

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Great Asby



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Eden
District Council

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This document is also available in larger print on request.

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PART 1 CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

Part 1 of this document describes the planning policy background to conservation areas and how the character appraisal in Part 2 will be used. Eden District Council prepared a character appraisal of Great Asby prior to declaring the village a conservation area on 25 November 2002. The appraisal includes a description of the historical, architectural and townscape importance of Great Asby which is one of 22 conservation areas in Eden, outside of the Lake District National Park.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

1.2.1 What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation areas are defined in law as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Legislation to declare conservation areas has been with us for forty years and thousands have been designated across the country. Conservation areas can bring many benefits, including giving greater controls over demolition, minor development and tree felling.

Local planning authorities have a responsibility to consider the quality and interest of a conservation area as whole, rather than individual buildings within it.

1.2.2 How does this Appraisal Relate to the National, Regional and Local Planning Context?

The Government sets out national planning policy in the relevant Acts of Parliament and Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG) and their ongoing replacements, Planning Policy Statements (PPS) (Appendix A). Of most direct relevance to conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment. This national guidance has a regional dimension in the form of regional planning guidance, Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), prepared by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) which will eventually replace the Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan.

Local and site specific policies are prepared in accordance with these national and regional policy frameworks. The system for producing local planning policy documents however changed in 2004 with the old district Local Plans being replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDF) which are expected to be in place in Eden by 2009. At the heart of the LDF is the Core Strategy that sets out the vision, spatial objectives and core policies for the future development of the District. The Core Strategy Preferred Options Paper (Dec 2006) sets out the following principles for the built environment (Policy CS 19):

- Conserve and enhance buildings, landscapes and areas of cultural, historic or archaeological interest including conservation areas, historic

parks and gardens, areas of archaeological interest and listed buildings and their settings

- Promote the enhancement of the built environment through the use of high standards of design and the careful choice of sustainable materials for all development
- Encourage the sympathetic and appropriate re-use of existing buildings, especially those which make a contribution to the special character of their locality
- Promote design that ensures a safe and secure environment
- Promote improvements in accessibility in the built environment for all people regardless of disability, age, gender or ethnicity

One of the key LDF documents will be the Primary Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) which will be prepared in accordance with the overarching objectives of the Core Strategy. Policies relating to development within conservation areas will refer to conservation area appraisals where they exist. This appraisal will be used as supporting evidence when considering planning applications and appeals in Great Asby Conservation Area.

Until the DPD has been adopted the local planning policies in the Eden Local Plan 1996 will be saved and a full list of relevant policies can be found in Appendix A.

Other LDF documents of relevance to Great Asby Conservation Area are Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that provide detailed guidance on specific subjects. Currently these are:

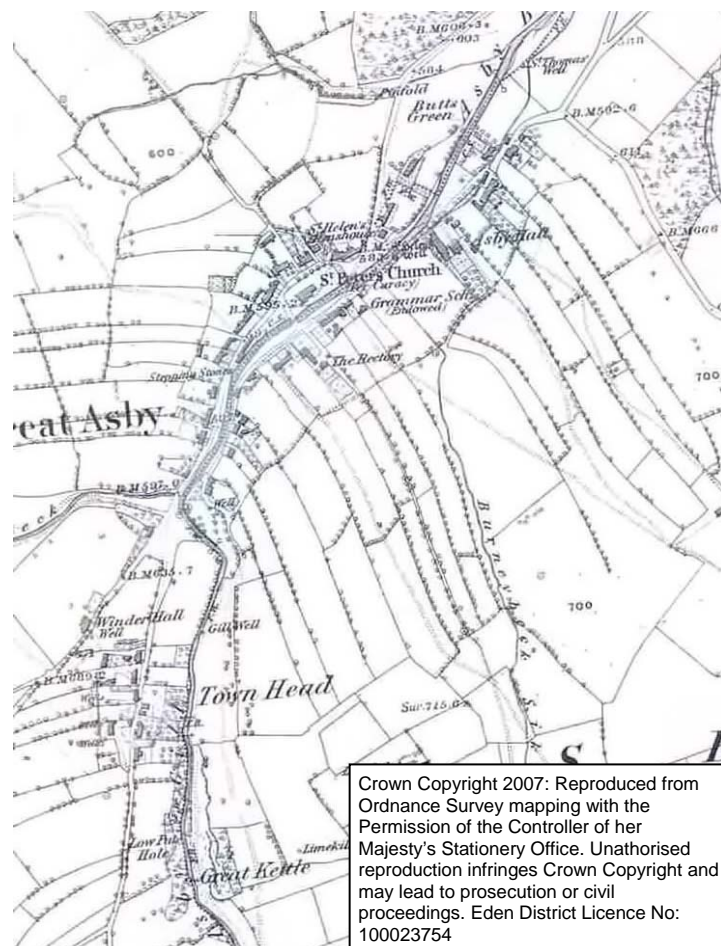
- Shopfront and Advertisement Design (2006);
- An Accessible and Inclusive Environment (2007)

PART 2 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

The following character appraisal of Great Asby was prepared before declaring the village a conservation area on 25 November 2002. There have been alterations since that time, but they have not affected the fundamental character of the conservation area.

2.1 History

The origins of the Great Asby are not certain, but the general Eden valley area was populated in Roman times with many small scattered settlements and farmsteads consisting of stone huts and enclosures, often found on the higher land. Examples of such settlements exist on the hills surrounding the village. The present layout of the village suggests it was established by the medieval period. The 'outgang' field system at the southern edge of the village (ie the fan shaped opening leading onto the common) represents a form already developed in the region before the arrival of the Romans. It was also practiced by the Scandinavian settlers and continued well into the medieval period.



1862 OS map showing medieval field pattern

There are two possible explanations for the name of the village, formerly written as Askeby. The first is that the 'aske' comes from the Scandinavian word for ash with the suffix 'by' meaning farm or homestead or hamlet. This is a common

derivation for the names of villages in the Eden valley established in around the ninth/tenth centuries. The second explanation is that it is named after Robert de Askeby.

At the time of the Norman Conquest, what is now Great and Little Asby were believed to comprise one manor which subsequently became Little or Old Asby (Askeby Vetus). The present village of Great Asby was divided into two manors or townships - Asby Winderwath to the west of Asby Beck and Asby Coatsforth to the east. Little Asby seems to be the older of the two present settlements. The De Askeby's were the earliest recorded owners of Asby Winderwath in the late 12th century and in 1299 Robert De Askeby founded a chantry in the church. This church was described in 1860 as an "ancient church", but was demolished soon after to make way for the present church of St Peter, which dates from 1866.

St Helen's Well to the north west of the church was described in 1777 as:

"A little below the church eastward rises a large spring called St Helen's Well. It has been neatly seated round; and (no doubt) in ancient time, like the rest, did not want its miracles."



St Helen's Well



St Helen's Well before walling erected

The manor house for Asby Coatforth was Asby Hall, the present building of which dates from the late seventeenth century. The manor house for Asby Winderwath may have been Winder Hall which appears on the first edition OS maps (c1860) but had disappeared by the second edition of 1899. From its plan form, it appears that it may have dated from the late sixteenth or seventeenth century.

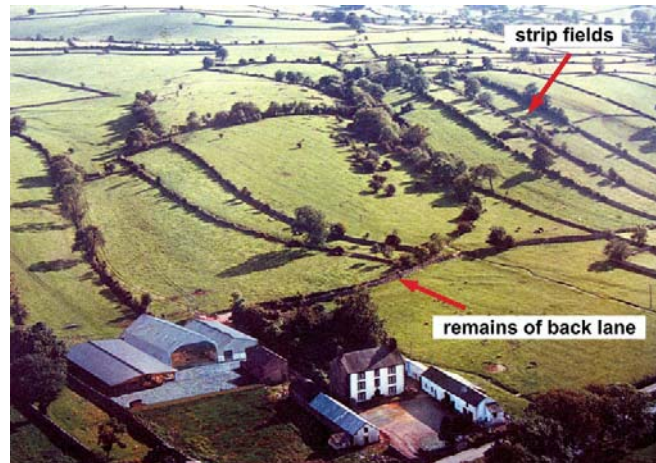


Asby Hall

2.2 Layout and Setting

The village lies in a valley within a landscape of limestone upland farmland characterised by improved and semi-improved pasture within strip fields enclosed by limestone walls with some hedgerows. These open out into larger enclosed fields and ultimately onto the unenclosed common beyond. The village is quite well hidden within the valley, but has long-range views to and from the Pennines. There are few mature trees within the village, but larger amounts of woodland and boundary trees immediately surrounding the village and the isolated farms beyond.

The layout of the main body of the village displays some of the typical characteristics of a medieval farming village. It has narrow fields at right angles to the village street and green (and in the case of Great Asby also the village stream), divided into crofts and strip fields by a back lane. The dwellings and associated farm buildings tend to be located fronting onto, or occasionally at right angles to, the village street in a “long house” (with dwelling and byre or barn under a single or continuous roof) or sometimes a courtyard form. These crofts and strip fields still remain largely intact in Great Asby and, to eastern side of the village, the remains of a back lane can also be seen. The ‘outgang’ to the southern end also remains although this has been built on. Much of the village green remains, as do many of the unmade verges and limestone boundary walls.



Strip fields at right angles to road and remains of back lane (Asby Hall)

2.3 Buildings

Most of the present pre-twentieth century buildings date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries apart from Asby Hall and the Old Rectory with its fourteenth century Pele tower. Their plan form and plinths indicate that they may represent the rebuilding or remodelling of earlier medieval or post-medieval buildings.



The Old Rectory

Many of the present buildings have replaced or incorporated earlier buildings. Most of the earlier humbler buildings may have had heather thatched roofs and would probably have been cruck-framed with walls of earth, clay or roughly piled stone. The increased peace and prosperity of the mid to late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resulted in a major rebuilding in stone that developed and refined the traditional form and style. The importation of formal architectural detailing in the new building and remodelling of the late eighteenth century through to the late nineteenth century largely respected the local traditional use of materials and detailing. This has now become an established part of the character of the area although it has had less influence in Great Asby than in some other Eden villages and local traditional characteristics have survived strongly.

No thatch remains in the village, but many buildings are likely to have been heightened and the roof pitch reduced in order to accommodate Westmorland Green slate roofing, a thick slate laid in diminishing courses giving roofs a distinctive colour and texture. Some later roofs have Welsh or blue slate and a

number of twentieth century buildings have concrete tiles. Stone copings along verges and kneelers are an attractive feature of some roofs in the village.

In terms of building form, earlier buildings are likely to have been low single storey or one and a half storey buildings with upper floor accommodation in the roof space. Most domestic buildings are now of two storeys. Of the two predominant forms, the earlier is a derivative of the “long-house” form with both house and farm building under a continuous roof, often with a cross passage. This form can be seen at Elm Tree Old Farmhouse, the White House, The Hollies and many others.



Long-house form (White House)

The later form, much less common in Great Asby than in many other Eden villages, is a three bay house of largely symmetrical design with a central doorway flanked by a window on either side, such as the late nineteenth century Croft House.

Many other farmhouse and cottages have been remodelled along these lines such as that at Town End. Other traditional features found in the village include “outshuts” - rear single storey extensions under a continuation of the main roof, and external stone staircases leading to the first floors above former farm buildings.



External stone stairs

The majority of the buildings in the village are constructed of limestone rubble under graduated Westmorland Green slate roofs with sandstone ridge tiles. The limestone varies in colour from light grey to pale yellow. Because it is not readily worked, the limestone is most frequently used as random rubble with limited

horizontal coursing and in fairly small pieces. Whilst window and door openings are often treated simply with stone cills and lintels, many, including some of the oldest buildings, do have full dressed stone surrounds as found elsewhere in the District. Where dressed stone features do appear they are frequently made from sandstone. There are also a small number of pale pink or yellow sandstone buildings, including St Peter's Church. As sandstone is more readily worked, it often used in finely dressed form as ashlar for walls or for quoins and window surrounds.



St Peter's Church (source: www.visitcumbria.com / Simon Ledingham)

Some buildings have been lime washed (now painted) or rendered. Where render exists, it is either as a wet-dash or roughcast finish, self-coloured or painted white or in bright pastel shades. Window surrounds, if present, are picked out in a contrasting colour.

The oldest window detailing in the village is at the Old Rectory where there remains a medieval window. In general however the older window styles found include small, square or narrow, two or three light casements separated by thick stone mullions such as can be seen at Asby Hall and again at the Old Rectory. These would have had iron and leaded windows and are becoming increasingly rare. Frequently these openings have been adapted and the mullions removed to take timber casements or enlarged to take vertical sliding sash windows with twelve or sixteen small panes.



Casement windows and stone mullions (Old Rectory)



Later addition of sash windows to the Hollies



Stained casement windows and rear outshut roof at Harlea House

A significant number of the present buildings retain classic Georgian sash windows of twelve or sixteen panes, although many have lost their glazing bars and now feature Victorian or Edwardian two, four or six-paned sliding sash windows with horns, as do the later buildings constructed or reconstructed in this period. More recently, some sash windows have been replaced with timber casements, 'mock' sashes and a small number with plastic windows, usually within the existing opening. Whatever their form, most windows have a vertical emphasis, either in the shape of their openings or in the proportion of individual panes. White paint is traditionally used as the final surface treatment for timber windows, particularly for sashes, but there are a number of stained casement windows in Great Asby particularly on barn conversions.

The older doors would have been of wide, probably oak, planks, but few of these survive. Eighteenth and nineteenth century doors would also be plank doors or often of six and later of four panels with or without fanlights. A number of these survive but many of these have been lost to modern panelled and glazed doors.

As with much of the District, gables tend to be blank and the proportion of window to wall is low, giving buildings a sturdy appearance. Roofs are traditionally unbroken and without dormers, although some of the Victorian buildings feature projecting gables such as at the Methodist Chapel. The exteriors of buildings are generally treated in a simple manner with both the eaves and particularly verges of roofs set almost flush with the faces of the supporting walls. Guttering is generally of cast-iron fixed directly to the wall face by hangers and brackets. Some Victorian buildings have overhanging eaves and carved timber bargeboards and porches, again such as at the Methodist Chapel.



Carved bargeboard, low limestone wall and railings - Methodist Chapel

Of considerable importance to the traditional character and appearance of settlements is the simple, informal nature of the roads, farmyards and verges. The carriageways of roads and accesses are generally narrow, almost exclusively with wide grass verges without kerbs. Although the public roads are now tarmacked, many access lanes and farmyards are still finished in hard-core or with hard-core runnels.



Limestone footbridge over Dale Beck by Ash Croft

Boundaries in the village are marked by limestone rubble drystone walls. Those to the property frontages are often low walls with iron railings and sometimes decorated with limestone pavement. Most properties have small front gardens with gated pedestrian and sometimes vehicular accesses. A small number of gardens and boundary walls have been lost to make way for parking areas.

2.4 Present Character and Appearance of the Village

The village still retains a church, chapel, school, public house, village hall and a number of active farms. The central area of the village, despite some inappropriate alterations to existing buildings and modern development, retains a very attractive and relatively unspoilt character particularly in its overall layout.

Certain alterations to existing buildings, such as the replacement of windows with modern casements and uPVC mock sashes, have detracted a little from the character and appearance of the village. The design and materials of a number of post-war buildings in the village are out of keeping with its character and appearance. However the layout of some of these new developments has largely respected the traditional pattern of the village, being simply individual dwellings or small groups within infill plots along the village street.

The layout, form, detailing and materials of other new developments however are at considerable odds with the form and character of the village. Most notably the row of houses at Burney Beck and the new cul-de-sac form of the development at River View with its suburban highway engineering design that has altered the traditional line of the village street. Cumulatively the scale of the buildings, the heavy use of render, concrete tile and lightweight fencing to the rear rather than stone walls detract from the existing character of this localised area of the village. Fortunately the damage to the traditional character and appearance of the village

as a whole has been limited because of the relatively small scale of these developments.

The street lighting in the village is rather utilitarian and the column-mounted lights are inappropriate.

Overall in terms of its layout and buildings the heart of the village retains much of its historic and very attractive character. The buildings of Great Asby form an attractive and coherent group with a strong, distinctive and limited palette of materials and design. The layout of the village with its rectilinear form, central stream, village green, unmade verges and stone boundary walls etc provides an attractive and high quality environment and one of considerable historic interest.

2.5 Key Characteristics of Great Asby

- Asby Beck running through centre of village with open views to fells beyond
- Linear village green
- St Helen's well
- Narrow fields at right angles to the village street
- Buildings front village street with some at right angles facing down the street
- Simple, informal nature of roads, farmyards and verges
- Limestone boundary walls
- Mostly two storey buildings
- Unbroken Westmorland green and Burlington blue slate roofs laid in traditional diminishing courses
- Sandstone coping and kneelers on roofs
- Buildings constructed of limestone rubble with limited horizontal coursing
- Painted wet dash or roughcast render walls
- Outshuts (rear single storey extension under a continuation of the main roof)
- External stone staircases leading to first floors above former farm buildings
- Blank gable walls
- Low proportion of window to wall
- Simple treatment of door and window openings. Surrounds often dressed
- Window openings with a vertical emphasis – usually vertical sliding sash windows on pre-twentieth century properties
- Small front gardens with low limestone boundary walls some with iron railings or decorated with limestone pavement.

Appendix A National, Regional and Local Policies

1 National Planning Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 69 requires that local planning authorities shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas. The Act therefore places a duty on the local planning authority to designate conservation areas in areas which they consider meet the criteria.

Section 72 of the Act places a duty on the local planning authority in the exercise of their planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Section 71 of the Act requires that from time to time, local planning authorities shall formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

Section 73 of the Act requires the local planning authority to publicise proposals which would in their opinion affect the character and appearance of a conservation area. Such proposals need not be within the conservation area and PPG 15 (Paragraph 4.14) further advises that in the Secretary of State's view, the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area should also be a material consideration when considering proposals which are outside the area, but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.

Planning Policy Guidance

PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment - September 1994

2 Regional Planning Guidance

Draft Submitted Regional Spatial Strategy North West

See documents at North West Regional Assembly website: www.nwra.gov.uk

Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan

See document at Cumbria County Council's structure plan website: www.planningcumbria.org

3 Local Planning Guidance

Eden Local Plan 1996 (saved policies)

- Policy BE3 - New Development in Conservation Areas New development within a conservation area should not adversely affect the character or appearance of the area. It must also respect the scale, form, orientation,

materials and architectural detailing of adjoining development; that traditional to the area concerned, and established street patterns and building lines. In order to exercise an appropriate level of control over development the Council will require the submission of fully detailed plans in support of applications for planning permission within conservation areas.

- Policy BE4 - Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas

Proposals to alter or replace shop fronts and property facades within conservation areas must wherever possible conserve original features and material, reflect traditional design features and be constructed in traditional materials.

- Policy BE5 - Advertisements in Conservation Areas

Within conservation areas, advertisements should not adversely affect the character or appearance of the area.

- Policy BE13 - Development Affecting Listed Buildings

Development proposals which would adversely affect the character or setting of a listed building or result in the loss of important features will not be permitted.

- Policy BE14 - Alteration of Listed Buildings

Minor alterations which are necessary to facilitate the appropriate change of use of listed buildings or to improve accessibility will be supported provided they are judged acceptable in relation to Policy BE13.

- Policy BE19 - Quality of Design

In considering development proposals the Council will have regard to the quality of the design submitted. It will be expected in all cases that this will be such as will maintain the quality of the landscape or built environment within which the proposal is located. Where development is proposed in juxtaposition to existing development which is traditional in character the Council will require designs to have particular regard to the scale, massing, character, architectural features and materials of that existing development. Regard must be had in all proposals not only to the design of buildings but also to the provision and proper layout of open spaces and landscaped areas.

- Policy BE21 - Light Pollution

Applications for development requiring or likely to require external lighting shall include details of lighting schemes. Such schemes will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i) that the lighting scheme proposed is the minimum to undertake the task;
- ii) that light spillage is minimised;

- iii) in edge of town or village locations, or in rural areas, that landscaping measures will be provided to screen the lighting installation from neighbouring countryside areas; and
- iv) that road safety will not be compromised as a result of dazzling or distraction.

- Policy BE23 - Display of Advertisements

Applications for consent to display advertisements will be permitted where the size of the sign and the materials to be used are appropriate to the location and will not have an adverse effect on either the visual amenity of the locality or on highway safety.

- Policy SH6 - Village Shops

Proposals for small retail outlets and post offices within existing settlements, but outside established shopping areas, will be permitted provided that:

- i) the proposal is of a design and scale suited to its location;
- ii) access and parking arrangements are satisfactory;
- iii) impact on the amenity of other occupiers in the locality is of an acceptable level; and
- iv) the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the local built form, landscape, and conservation interests.

- Policy SH7 - Village Shops and Post Offices

Proposals which assist in the provision or retention of village shops or post offices will be supported.

- Policy PT8 - Access to Buildings

Through negotiation the Council will seek to ensure that all new development to which the general public have access makes provision for access by people with physical disabilities.

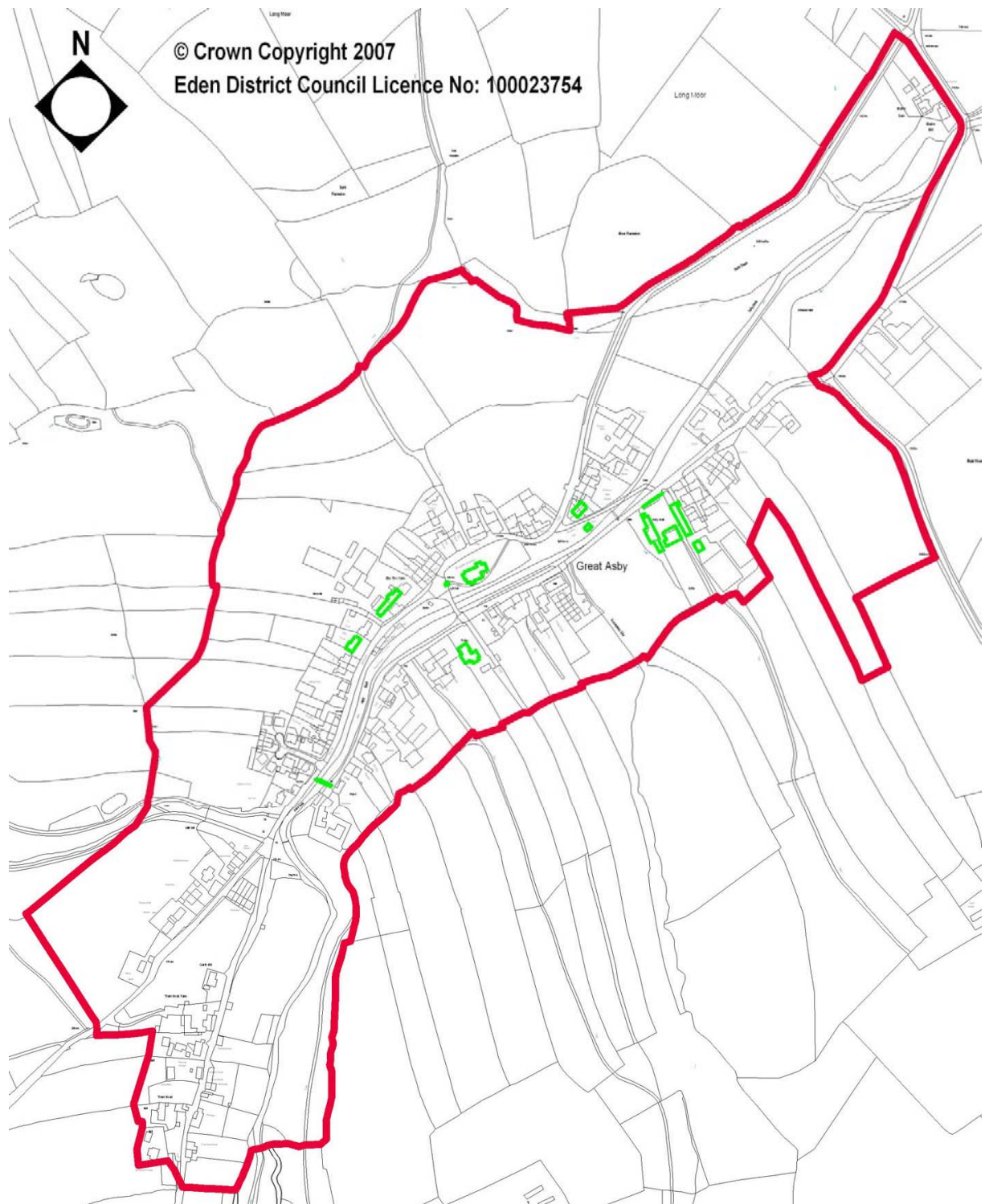
Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents

- Shopfront and Advertisement Design (2006)
- An Accessible and Inclusive Environment (2007)

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Eden Design Summary (1999)

Plan 1 **Listed Buildings within Great Asby Conservation Area**



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