." Post-1800 houses like, for instance, Greenbank (1832) and Meadow View (1847), have probably been formally designed by a draughtsman or local builder/architect.

The oldest building in the conservation area is Thorneycroft (datestone 'C B 1613'), and some of the apparently 18th century buildings may contain earlier fabric. Westgate Farmhouse (grade II), in particular, is reputed to contain building stone from an early Elizabethan farmhouse that burned down in 1700. Nearby are the remains of Watergarth, an Elizabethan farmhouse last inhabited in the 1920s and demolished in 1977.

Buildings with 18th century origins are well-represented in Blindcrake, for example farmhouses such as Blindcrake Hall (datestone D & J G 1728), Low Farmhouse (datestone W & S C 1729), Croft House, Westgate Farmhouse, Grange Farmhouse and High Farmhouse (datestone JOHN AND MARTHA BLAICKLIN 1730). Cottages such as Smithy Cottage, Sunnybrow, Old Hall, Ghyll Bank House and Clints View probably date from the mid-18th century, though much altered and extended. All of these buildings are notable for the use of locally available building stone and, where original, small window and door openings in relation to building frontage.

The Flaggs and 1 & 2 London Row probably date from the early 19th century. They have a higher ridge height and wider frontage than earlier rows of stone cottages such as Beech House/Skiddaw View and Clints Cottage, reflecting taller room sizes and heights. Both rows open almost directly onto the street, the former with a stone-flagged apron, and the latter with a cobbled pavement. Blindcrake Hall and Elder Tree House (which date from the mid-18th century) appear to have been given Georgian facades at the start of the 19th century, perhaps an ostentatious indication of wealth.

Notable 19th century Georgian and Victorian buildings include Greenbank (1832), Crabtree Cottage (1836), Meadow View (1847), Mountain View (c.1850) and Woodlands (1876). These buildings are very similar in design, being two storeys in height (but significantly taller than earlier stone cottages) with a symmetrical three-bay frontage, with gable end chimney stacks and central front entrance.



Fig. 31 Croft House, a grade II listed building. Typically, quoins and window surrounds have been highlighted with colour.



Fig. 32 Blindcrake Hall. This façade has been added to an earlier building. A datestone to the rear reads: 'D & T G 1728'.

At the end of the 19th century a Mission Room, Reading Room and Methodist Chapel (1894) were converted out of a mid-18th century terrace of stone cottages. The process of conversion of existing buildings continues to this date with several barns, a pub, a former chapel and a smithy being converted to residential use in the second half of the 20th century.

The conservation area's 20th century buildings are unremarkable. The Oaks, comprising four dwellings in two semi-detached blocks, are typical post-war (1949) houses for agricultural workers. The impact of late 20th century infill bungalows and houses on the historic character and appearance of the village is mitigated by their generally small scale, deep set-back from the road and front stone boundary walls.

Agricultural vernacular: longhouses and bank barns

The conservation area is notable for its characteristic north Cumbrian farm-related buildings. Though some have been converted to new uses, many remain, at least in part, in agricultural use. Of particular note are the area's 'longhouses' and 'bank barns'.

A longhouse in this context is a two-storey building in which residential quarters and livestock shelters were housed under one continuous roof, i.e. a barn and dwelling under one roof, typically with a cross passage between them. Typical examples are Low Farm,



Fig. 33 Ventilation slits in the agricultural part of a longhouse, i.e. a barn and dwelling under one roof.



Fig. 34 A traditional bank barn with direct access to the upper storey at the rear.

High Farm, Main Farm, Croft House and barn, and Grange Farm, all dating from the 18th century. Bank barns are two-level buildings built on sloping land with direct access from the ground to both levels. They are normally built into a bank or slope and access to the upper storey is from the bank (or occasionally via a ramp). Typically, a Lakeland bank barn would have upper floor for fodder storage and lower level for animal quarters. There is a typical bank barn at Holm Farm.

Materials and construction details

Stone is the predominant building material. There is an old quarry and limekiln west of the village (O.S. Grid reference NY 144345). Most historic buildings are built with local limestone but in many cases the stonework has been covered with a rough-cast render. In general, the dwellings, requiring warmth and resistance to water penetration, have been rendered to protect their vulnerable lime mortar joints. Utilitarian animal and storage barns still retain exposed external stonework often with recessed mortar joints that create shadows between the courses which adds to the textured appearance of the wall. Door and window surrounds are made of large lengths of cut stone, often red sandstone



Fig. 35 Most agricultural buildings retain exposed stonework.



Fig. 36 A roof of graduated greenslate with the smallest sized slates at the ridge.

There is a recurring modern motif of contrasting the colour of the render with the colour of the surrounds – Westgate Farm has white render with red surrounds, Blindcrake Hall has cream render with blue surrounds, High Farm has a white render with black surrounds.

Local red sandstone is occasionally used for window and door surrounds, for example at the barn at Low Farm and The Flaggs. Greenbank has a sandstone chimney stack. An outbuilding at High Farm has sandstone quoins. Walls are mostly built of uncoursed random rubblestone with large squared quoins of long and short stonework. The barn at High Farm has large boulder stones in its construction. Some rendered houses such as Blindcrake Hall and Croft House have quoins highlighted with a deeply-cut V-groove. The south gable of Greenbank is, unusually, clad with slate-hanging.

Old roofs are mainly of graduated greenslate, i.e. stone slates of varying size laid in diminishing courses and random widths such that the smallest slates are at the ridge, graduating to large slates at eaves level. Welsh slate is not uncommon but this building material, and brick, would not have arrived in the village until after transport improved with the coming of the railway to Cockermouth in the 1840s. Brick is, anyway, uncommon. Yellow brick walling can be seen at Bryn Howe, a barn conversion, and the former abattoir to the rear of Ghyll Yeat. Similar bricks are used for chimney stacks at, for instance, Low Farmhouse and Blindcrake Hall. Modern tiled roofs at The Old Post Office and Rose Farmhouse do not harmonise with the prevalent stone vernacular.



Fig. 37 Typical vernacular building details at High Farm. Note the large boulder stones in the wall.



Fig. 38 Windows have been added to this former agricultural barn as part of a residential conversion.

As noted above, window and door surrounds commonly have stone surrounds. Westgate Farmhouse, Croft House and the barn at High Farm have doorways with alternate long and short blocks topped with a single stone lintel. The front door lintel is sometimes the site of incised datestones, for example the 'John and Martha Blaicklin' datestone at High Farmhouse. The 1728 datestone at the 'back' of Blindcrake Hall probably indicates that this side of the building was the front entrance before the Georgian façade was added to the other side of the building c. 1800.

Windows are deeply recessed as a protection against the harsh climate. Older window openings were small and almost rectangular in shape producing the characteristic dominance of solid (wall) over void (window). Such small openings are both a reflection of low floor-to-ceiling heights and the difficulty of manufacturing large sheets of glass. Later windows, especially those constructed or altered post-1800, have a marked vertical emphasis, accommodating timber sliding sash windows. The more recent the

building, the larger the window openings tend to be, and the fewer panes used in the sliding sashes – compare Greenbank (1836) with Woodlands (1876).

Of note are the arched windows in the old chapel, indicating its former ecclesiastical use and the remnants of a stone-mullioned window, a typically 17th century feature, in the ruined building by Thorneycroft. Dormers are uncharacteristic. Farm buildings have few openings except where necessary for access or loading/unloading. Ventilation is by means of narrow slit vents.

The joinery in historic buildings would originally have been timber, but historic timber joinery in many historic buildings has been replaced with aluminium or uPVC, nearly always to the detriment of the host building because of the loss of original historic fabric and alteration of glazing pattern.

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. Covered well behind telephone box | grade II |
| 2. Blindcrake Hall | grade II |
| 3. Croft House and barn adjoining | grade II |
| 4. Westgate Farmhouse and adjoining barns | grade II |
| 5. Grange farmhouse and barn adjoining | grade II |
| 6. Low Farmhouse and barns adjoining | grade II |
| 7. High Farmhouse and barn adjoining | grade II |



Fig. 39 Grange Farmhouse, listed grade II.



Fig. 40 Westgate Farmhouse, listed 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 building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded.

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 listed and unlisted buildings.

❑ Inappropriate alterations

There are instances where buildings have been extended or altered in a manner which neither reflects nor harmonises with the traditional design and materials of the buildings in the village. There have occasionally also been alterations to door and window openings that have upset the composition of a frontage.

❑ Road repairs

Following the floods of November 2009 the state of repair of roads within the conservation area, and further afield, is a cause for concern. In particular, the formation of potholes and erosion of road edges is unsightly and can be dangerous.

❑ State of repair of the barn at Low Farm

Buildings in the conservation area are generally in a good state of repair, but the two-storey barn adjacent to Low Farmhouse (listed grade II) is roofless, in a serious state of disrepair and currently an eyesore. The former Moota inn is also in need of remedial works.

❑ Maintenance of walls, hedgerows and field boundaries

The conservation area contains a substantial network of hedgerows and stone walls, some of which are in need of maintenance or repair or are poorly managed. Failure to repair and maintain traditional stone walls would detract considerably from the character and appearance of the conservation area. Lack of maintenance of the boundaries between the medieval strip fields could, over a period of time, result in the loss of their historic interest.

❑ Large-scale farm buildings

Modern farming practices require large covered spaces and storage areas. The introduction of large-scale buildings which do not respect local vernacular building materials and character is in danger of eroding local character particularly in the upper part of the village.

❑ Pointing of stonework

Re-pointing of stonework, where necessary, should be carried out with care by a skilled craftsman. The stonework, not the mortar, should remain the dominant visual element. This is not always the case.

❑ Overhead wires

The village is marred by an unattractive wirescape of power and telephone cables. Many villages in the area have had such wires removed and this would be a very desirable enhancement for the village.



Main Farmhouse, mid-18th century



Rose Farmhouse, mid 18th-century



London Row (c. 1800)



The Flaggs (c.1800)



Greenbank (1832)



Meadow View (1847)

Fig 41: Examples of 18th and 19th century buildings in Blindcrake Conservation Area.

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.

The 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 Lake District Core Strategy 2010 together with such guidance leaflets as *'Converting an old building?'* and *'Outdoor advertisements and signs'*.

In implementing this policy framework, our development management service aims to preserve and enhance the special character of the conservation area. We recognise 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. Other agencies and funding bodies also have a vital role to play.

1.4 Public consultation

The Blindcrake Conservation Area and Management Plan is created by collaborative working between heritage consultants, the Lake District National Park Authority and the local community. The appraisal and management plan was subject to a 4 week period of public consultation commencing in the Autumn of 2010. This included sending consultation letters to residents and businesses, placing the document on the Authority's

website and the provision of a public exhibition in the town. The document was subsequently amended to incorporate relevant suggestions and comments.

1.5 Designation and extension

The appraisal has examined the conservation area boundaries and has identified that the existing conservation area boundary, drawn up in 2001, is satisfactory.

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.



Fig. MP1 The flat-roofed extension to the building on the left, formerly a public house, does not harmonise with the row of cottages.



Fig. MP2 Twentieth-century profiled roof tiles have altered the appearance of this 18th century building.

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 currently 7 listed buildings within the conservation area.

Extensions and alterations to listed buildings should conform with 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.



Fig MP3. Large areas of glazing are out of character with historic buildings.



Fig. MP4 The former Moota Inn is in need of remedial works (June 2010).

1.9 Enhancing and protecting the local character and 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. 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;
- the erection of porches;
- minor installations and alteration of materials;
- loss and alteration of boundary walls;
- aerials, satellite dishes, alarms, downpipes and wires in prominent or highly visible positions;
- the use of non-traditional building materials, mortars and roofing materials.

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.

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 we may decide to serve a Tree Preservation Order. The appraisal identifies a number of significant trees and groups of trees on verges or within areas of public open space and within private gardens. 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.



Fig. MP5 This 18th century building has replacement windows that are obviously modern.



Fig. MP6 Front boundaries are usually formed by stone walls or hedges.

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 very 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. This is especially important with regard to large-scale farm buildings. Important views are identified on the Townscape Appraisal map in the character appraisal.

1.12 Enhancement through new development, alterations and extensions

While there are very few opportunities for 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 be sites where completely new development is acceptable. As the quality of the general environment within the conservation area is already acknowledged by designation, we will encourage well designed schemes using appropriate materials that respond positively to their historic setting. This includes the encouragement of high quality contemporary and sustainable design and materials.

1.13 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.

1.14 State of repair of the barn adjacent to Low Farm

The barn adjacent to Low Farm is in a serious state of disrepair and, without remedial action, the building is likely to deteriorate. We, as the Local Planning Authority, are currently investigating this matter and considering enforcement action to secure the long-term future of the building and to this end will consider using the full range of legally available powers.



Fig. MP7 Field boundaries define the size and shape of medieval field strips.



Fig. MP8 The barn at Low Farm is at risk of further decay and in urgent need of attention.

1.15 Protection of medieval field pattern

The dispersed pattern of field strips is still retained in the present day land ownership, and as long as the land remains sub-divided in this way then it is likely that field boundaries will continue to be maintained and contribute to the landscape character. If adjoining fields were to be joined (through the destruction of field boundaries), the historical legacy of field strips would undoubtedly disappear.

The medieval field system is a heritage asset of considerable significance. We will use our powers to secure the retention of the current field boundaries, including positive enhancement and maintenance via agri-environment schemes.

1.16 Repair of roads and removal of overhead cables

The maintenance of the roads is the responsibility of the Highway Authority and enhancement involving the removal of cables is the responsibility of the relevant utility companies. We will liaise with our partners to support improvements and enhancements

2 MONITORING AND REVIEW

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.

2.3 Document review

The appraisal and management plan will be reviewed every ten 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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