

Lowther Conservation Area
Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
April 2014



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LOWTHER CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Summary of special interest

The special interest that justifies designation of the Lowther Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Historic planned model village built in the 1770s for Sir James Lowther;
- Inspired by the drawings and design of Robert Adam (1728-1792), the renowned Georgian architect;
- Designed as a single entity with a common architectural theme which creates an exceptional sense of place;
- All of the historic buildings, including the 18th century pump and trough, are listed grade II* (defined in planning law as 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest');
- A fragment of a grandiose scheme that features the plan-form of an incomplete circus and half of a Greek cross;
- One of the earliest examples of the circus form, best exemplified by John Wood's Circus in Bath (1754);
- Example of an 18th century urban plan in an incongruous remote rural setting;
- Unity of building materials, i.e. local limestone and sandstone walls under graduated Lake District slate roofs;
- Individual trees and woods that provide a setting and a backdrop for the historic buildings;
- Site of a historic lime-kiln;
- Stone boundary walls with copings that reflect the location and purpose of the boundary;
- Small details such as a Victorian letter box and a stone stile add to the area's distinctive sense of place.

1 Introduction

Lowther Conservation Area contains an exceptionally interesting historic planned model village built in the 1770s for Sir James Lowther to designs by Robert Adam, the renowned Georgian architect. All of the dwellings are listed grade II*. Whilst the listed buildings might be considered austere and architecturally plain, the layout of the village in the form of a circus (incomplete) and formally aligned courts on a rectilinear axis is ambitious and extraordinary and unquestionably merits conservation area status.

The Lowther Conservation Area was designated in 23rd November 1994 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.



Fig. 1 The model village, built in the 1770s, has a well-proportioned typically Georgian appearance.

Fig. 2 Prevalent building materials are local limestone and sandstone walls under hipped roofs of Lake District slate.

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 *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (March 2011). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic assets and

conservation areas is set out within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012).

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 Lowther 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 Lake District National Park Core Strategy (adopted 2010)*: Policy CS27 “The acclaimed historic environment”.

Survey work for this document and the accompanying townscape appraisal map was carried out during November 2010. The omission of any building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is not of interest.



Fig. 3 Keepers House was altered in the 19th century. Although it has kept its original form, the stonework has been rendered and the window openings enlarged.



Fig. 4 Only two quadrants of a planned circus are standing. It is possible that two other quadrants of cottages were demolished in the early 19th century.

2 Location and setting

Location of Lowther Conservation Area

The Lowther Conservation Area covers the mid-18th century planned settlement of Lowther, sometimes known as Lowther Village. It is not to be confused with Lowther New Town which, despite its name, pre-dates Lowther by about 100 years.

Lowther, or Lowther Village, is located just west of the main A6 road between Kendal and Penrith. By Hackthorpe (5 miles south of Penrith) a minor road loops west off the A6 and from this loop a narrow road passes through Lowther before making its way to Lowther Newtown, Lowther Park and the village of Askham.

Lowther is also the name of the parish in which the village stands. It is within Eden District on the eastern fringe of the Lake District National Park in the former county of Westmoreland.



Fig. 5 Gate to woods east of the model village. The green and white colours of the gate indicate the Lowther Estate.



Fig. 6 Small-paned casement windows are the norm. The stone string course is one of the village's few architectural adornments.

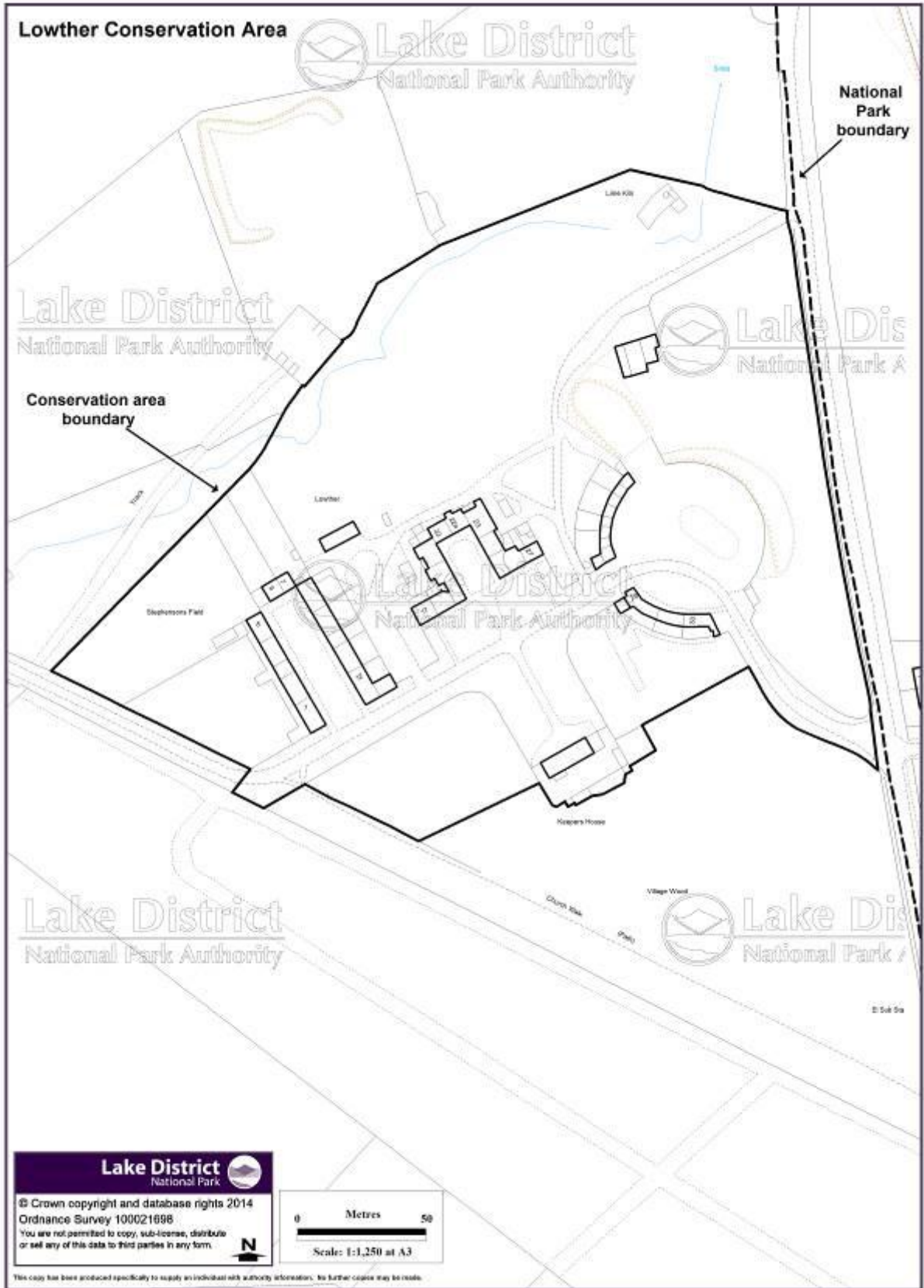
Boundary of Lowther Conservation Area

The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to encompass the whole of the built form of the 18th century model village and its associated private gardens and amenity spaces. The boundary has been drawn more widely to the north and east to include the site of a historic lime-kiln and to encompass surrounding woodland that is important to the immediate setting of the village.

The east, west and south boundaries are well defined on the ground by roadside and field boundary walls, but the northern boundary through the woods is much less clearly defined. The length of minor road that defines the eastern boundary of the conservation area also defines the eastern limit of the Lake District National Park.

Topography and landscape setting

Lowther lies about 220 metres above sea level in a low-lying landscape between the River Lowther and the River Leith. The planned settlement of houses is laid out on a man-made level platform on land that declines almost imperceptibly to the north-east. At the eastern end of the village there is a steep fall from the circus into the woods,



probably as a result of the earthworks required to create a level base for the village houses.

The village is almost entirely encircled by woods and, from within the conservation area, it is difficult to recognise that the site is set within a wider landscape of open fields, pasture and parkland. To the west lies an area of formally landscaped parkland, Lowther Park, and the steep-sided, wooded valley of the River Lowther. To the east, the relatively low-lying landscape of pastoral fields is severed by the M6 motorway.



Fig. 7 The straight axis road of uniform width adds to the urban feel of the area but note the absence of overhead wires and street lamps.



Fig. 8 Stone boundary walls are a feature of the conservation area. This one is topped with triangular coping stones.

Geology

The Lake District comprises a mass of ancient rocks in three major bands running north-east to south-west. The Skiddaw Slates, in the north, and the Windermere Group, in the south, sandwich the central Borrowdale Volcanic Series which includes the Lake District's highest and craggiest mountains such as Helvellyn (17 miles west of Lowther as the crow flies).

Lowther is located on carboniferous limestone east of the mountainous Borrowdale Volcanic Series. The site of an old lime-kiln in the northern, wooded part of the conservation area is a pointer to the presence of local limestone. The underlying geology closer to Penrith consists of red sandstone.

Archaeology

Research into the history of Lowther, with particular emphasis on Robert Adam's influence on its design, is comprehensively covered in Professor R. W. Brunskill's *Lowther Village and Robert Adam* published in the Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society Vol. 14. A reprint of the document is available from Cumbria County Council library.

Professor R.W. Brunskill (see above) suggests that the existing village is less extensive than the village that was actually built in the mid/late-18th century. He suggests that, "...it is more than likely that...additional accommodation was located in two further quadrants opposite the present two and forming a complete circus at the entrance to the village", and goes on to note that (in the 1960s), "enough masonry remains to suggest that something rather more than a curved retaining wall had occupied this area". Historic

accounts of the village support this view but archaeological research remains to be done to define the exact extent of the village as originally built.

The Lake District Historic Environment Register records the site of a lime-kiln (map grid reference: NY537238) of unknown date in the north-east corner of the conservation area. A lime-kiln is a furnace or oven in which lime is created from limestone.

The buildings within the conservation area are themselves of archaeological interest, and may retain evidence of their age, use and construction that is only likely to be uncovered during building work.



Fig. 9 The model village was inspired by Robert Adam's drawings for Sir James Lowther', dated 1766.



Fig. 10 Slate roofs are laid in diminishing courses i.e. small slates at the ridge graduating to large slates at the eaves.



Fig. 11 The external stonework of this house in the western court retains traces of limewash.



Fig. 12 Rainwater goods are cast iron painted in a uniform colour throughout.

3 The historical development of Lowther

Sir John Lowther of Lowther, the 1st Viscount Lonsdale, was the founder of the Lowther dynasty in the late 17th century. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Lowther family dominated the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland.



Fig. 13 Each quadrant in the circus is flanked by a two storey pavilion with a pyramidal roof.



Fig. 14 Part of the east range of the central court.

Lowther Village was the second attempt of the Lowther family to set up a model community on their estates. The first attempt was called Lowther Newtown. Confusingly, this Lowther Newtown pre-dates Lowther Village by almost 100 years. Lowther Newtown dates from the 1680s; Lowther Village (the subject of the Lowther Conservation Area) dates from the 1770s.

Lowther Newtown (sometimes known simply as Newtown) was initiated by Sir John Lowther c.1683 following the demolition of the old village of Lowther in 1682. The old village, consisting of hall, church, parsonage house and seventeen cottages, was deliberately pulled down by Sir John Lowther to open up the prospect of Lowther Hall, the site of the present castle, which he wanted to enlarge. The 'replacement' planned settlement was aimed at establishing a successful carpet manufacturing centre. It did not succeed.

When, some generations later in 1751, Sir Henry Lowther, 3rd Earl of Lonsdale, died without heir, the estate was inherited by his cousin, Sir James Lowther (1736-1802). He was created 1st Earl of Lonsdale and, through inheriting three fortunes in succession, became one of the richest men in 18th century England. He was not popular, became known as 'wicked Jimmy' and was described by Alexander Carlyle as "a madman too influential to lock up". It was Sir James Lowther who initiated the building of Lowther Village.

Sir James Lowther married the daughter of the Earl of Bute in 1761. The Earl of Bute was one of the earliest patrons of Robert Adam (1728-1792), the renowned Georgian architect who was one of the leaders of the classical revival in architecture in England in the 18th century. It is likely that Lord Bute introduced Robert Adam to his wealthy son-in-law for in 1766 Robert Adam began a series of drawings for a new court-house and gaol intended for Appleby, for Whitehaven Castle and, significantly, for a new residence at Lowther Hall. Bound with the drawings for Lowther Castle is a *Plan of the Village for Sir James Lowther*, dated 1766.

The 1766 *Plan of the Village for Sir James Lowther*, held at Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields in London, is illustrated in diagrammatic form in Professor Brunskill's research paper and shows a strong resemblance to the form and layout of Lowther Village. Lowther is less than half the size of the grandiose village projected by Robert Adam but both are based on a combination of circus and Greek cross imposed on a square.

Professor Brunskill further makes the case for the influence of Robert Adam and, whilst it had once been assumed that Adam's plans never came into being, there can now be no doubt that Lowther is architecturally inspired by Robert Adam, albeit an altered and incomplete embodiment of Adam's ambitious *Plan of the Village for Sir James Lowther*.

Sir James Lowther's motives for building the model village are not known. Given what is known of his character, he is unlikely to have acted from purely philanthropic reasons. The model village may have been intended to halt expansion of the 1680s village which was still considered to be too near to Lowther Hall. Writing in 1800 a visitor noted that, "Lowther village was built many years ago...with a design of establishing a linen manufactory" but the commentator may have been mistaking the 1770s village with the 1680s village for there is no evidence of manufacturing in Lowther Village.

Visitors to Lowther at the end of the 18th century reported, "the work there proceeding formed a crescent behind which the other buildings are thrown in squares" (William Hutchinson, 1773) and "We went to look at a regular-built village, which is but thinly inhabited; many of the houses are unfinished, and there were cattle in some of them..." (Joseph Budworth, 1795). The former quotation, which notes work 'proceeding', is the basis for the cited date of erection of c1770 -1780. The latter quotation suggests that work proceeded slowly! In 1802 a Richard Warner described the village's "desolate and deserted appearance".

A survey of 1806 recorded 96 houses (some occupied by cattle or as stores, and some incomplete) so, given the much smaller number of cottages in the village today, it is likely that some houses were demolished in the 19th century. Professor Brunskill suggests that the circus may once have been complete but even this would not be enough to make a total of 96 houses and it is possible that some of the squares were once larger in size.

The dwellings, originally intended for estate labourers, were probably never well-built, and must have provided cramped accommodation despite communal outdoor areas. Through the 19th and early 20th centuries the village houses were mostly occupied by estate workers of low status. During the mid-20th century the houses were, for some time, occupied by the army.

Lowther Village was handed over to the Lowther and District Housing Association in 1964 and a full-scale repair, improvement and modernisation scheme was carried out that reduced the number of dwellings considerably. The most extensive section of renovation was the north-west quadrant of the village which had been totally abandoned and was practically derelict. The renovation scheme won a European Architectural Heritage Award in 1975.

4 The character and appearance of the conservation area

General character and appearance

The stone-built model village stands at the core of the conservation area and indeed is the reason for the area having this status. The conservation area as a whole also includes the rear gardens of the cottages, a small field and areas of managed woodland.

Rear gardens are well-tended by their owners and are generally bounded by stone walls. The field to the west of the area brings the otherwise unseen, wider pastoral setting of the village into the conservation area. The village's enclosing woods are not accessible to the public. Their contribution to the conservation area is their role in providing a suitably scaled backdrop to the cottages and softening the arid and austere appearance of the area. The sound of birdsong from the woods mingles with the sound of traffic along the nearby M6.



Fig. 15 Parking is available to the rear of the cottages.



Fig. 16 Trees form a backdrop to the village in this view eastward to the circus.

Overall the area has a rural atmosphere deriving from the surrounding woods and its green, leafy approaches. The village's built form, however, has an urban appearance at odds with this rural location. The straight length of road of uniform width that forms the main axis of the village is unexpected along a minor rural road.

Buildings rise starkly from the mown lawns. With the exception of suburban-style cherry trees, there is a notable lack of greenery within the village that might soften the formal arrangement of buildings and spaces. However, the incongruity of an urban form in a rural setting is one of the defining features of this conservation area.

Historic layout and architecture of the model village

Lowther is a planned model village designed as a single entity with a common architectural theme. In the light of Robert Adam's drawings and given the obvious absence of a fully realised circus, it can be seen that the current layout is only a fragment of a much larger and more ambitious scheme.

Adam's original concept consisted of three main elements: a circus flanked by two Greek crosses. In architectural terms, a circus is a central open space, around the perimeter of which stands a range of buildings; a Greek cross is comprised of a central square with four broad arms of equal length partly enclosed by buildings.

As built, the model village comprises an incomplete circus, which forms the eastern limit of the ground plan, beside two adjacent rectilinear 'courts' or 'closes' of which the central one forms one half of a Greek cross.

The circus lies at the east end of the site but only two quadrants of encircling cottages are standing. These two stone-built quadrants partly enclose a central grassed area (through which passes the village road) but, to the east, the circus is defined by trees. There may have been two opposing quadrants of cottages in this location, probably demolished in the 19th century.



Fig. 17 A strong rhythm of doors, windows and chimney stacks is typical.



Fig. 18 The central court which forms one half of the plan form of a Greek cross. The other half was never built.

Each quadrant consists of a row of single storey cottages set between a pair of two-storey pavilions with pyramid roofs. As Brunskill observes: "The strong simple curve, the rhythm of the doors, windows and chimney stacks, and the careful articulation of the flanking units combine to give a strong formality to this composition in miniature".

Immediately west of the circus lie two rectangular courts enclosed on three sides by stone cottages. Both courts end on the north side with a seven-bay, two-storey house which terminates the view into the court. A similar seven-bay, two storey house (with characteristic three-bay centre and hipped roof) stands in opposition to the central court on the other (south) side of the main axis road but without any side ranges. This house was apparently altered in the 19th century and although it retains its original form (with additional flanking single storey wings), its appearance has been altered by the application of cement render and installation of sash windows. The presence of this house suggests that a mirror-image of the northern court was planned – the construction of side ranges would have completed the Greek cross plan-form.

The side ranges of the central court are single-storey terraces with south returns running east and west. The side ranges of the west close are twenty-one bays long, and consist of alternating two-storey and single storey cottages set at right angles to the main axis of the village.

Lowther represents one of the earliest examples of the circus form. The village is urban in plan despite its rural setting and its isolation from any nearby conurbation. The

development of the idea of a circus began with the architect John Wood's research into the civic design of ancient Rome, exemplified in his design for The Circus in Bath (1754). In 1802 Richard Warner in *'Tour through the Northern Counties'* wrote, "we stopped near new village of Lowther to smile at the fantastic incongruity of its plan which exhibits the grandest features of city architecture, the Circus, the Crescent and the Square upon a mean scale of a peasant's cottage". This observation is no less true today.



Fig. 19 A typically symmetrical façade that terminates the view into the central court



Fig. 20 First view of the circus on arrival from Hackthorpe, to the east.

Focal points, views and vistas

Lowther is an artificially created model village in which there is a planned symmetrical and rectilinear relationship between building and space. This is intended to give rise to formal vistas along the axes of the design or through openings in the built form, perhaps terminating in a focal point. However, because the overall plan is incomplete, one cannot help but notice that some vistas are not as intended and there is a sense that something is missing, which indeed it is.

Having said that, there are good formal views into the circus and the courtyards and, as one walks through the village, there are many pleasing views of the historic buildings across a lawn and against a backdrop of trees. In the absence of front gardens and front garden boundaries, views of the buildings are undisturbed by the accretions of everyday living (such as sheds, garages, washing lines, parked cars or a plethora of differing boundary treatments). Further, there are no obtrusive street lighting columns or overhead wires in the public parts of the village.

Woodland trees restrict views outwards from the conservation area. The only gap in the woods that encircle the village is at the bend in the axis road as it leaves the village heading towards Lowther Castle. By accident or design, this means that the western view along the main axis of the village is the only view outward from the village.

Significant views are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map below:

- A Up and down the axis of the western court where a two storey building ends the view to the north.
- B Views along the main axes of the village from the centre of the village, especially into the central court, Keepers House and to the gateway pavilions of the circus.
- C Panoramic views around the circus.
- D View into the circus from the southern approach.



Current activities and uses

The village is exclusively residential. There are no business or commercial uses and no shop, pub or village hall. There is a large building in the wood to the north of the circus which is used for forestry vehicles and other forestry activities and storage.

Open spaces, landscape and trees

The three most significant open spaces are those that are an integral part of the formal plan of the village, i.e. the two courtyards and the circus. The spaces are not as originally planned but trees play an important role in re-creating, in part, the sense of enclosure that was intended.

The central courtyard, the larger of the two, was originally designed as one half of a Greek cross. Only half of this plan-form now exists. A courtyard space on the north side of the road is defined by buildings on three sides and this has a strong sense of enclosure which leaks into the roadside lawns. On the other (southern) side of the road, however, the space is not enclosed by buildings and has a more open aspect with the feel of a green rather than a courtyard. The 'green' takes the form of a lawn enclosed by low boundary walls, trees and a two storey house that is part of the original build.



Fig. 21 The side ranges in the central court are single storey.



Fig. 22 The two trees within the circus are the most important trees within the model village.

The western courtyard is long and narrow and is enclosed on three sides by buildings of both one and two storeys.

The incomplete circus is bounded by trees and two quadrants of stone cottages. In the absence of all four enclosing quadrants of cottages, the woodland trees perform a vital role in defining the eastern perimeter of the circular space.

Informally managed private gardens and a field north-west of nos. 1-12 Lowther contrast with the formality of the well-tended lawns and roadside verges that complement the front aspects of the historic buildings. They also give the restricted plan form of the model village some 'breathing space' within the embrace of surrounding trees and woodland.

As noted, trees are a characteristic feature of the surrounding area, providing a backdrop to the houses and protecting them from the weather. Trees and greenery are

not prevalent within the model village itself. This gives the village, as seen from public viewpoints along the road, a rather austere appearance.

The most notable trees are two specimens on the grass within the circus and another on the grassy triangle to the rear of the northern quadrant. Ornamental cherry trees are planted on the grass beside the main axis and at the entrance to the western rear access lane

Public realm: floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

The road through the village is tarmac with grass verges, occasionally lined with concrete kerbs or setts. Access roads to and around the backs of the dwellings are unsurfaced. There are no street lighting columns or telephone/electricity posts beside the main road.

Cottages open directly onto tarmac footpaths lit by discreet wall-mounted lanterns. There do not appear to be any remnants of an older floorscape which might have consisted of stone slabs or setts. The areas that form part of the overall planned composition, i.e. circus and courts, are well-managed lawns of close-cropped grass. A single wooden bench beside the village notice-board is the only item of street furniture.



Fig. 23 The side ranges in the western court contain cottages of both one and two storeys.



Fig. 24 The side range is articulated by slight projection and recession of some of the bays.

5 The buildings of the conservation area

Architectural style

The historic buildings were designed as part of a single compact architectural entity and are very similar in construction, materials and design. All are dwellings.

All of the historic buildings are listed buildings. A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Consent is required from the Lake District National Park Authority before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out.



Fig. 25 The stone trough and pump is 18th century and listed grade II*.



Fig. 26 Pavilion at the entrance to the circus.

Building height varies between one- and two-storey. Loft spaces have been converted to form bedrooms but there are no dormers. Rooflights on the rear elevations are common. The single storey cottages that overlook the circus have basements accessible only from the rear and, from the rear, appear to be two storeys in height.

Building frontages are plain. Some articulation of the plan form is gained by slight projection and recession of two or three bays in a range. In the Georgian manner the houses have unadorned facades punctuated by plain well-proportioned door and window openings that follow a regular rhythm. The only notable architectural adornment is a narrow projecting stone string course that maintains the eaves level where two storey buildings stand adjacent to single storeys.

Listed buildings

All of the listed buildings in Lowther Conservation Area are listed grade II* defined in planning law as 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest'. Only about 5% of listed buildings are grade II*. Listed buildings are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. These are:

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Nos. 1-12 Lowther Village | grade II* |
| 2. | Nos. 13-20 Lowther Village | grade II* |
| 3. | Pump and trough south of nos. 13-20 | grade II* |
| 4. | Nos. 21 and 22 Lowther Village | grade II* |
| 5. | Nos. 23-26 Lowther Village | grade II* |
| 6. | Lowther Cottage, Lowther Village | grade II* |

Building materials and detailing

The prevalent building materials are local limestone and sandstone walls under hipped roofs of grey-green Lake District slate. A map of c.1850 marks a 'village quarry' just north of the site and this may be the source of the limestone rubble. Sandstone, being less friable, has been tooled into roughly squared long and short blocks and used for window lintels and building quoins respectively. Historically, joints between the rubblestone walls would have been made of lime mortar (a lime-kiln is located nearby) but most of the buildings have undergone some form of restoration or rebuilding in the second half of the 20th century and some joints are now filled with modern cement mortar.



Fig. 27 Rear of the circus' north-west quadrant of cottages is, surprisingly, two storeys in height.



Fig. 28 Blocked opening to the right of the door. The cottages have been altered over the years, most notably in the 1960s.

With the notable exception of Lowther Cottage, none of the buildings are rendered but they would almost certainly have once been lime-washed, although this has now been removed. Typical limewash can still be seen to the rear of no. 6 Lowther. Lowther Cottage (known currently as Keepers House) appears to have a modern cement render, perhaps a modern attempt to prevent damp ingress.

As it stands apart from the main layout and is well set back from the road, the house's different appearance (i.e. render not exposed stonework) is not readily marked, but does contribute to its sense of isolation from the main blocks.

Most roofs are of local grey-green slate. The slate is laid in diminishing courses (sometimes called 'graduated') and random widths. Chimney stacks are now cement-rendered, scored to look like ashlar. Though designed for several pots, most chimneys only retain a single clay pot, if any at all.

Door and window joinery is timber, as traditional, but not original. Doors are simple planked doors, painted a uniform green. Windows, painted white, for the most part are twin side-opening casements, each light consisting of six small panes, 3 x 2. Lowther Cottage is again the exception. This building, which the listed building description records as "altered in the 19th century", has larger window openings fitted with vertical sliding sash windows with the upper and lower sashes divided into two panes.

Cast-iron rainwater goods are affixed to the stonework with thin metal brackets.

Stone boundary walls and sheds

Limestone walls are the prevalent boundary treatment both within the model village and for field and woodland boundaries. There is a notable difference in the treatment of the coping of walls reflecting the location and purpose of the wall.

Walls that form part of the overall composition and either link or directly bound its separate elements have triangular coping stones. These can be seen both to the front and rear of the cottages and they help to pull together and unify the three elements of the plan form. The boundary walls beside the eastern approach to the village through the circus have a coping of rectangular blocks.

In contrast to triangular and rectangular coping stones that have been worked into shape by a mason, the coping of the boundary wall to the western field, for instance, consists of random stones laid on edge in the vernacular tradition.

Modern well-designed stone sheds and outbuildings to the rear of several cottages contribute positively to the conservation area's character and appearance.

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, for example the stone stile, a Victorian letter box and stone boundary walls. These items should be preserved.



Fig. 29 Stone stile leading to a footpath through the woods west of Keepers House (Church Walk).



Fig. 30 Victorian letter box.

6 Negative features and issues

The fact that, for the most part, the entire village has been owned by a single housing association for the past 45 years has helped to retain the planned uniformity of the model village. Changes and alterations, where necessary or desirable, have been carried out with regard to the model village as a whole, and not in a piecemeal fashion as might have happened if the cottages were in separate ownerships.

The landscaping of the site as a whole also bears the print of comprehensive management with well-kept communal areas that complement the historic buildings.

From brief external survey, buildings are generally in a very good state of repair but the row of former privies to the rear of nos. 1-5 Lowther is untidy and neglected. Nos. 1-5 were undergoing extensive repair works at the time of survey (November 2010).

The following issues are worthy of note:

- Condition of listed buildings – a number of properties on the estate have problems of water ingress and ventilation. The western range nos 1-5 Lowther are currently undergoing repair, including pointing and chimneys but also to apply limewash to the west elevation. The buildings would originally have been limewashed but the reinstatement of this former finish has consequences for the unity of the buildings within the conservation area.
- *Use of Velux rooflights to rear*— intrusive standard rooflights have been used to the rear of some properties. These protrude above the roofline and have a chunky frame profiles.
- *Satellite dishes*: Ground-mounted satellite dishes in the courtyard of nos. 1-12 Lowther detract from the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.
- *Road surface and verges*: Following recent extreme weather the tarmac surface of the access road to the central court is in need of repair. Parts of the roadside grass verge have been eroded by traffic and concrete curbs used to define edges
- *Modern developments*: The row of flat-roofed garages to the rear of the courts is out of keeping with the stone-built historic cottages.
- *Maintenance of stone boundary walls*: The conservation area is characterised by stone walls which are in a good state of repair except for the length bounding the field in the west of the area. Failure to repair and maintain traditional stone walls would detract considerably from the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Fig. 31 The conservation area is characterised by stone boundary walls.



Fig. 32 Buildings are in a good state of repair.

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.



Fig. MP1 Access road in need of repair.



Fig. MP2 Satellite dishes in the western court.

1.3 Legislative background

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 *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012), English Heritage guidance titled, *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (March 2011) best practice guidelines, policies within the Lake District National Park Local Plan (1998) and adopted 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 to enhancement. Other agencies and funding bodies also have a vital role to play.

1.4 Public consultation

The Lowther Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is created by collaborative working between the Lake District National Park Authority and the local community. The appraisal and management plan was subject to a 12 week period of public consultation between July and September 2013. 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 Askham.



Fig. MP3 Grass verge eroded by passing vehicles.



Fig. MP4 Stone wall in need of maintenance.

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 1994, is satisfactory. However, the boundary through the woods to the north of the village, drawn widely to enclose the site of a historic lime-kiln, cannot be easily determined on the ground.

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 currently 19 listed buildings within the conservation area.

Extensions, alterations and necessary repairs 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.
- Maintain the unity of form, materials and appearance within the conservation area

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.



Fig. MP5 Untidy sheds in a block beside the western court.



Fig. MP6 The row of flat-roofed modern garages is out of keeping with special historic interest of the conservation area.

1.8 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 and alteration of boundary walls;
- aerials, satellite dishes, alarms, downpipes and wires in prominent or highly visible positions;

To help retain and conserve traditional features and manage installation of satellite antennas to the forecourts of single family dwelling houses we will consider introducing an Article 4 Direction. This would remove permitted development rights which such development to be made without planning permission. Such a Direction would require consultation with the local community.

1.9 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.

1.10 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. Important views are identified on the Townscape Appraisal map in the character appraisal.

1.11 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. 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.

1.12 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 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.

1.13 Repair and maintenance of roads

The maintenance of the roads is the responsibility of the Highway Authority. We will liaise with our partners to support improvements and enhancements and the materials and details are of appropriate quality.

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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