



St Bees Conservation Area Appraisal

2021

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Glossary

Ashlar	Masonry consisting of squared, close-jointed blocks
Bee bole	An alcove designed for holding a <i>skep</i> (see below)
Buttress	Structural masonry element that resists lateral movement in a wall
Chancel	The area of a church around the altar, typically the section of the church to the east of the <i>transepts</i> in a <i>cruciform</i> plan (see below)
Cloister	A covered walkway against the wall of a building, enclosing a quadrangle
Cock-and-Hen	An arrangement of coping stones on a wall top consisting of alternating horizontal and vertical stones
Cornice	A projecting ornamental band at the top of a façade
Cruciform	Cross shaped
Cruck	Either of a pair of curved timbers that form part of a frame from ground level to the apex of a building (a “cruck-frame” building)
Fenestration	The arrangement of windows
Lych gate	A covered gate into a churchyard
Mullion	A vertical post, normally stone or timber, dividing up the area of a window into smaller panes
Pediment	An ornamental gable, often triangular or arched, used above windows and doors
Potash kiln	A kiln of drystone walls used for producing potash, typically found in and around the Lake District, where the potash was used in production of woollen fabric
Quoins	Cornerstones, often forming an alternating stack of blocks at the corner of a building
Skep	A straw bee hive that predated wooden hives
Snecked	(Masonry or work) A strong, attractive masonry bond made using three different types of roughly squared stones
Snicket	A northern English term for a passage or alleyway that runs alongside or behind houses
Stucco	Fine, smooth plaster for wall facing and forming decorative features
Transept	The sections of a church formed by the two arms of the cross in a cross-shaped (or <i>cruciform</i>) plan, typically a north and a south transept

Transom	A horizontal beam, normally stone or timber, dividing up the area of a window into smaller panes, usually positioned nearer the top than the bottom so the panes above it are lower and those below taller
Tripartite	Consisting of three parts. A tripartite sash window consists of a larger central sash with a narrower one to either side, separated by mullions
Vestibule	An antechamber or lobby

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Copeland Borough Council (the Council) currently administers eight conservation areas (Whitehaven, Corkickle, Hensingham, Egremont, Cleator Moor, Beckermets, St Bees, and Millom). A further conservation area, Ravenglass, is located within Copeland but administered by the Lake District National Park Authority.

These range in size and character, with Whitehaven, the country's first post-medieval planned town and one of its most complete, being the largest in area (approximately 80 hectares) and the first designated (1969). Hensingham is the smallest at approximately two hectares.

St Bees was designated in 1976. More recently a brief overview was provided in the Borough's Conservation Area Design Guide (2017), but this appraisal has the capacity for a more in-depth assessment.



Figure 1 Location of St Bees within Copeland

1.2. What is a Conservation Area?

Local Planning Authorities have a responsibility under law to:

...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... [Underlines added]

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 69(1)

These areas are designated as conservation areas, and the authority also has a duty to from time to time review the areas designated (Section 69(2)). This means the Council has made a commitment to take account of the effect on character and appearance of any development proposed within the area, and this applies to its entirety, not merely its buildings.

The special interest of a conservation area is engendered by all its positive qualities, and a job of the planning process is to ensure that change in a conservation area avoids harm to its positive aspects while allowing its negative aspects to be addressed. In order to do this, its character in positive, neutral and negative terms must be understood, stated and agreed upon. This is the job of the character appraisal (a requirement of Section 71(1) of the Act).

The appraisal is created through a process of public engagement with local people, whereby attendees at a meeting have the opportunity to present their views (1990 Act Sections 71(3-4)).

Once finalised, conservation area designation brings the following work under planning control:

- Demolition of buildings
- Works to or removal of trees
- Development that may be permitted elsewhere, e.g. some house extensions

Generally, home owners benefit from conservation area designation as the controls sustain and/or enhance property values, a finding that has been confirmed by research from the London School of Economics (Ahlfeldt, Holman and Wendland, 2012).

Planning applications made in conservation areas are typically made in full rather than in outline as this allows their implications to be fully understood. This process is not only governed by the 1990 Act mentioned above, but also from guidance such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policy such as found in the Copeland Local Plan.

Additionally, conservation area appraisals are useful in discharging Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act, in which “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance” of the area. The appraisal does an important job in describing that character and appearance comprehensively.

1.3. What is the Purpose of this Document?

A conservation area appraisal is a tool that explores and defines what is special about the area's architecture and history, and therefore worth preserving or enhancing:

A good appraisal will consider what features make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the conservation area, thereby identifying opportunities for beneficial change or the need for planning protection.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 18a-025-20190723

Appraisal takes a broad approach, looking at the development and evolution of an area, the relationships within and outside it, how it is used and has been used in the past, and if it has any associations with notable people, movements, innovations or practices.

A place's street pattern may be of importance, along with the style, appearance, construction and arrangement of its buildings. Key views, connections, boundaries, nodes where people meet, junctions, routes and zones are important: in other words, what makes the place what it is, what makes it valuable, and what makes it distinct from other places.

With this process there is the opportunity to reappraise what is already known about the area, and whether there should be any revisions to its boundary. Places are in constant flux, both in terms of their physical makeup and in what we understand of them.

The appraisal will be used during the development control process to gauge the impact of potential developments. It can also be used by those making planning applications as a resource to assist in self-assessment, and may be of interest to people living in or studying the area, either generally or in the course of commenting on a planning application.

The relationship between a conservation area and its occupants is particularly important because the maintenance of property within the area is one of the key ways by which its character can be preserved and enhanced, and harm avoided.

This appraisal has been prepared following detailed assessment of St Bees using Historic England's 2016 advice document on conservation area character appraisals. It contains appendices mapping building quality and townscape analysis, which should be viewed in conjunction with the descriptive sections. While it attempts to reach a sufficiently high level of detail, it is not possible to describe all that is significant and interesting, so where aspects have been omitted or overlooked this should not be taken to mean that they lack architectural or historical importance.

2. Location, History and Development

2.1. Overview of St Bees Conservation Area

For the purposes of this appraisal, the conservation area has been divided into three character areas, to aid analysis. These areas are not discreet and the margins should not be viewed as hard and fixed. The central region, where Main Street and Finkle Street join, is in reality a transitional space, where zones of differing character converge.

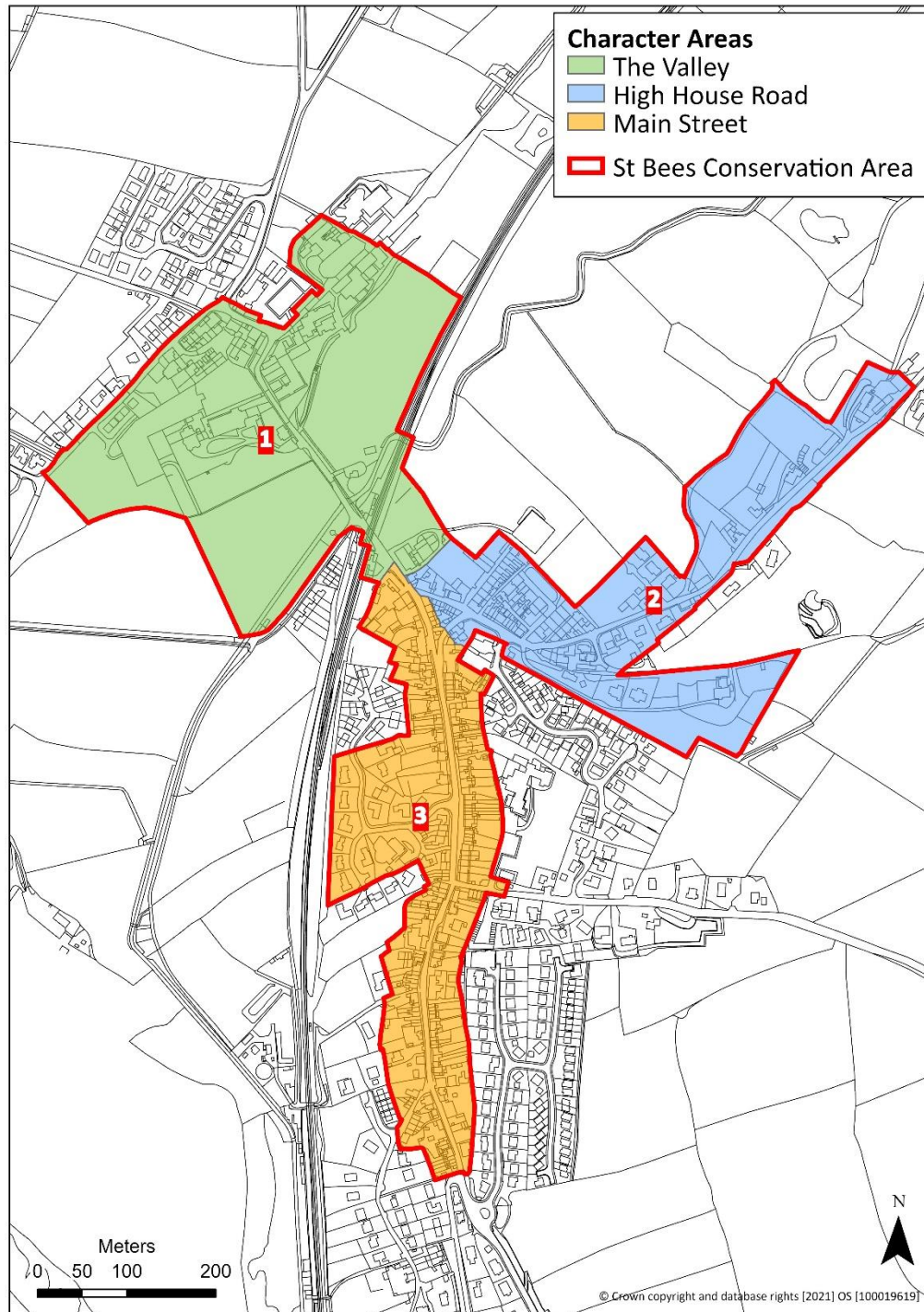


Figure 2 St Bees conservation area divided into three character areas: 1. The Valley; 2. High House Road; 3. Main Street

2.2. Historic Development

2.2.1. Origins

The name St Bees derives from St Bega, a probably apocryphal early middle-ages Irish princess who arrived on the Cumbrian coast likely in the 9th century (sometimes given incorrectly as 7th century), and who later travelled to Northumberland to escape persecution by Norse raiders.

The Benedictine Priory traces its roots back to that time, but the present structure postdates the Norman arrival in Cumberland in 1092 by approximately thirty years. It is the origin point of the village itself, and was for a number of centuries essentially the entire settlement, with further development not taking place until the Middle Ages.

The priory is a large, cruciform building whose style mingles elements of Norman with those of the Early English Gothic that was in development from the 12th century.

2.2.2. Development History

Little is evident about the majority of the priory's earlier medieval history, although it is likely it suffered for Scottish incursions during the Wars of Independence during the late 13th and early 14th century, as did much of the local area.

The early development of St Bees is linked closely with the work of Edmund Grindal (c.1519-1583), who became Archbishop of Canterbury in the reign of Elizabeth I, and sponsored the creation of the original school building and the current stone bridge over Pow Beck.

The priory was unroofed during the Dissolution of 1539 and following this, in a ruined state, it was granted by Edward VI to knight Sir Thomas Chaloner in 1554.

In 1583, the school was founded by Edmund Grindal who was by that time at the end of his life. Land was purchased from Thomas Chaloner the Younger in 1586 and the first of the school buildings constructed opposite the priory's east end. A bridge had been added across Pow Beck in 1585, and development was also beginning to increase on the other side of the beck around what is now the lower end of Main Street and Cross Hill.

From a ruinous state, the priory was re-roofed in 1611 for use as a parish church, making use of some of the remains of its domestic buildings for stone, and further restored in 1622.

From Chaloner it passed to the Wybergh family, who subsequently mortgaged it to the Lowthers to raise money following the civil war, after which it passed to the Lowthers in 1663 following foreclosure on the mortgage.

In 1816, the Theological College was founded by Bishop Law of Chester, and housed in the priory chancel, which was reroofed with a shallower pitch by the Lowthers at that time. This institution provided training for people intending to enter holy orders, although it did not itself offer accommodation, so students took residence nearby in the parish.

The 1840s and 50s were a period of great change in St Bees. The school's "1842 Plan", was realised using mineral rights to locally-exported coal restored from the Lowther family, and

the arrival of the railway in 1849 also allowed both far easier travel and export of local red sandstone.

Extensive repairs to the priory's transepts and tower were carried out in the 1850s, including the addition of a new peal of eight bells, and a new font.

As the economy of St Bees evolved throughout the 19th century from primarily agricultural to more diversified, so houses were built to accommodate the changing population. Many of the attractive cottages and villas in the village are Victorian, and the school too continued to add new buildings through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Since the post-war decline of West Cumbria's economy, and subsequent revival in the form of tourism and high-tech industry, St Bees has primarily seen development in the form of housing designed around private car ownership.

2.2.3. Map Progression



Figure 3 OS 25" 1863.

Figure 3 shows St Bees during a period of expansion for both the school and the village itself. Generally speaking, the village originated at the top-left corner, with the priory and the school, however, even by the 16th century there were various other properties dotted about, such as Cross Hill House/Manor Stead, the now divided birthplace of Edmund Grindal. Gradually, the separated farmsteads have been infilled with later houses, and Main Street has progressed southward.

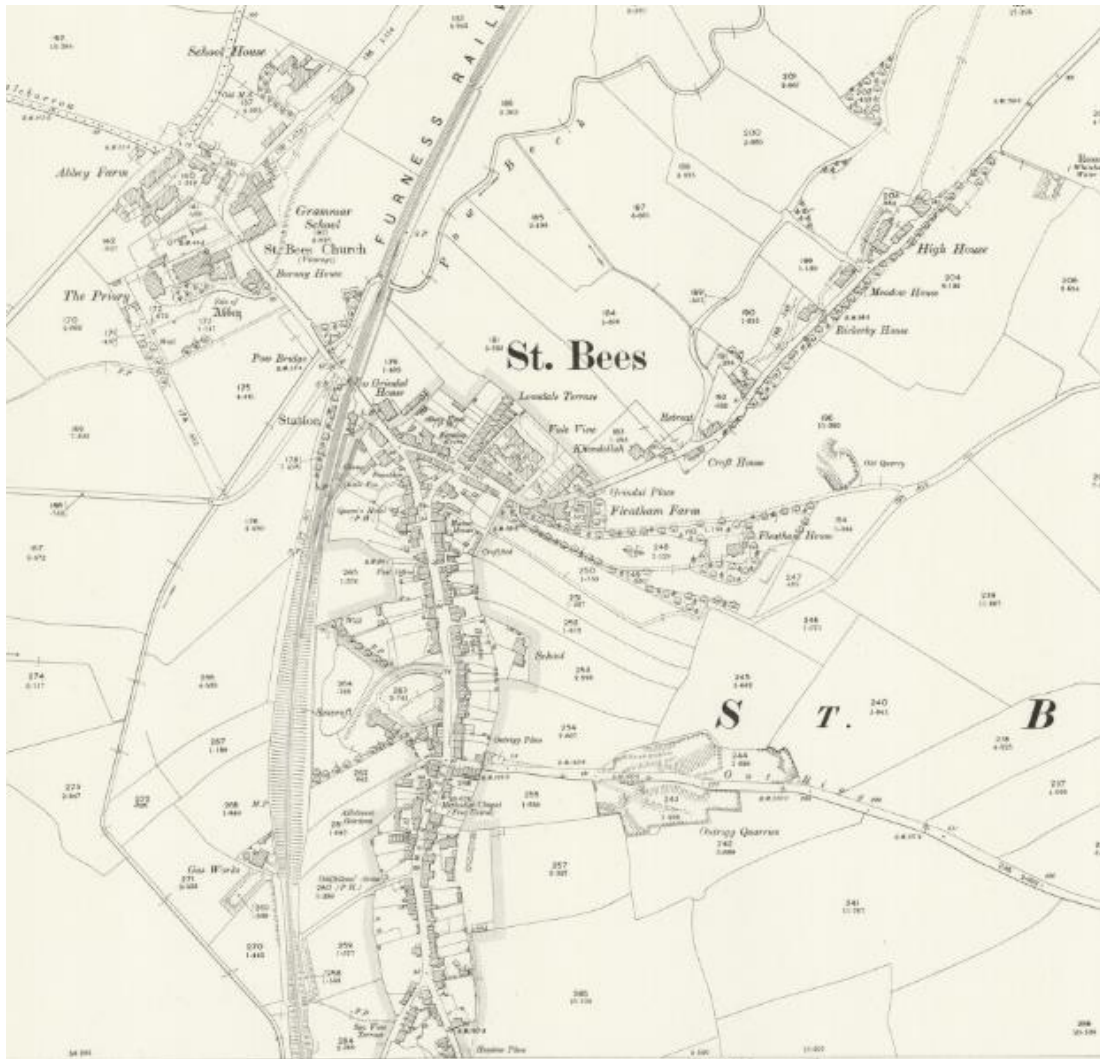


Figure 4 OS 25" 1898.

By the late 19th century, stone quarrying had become more established thanks to the railway, and many local houses had been constructed using it, along with civic buildings such as the Methodist Chapel at the top of Main Street and the club at the bottom of Finkle Street.

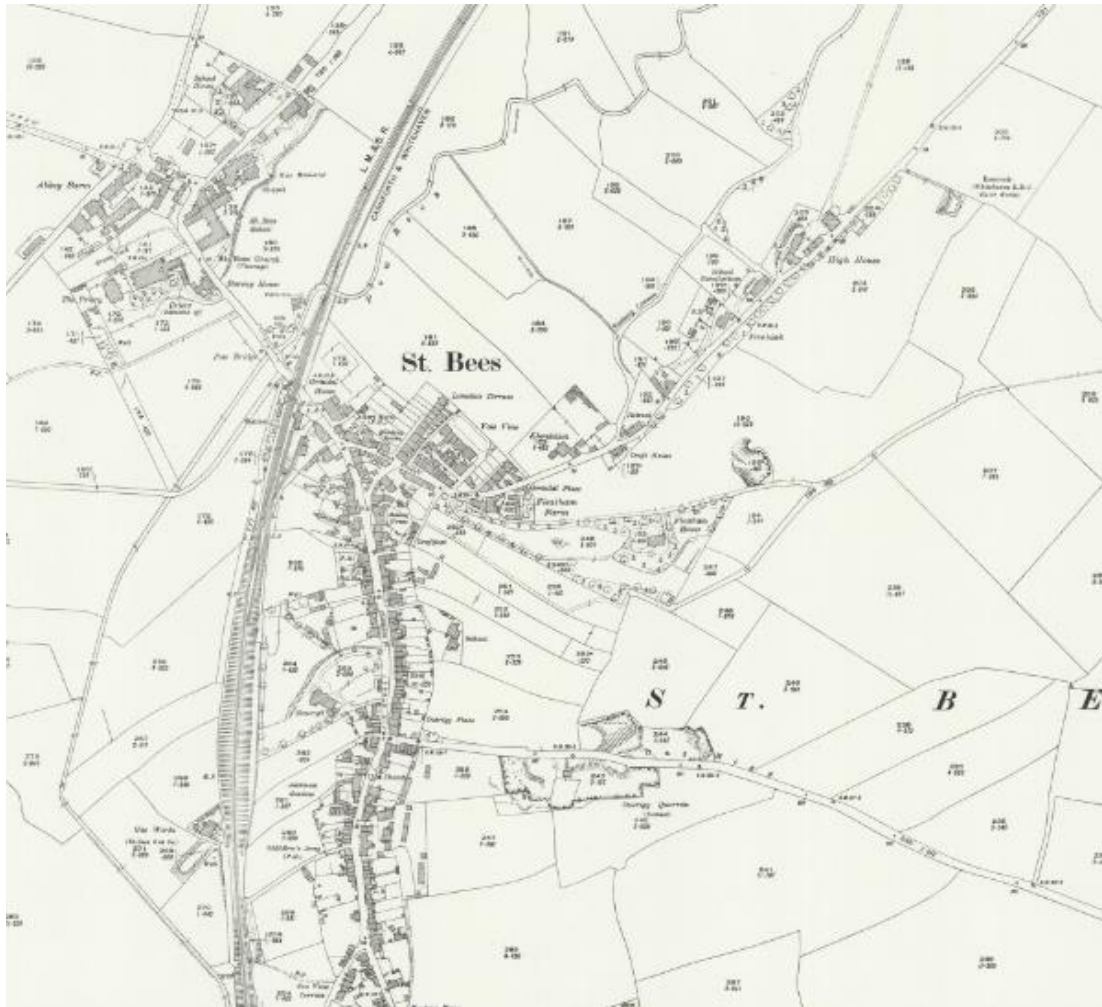


Figure 5 OS 25" 1923.

During the interwar period, St Bees conservation area was more or less as it currently appears, although the housing developments that flank it on either side of Main Street were as yet absent.

3. Built Environment

3.1. Architectural Quality and Built Form

3.1.1. Character Area 1 – The Valley

The first of the three character areas is a broad, almost rectangular area mostly filled with grassland and located predominantly on the north-western side of Pow Beck, and stretching up the rise to the north-west. It includes the area at the valley bottom around the station, and is defined by a sense of space, with buildings on both sides of the valley, including the highly significant priory and school buildings, which form a group as impressive as any in Cumbria.



Figure 6 The Pow Beck valley, looking north-east. The tower of the priory church is visible to the left.

The setting of a designated heritage asset (the priory, for example) is a constituent of its significance, both in contributing to it and in allowing it to be appreciated. This not only applies to listed buildings, but also to conservation areas.

The Pow Beck valley character area serves as a good example of the ways in which setting can be harmed. Although its character is mostly intact, development has taken place outside its boundary that has reduced the ability for the priory's significance to be appreciated, and in some sense has harmed that significance too in cutting it off from the fields that were historically a part of its working landscape.



Figure 7 The setting of the priory church has been harmed by post-war housing that not only lacks architectural merit but is positioned on a hill so as to be visible from the entire surrounding area.

Though the railway line is at the heart of the settlement, and it is now difficult to imagine St Bees without it and its station, it is of course a relatively recent addition, in the grand scheme of St Bees' chronology.

The station itself is not listed, although its signal box is, and though the railway and first station arrived in St Bees in the summer of 1849 it wasn't until 1860 that the current building was constructed in red sandstone. The listed signal box, possibly by well-known Lancaster firm Paley and Austin, who handled many local projects in the mid- and late-19th centuries, dates from 1891, and was needed to cope with the increasing volumes of rail traffic.

Both these buildings are in red sandstone, characteristic of many civic and industrial examples of the period, with steep roofs clad in local slate. They are quite prominent, given their proximity to both the road and the railway line, although they are somewhat obscured by the footbridge, which is sadly of no architectural merit.



Figure 8 The 1860 station (L) and 1891 signal box (R), viewed from the level crossing on Main Street

Grindal House, located nearby, was originally constructed shortly after the arrival of the railway as the Station Hotel. It was bought by the school following the reversion of the Whitehaven mineral rights in 1842, which brought greatly increased spending power to the school and preceded the expansion of its facilities. Grindal House and the areas of planting on the opposite side of the road make a very pleasing gateway that divides the upper part of St Bees (Main Street, Finkle Street and High House Road) from the valley.



Figure 9 Grindal House, a grand and somewhat elaborate Victorian building that is listed grade II, as are the boundary walls in front of it. Together, these create a very positive impression. Though various poor quality extensions to the rear have had a detrimental effect, these are fortunately fairly hidden from Main Street.

Near the junction of Station Road and Main Street are two heritage assets of particular note. The first is the grade II listed WWI memorial, one of two in St Bees, the other being near the lych gate within the priory grounds (see below). This memorial was commissioned slightly after the other in response to the belief that it was not sufficiently large or public. It bears a likeness of St George and the dragon and is to the design of J. D. Kenworthy, a local artist.

Nearby is the bridge, which is listed grade II* and dates back to 1585. It was built at the behest of Edmund Grindal, and later widened from twelve to twenty-four feet.



Figure 10 The grade II listed bridge over Pow Beck, with the join between the 16th century original arch (the nearer section) and the later part (further away) indicated. On top of the bridge, the difference can also be appreciated in the different levels of weathering of the east and west parapets.*

The Grindal coat of arms on the bridge is a 1912 replica, the original having been removed (causing some controversy) to the interior of the school to protect it from damage.

As with much of St Bees, substantial fabric in the valley character area dates to the 19th century. Near the start of this century, the Theological College was founded, in 1816-17, and was the first Church of England training centre for clergy outside Oxford or Cambridge. This was located within the chancel of the priory, which was reroofed having stood unroofed since the dissolution. For accommodation, students took rooms throughout the parish.

Much of St Bees School also dates from the following decades, and contributes greatly to the character of the conservation area in a number of ways. Looking north from the bridge over Pow Beck, a vista of the various red sandstone buildings is presented across the rich, flat base of the valley.



Figure 11 Looking north from Pow Beck bridge toward the school. The view of red stone buildings with manicured grass in front and hilled farmland behind is important and valuable.

At this range, the individual buildings are not easily distinguishable, but collectively convey an impression of red sandstone and slate gables that is evocative of the romanticised idea of ancient learning, and calls to mind the “dreaming spires” of Oxford, a Victorian romantic idea that was coined in the 1860s.

Despite the air of great antiquity – and despite the genuine ancientness of the school’s origins and early fabric – all the buildings in Figure 11 are mid-19th to mid-20th century. This is not to undermine their quality, but is a fact worth acknowledging, especially in the context of appreciating the value of heritage from this period.



Figure 12 The priory tower and buildings of the school are visible in the same composition. They are closely connected, and contribute to making St Bees a significant place, not merely an attractive one.

At one approaches, certain features make themselves known. The entrances to the school and the priory are close together. The grand iron gates south of the school offer a view along a drive around the sound side of the buildings, where it disappears towards the parts arranged further east.



Figure 13 The gates and wall south of St Bees School

Opposite these gates is Barony House, a 19th century two-storey building in five bays with hood moulds over the windows and a central door up split, red sandstone staircases, beneath a trellised porch. This serves as the music department of the school.

St Bees School underwent its greatest period of change during the mid- and late-19th century, beginning in 1846 with the creation of the quad by enclosing a square to the south side of the original 16th century building.



Figure 14 School quadrangle. The original building is to the left, although it was originally lower.

One of the key moments in the conservation area is experienced when passing the front of the school quadrangle, particularly on foot where there is more opportunity to stop and look.

The original school building is located on the north side, the left as one looks at it. This is the late 16th century part founded by Edmund Grindal, which likely incorporated material recovered from the former abbot's house, left vacant following the dissolution some forty or fifty years earlier. This building was altered with the addition of an extra storey in the early 19th century (it was originally two storeys), but the major expansion was not to occur until the 1840s, at which point the remainder of the three ranges was constructed. The classical arrangement, castellated clock tower, symmetrical green lawns and ornate ironwork and gate piers to the front come together to create an arresting sight.

Together with the priory, the school quadrangle and its other later buildings give the valley character area a distinctly institutional feel, in both the senses of religion and learning. Though for a long time these amounted to the same thing, they remain physically and structurally integrated well enough that the composition is still readable as a whole; the school on one side of the road and the priory on the other complement one another, and have a wide setting contributing to their significance, and in which their significance can be appreciated.



Figure 15 The grade II listed early 20th century lych gate and walling with railings at the front of the priory.

The lych gate is opposite the the front of the school quadrangle, and contributes to this group at one of the conservation area's key sections. Just to the north of the gate, behind the wall, is the original WWI memorial, also listed grade II.



Figure 16 Historic iron railings have survived near the priory lych gate, although one or two finials have been broken off. This photo also shows the earlier of the two WWI memorials. WWII names were added below on an engraved stone.



Figure 17 The old village pump

Set within an attractive gothic arch on the road side is the location of the former village pump. Although missing its mechanism and in a somewhat degraded state, this remains an interesting feature that lends weight to the idea of this location being a fully-fledged place of its own, in which quad and precinct are united, as opposed to separate places on either side of a road.



Figure 18 New College Hall and the priory. Note the altered chancel roof pitch.

Viewed from the road, one sees the east end of the priory, which housed the Theological College's Old College Hall, and the rear elevation of its New College Hall, an 1863 building by notable gothic revival architect William Butterfield. This provided a pair of lecture halls to allow expansion of the Theological College, an institution that was in existence for less than

eighty years and is sometimes confused with the school itself. After the college's closure in 1895, the lower hall was for a while used as a public library.



Figure 19 The Old College Hall, viewed from the south. The fluted masonry in the foreground is likely part of the current building's original 12th century phase.

Old College Hall was the original part of the Theological College, housed within the re-roofed priory chancel. Ruined remains of the medieval chancel south aisle are visible in front of it, and it was beneath this ruined aisle floor that the St Bees Man burial was discovered in 1981.



Figure 20 The priory viewed from the south-west, showing the Norman west doorway

To the north of the priory is a grade II listed mid-17th century sundial, shortly post-dating a period in the 1610s-20s in which the priory was restored following its un-roofing in the dissolution in 1539.

Also to the north of the priory is a grade I listed cross dating from the 10th or 11th century.

South of the priory is the Sleeping Child Memorial Garden, a project initiated by the renowned 20th century sculptor Josefina de Vasconcellos, who arranged for three of her works to be positioned among trees and planting. The purpose of the garden is to offer solace to those who have lost young infants. In addition to the three Vasconcellos sculptures in the garden, a further two are located within the priory, and another, named "The Hand", serves as a World War II memorial. This is situated within the grounds of the school.



Figure 21 The vicarage at the west end of the priory. This handsome although well-hidden building dates from 1816, contemporary with the creation of the Theological Collage and also the time at which the remaining elements of the monastic cloister on the south side of the nave were demolished after standing ruined for almost three centuries.



Figure 22 To the north of the priory is Abbey Farm. In the left of the photo is a sandstone barn, undeveloped and all the more important to local character for it.

Abbey Farm is a collection of buildings that have been converted into separate properties. This attractive house is called Abbey House, and it is joined to Numbers 1, 2 and 3 Abbey Farm. The front garden and boundary walls make a very positive impression when entering St Bees from this side. The fenestration is attractive and chimneys have been retained.



Figure 23 Abbey Farm house itself, the yellow building, dates back originally to 1679, although has received further additions. It is grade II listed, and makes a positive impression at the corner as one enters the north side of St Bees.



Figure 24 10, 11 and 12 Abbey Farm

These are three houses created in 2016 with the successful conversion of grade II listed 18th century barns attached to Abbey Farm. The Abbey Road elevation (shown here) features a sloping cart entrance with paving up to what is now a domestic door, and a covered opening into which two house entrances have been neatly integrated.



Figure 25 8 and 9 Abbey Farm

Though not listed, 8 and 9 Abbey Farm make a very attractive pair, set at an angle to the road in what used to be the entrance to the farmyard. As with 10, 11 and 12, articulation in the façade in the form of arches and set-backs, creates interest, shadow and richness that perfectly complements the red sandstone, slate and greenery.

Also associated with Abbey Farm is a very fine row of eight bee boles, alcoves designed for holding *skeps*, or straw bee hives that predated wooden hives. The International Bee Research Association's gazetteer lists this as being "behind St Bees School's sports hall". Although the online version of the gazetteer describes them as being 19th century, an earlier document from the Eva Crane Trust mentioning the boles speculates that they were used by the monks of the priory.



Figure 26 The conservation area boundary runs along the north edge of Abbey Road.

The properties on the left of this picture are outside the conservation area, but characterise its setting, and the road and buildings to the right are within it. The majority of the buildings in this part of the area's setting have had a harmful effect on it and are also highly conspicuous, being elevated. The planting and stone boundary treatments have however helped soften their impact.

In the Abbey Vale development to the north of Abbey Road, a 15th century potash kiln was discovered in 1986, suggesting that this area was historically part of the working landscape of the priory itself. There is potential for the entire area to hold archaeological remains relating to its medieval period of operations, as well as evidence in the form of field boundaries, movement routes etc.



Figure 27 The recent Holly Mews development

The Holly Mews houses are quite successful, and make use of a façade articulation with projecting roof, and red sandstone cladding that looks at home alongside the converted buildings of Abbey Farm. However, sites in this area are visible across wide surroundings and great care should be taken in urbanising the remaining green spaces of the valley as this is key backdrop to several highly significant heritage assets, the conservation area, and the village itself, and is a finite resource.



Figure 28 This image shows the relative impacts of two developments on the setting of the priory.

Pictured above, the houses of Abbey Vale on the higher ground outside the conservation area (R) are conspicuous, whereas the newer red stone and brick ones on Holly Mews (L),

with their darker walls, gables, lower position and sheltering among trees, are less visible, although their visibility is seasonal. What is visible of them is more elegant, but set against the backdrop of other houses, rather than the fields and sky.

Now that Abbey Vale exists, relatively little can be done to redesign it, however it is interesting to speculate on what effect might be achieved if all its residents coordinated to paint their houses green. This idea would probably appeal to Humphry Repton, the famed Georgian-period landscape designer who advocated the popular “invisible green” shade to make railings and other structures blend into their backgrounds.



Figure 29 Abbots Court, outside the conservation area but within its setting

Also of note, situated approximately 100m west of the edge of the conservation area, is Abbots Court. This is a mid- to late-19th century property, built originally as two separate blocks, the lower western part likely having been stabling, and then later combined together. Although not within the conservation area, it is one of the grandest houses in the locale (though no longer residential), and both its neo-Gothic appearance and its curving drives and lawns make a positive impact on the setting of the conservation area.

3.1.2. Character Area 2 – High House Road

The second of St Bees' three character areas runs from the bottom of Finkle Street, where it intersects with Main Street, up, onto and along High House Road. Like Main Street (Area 3) it is fundamentally a linear area, but also includes Manor Stead and the Fleatham House grounds to the south of the road, and Lonsdale Terrace, Vale View and Grindal Place to the north.

It ascends from the base of the valley to the top of High House Road, terminating just north of High House itself, an appropriately named property as it is the highest part of the conservation area. The road, though lined with mixed trees and houses on its west side, enjoys views over Pow Beck valley towards the priory and school on the other side.



Figure 30 This attractive barn forms the northern reach of the conservation area on High House Road. It is grade II listed. Above the dove holes is a round stone reading "William & Hannah Fox 1810".



Figure 31 A cluster of historic buildings at the north-eastern corner of the conservation area on High House Road

Although largely secluded from view from the public highway, this cluster of buildings is both highly historic and highly varied. It consists of the following:

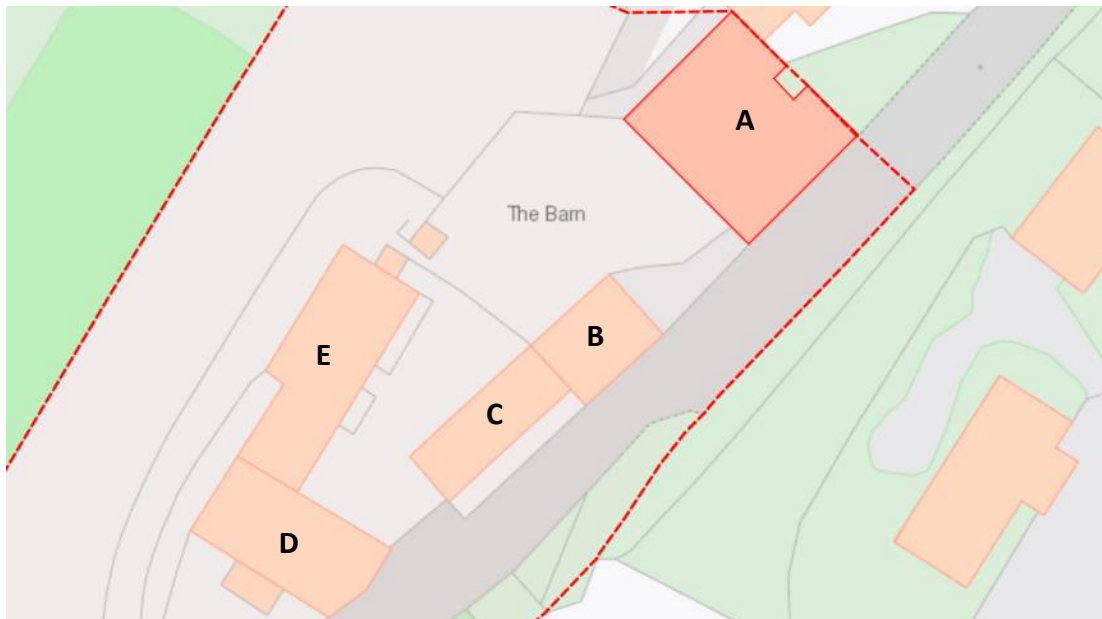


Figure 32 A. Grade II listed barn (early 19th century); B. “The Barn” (possibly early 19th century); C. High House cottage (probably 17th century); D. Possible cruck barn; E. High House

High House is significant in that it has been in the ownership of one family for something approaching five hundred years, and possibly longer. The current building is obviously not medieval, and appears to be a 19th century rebuild of an earlier house.



Figure 33 Grand red late 19th century sandstone gate piers and walls at the entrance to High House. Parts of iron gate hinges remain, but the gates themselves are gone.

According to the OS maps available, these gates and the curving entrance date from between 1863 and 1898. Interestingly, the way High House is depicted also completely differs between these two OS editions, suggesting that the property was almost entirely rebuilt and greatly expanded in size at the same time as the grand entrance was added.



Figure 34 Meadow House, converted to flats, with unsympathetic dormer and plastic windows. There is also a K6 telephone box (one of at least three in St Bees), which appears to have been moved here as an ornament.

Meadow House appears to date originally from the eighteenth century. The central part of the building is the oldest, but it was extended at both ends quite substantially in the late 19th century. In the early 20th century it was in use as the school's sanatorium.

During the mid-19th century, this house was a residence of a lady who used it for running a school for girls. In his guide to St Bees (1869), Welsh antiquary and priest John Williams writes, "...the prettiest view in St Bees is to be had from Meadow House".



Figure 35 Historic iron railings and sandstone wall surviving outside Meadow House, in combination with unattractive concrete additions, either associated with the building's use as a school sanitorium or its later conversion into flats.



Figure 36 Fern Bank

Fern Bank is a dramatic, tall brick house, quite different from the more vernacular 17th century buildings nearby. It also features extensive mature gardens, and is both designed and situated as to make an impression on people travelling up and down High House Road.

It dates from the latter 19th century and was originally named Rickerby House. Various garden features, such as a fountain and glass houses, were added in the early 20th century, presumably as the owners were interested in developing the grounds.



Figure 37 The Knoll on High House Road

The Knoll, a 1950s house of no particular architectural merit, has been gutted within the last ten years and its site allowed to grow untamed. This has been a mixed blessing, as the foliage does hide the building. In its current state it makes a negative impression on the conservation area, although it is fairly well hidden. Nonetheless, there exists an opportunity here for the plot to be appropriately redeveloped.



Figure 38 Retreat Farmhouse

Though it is clearly altered, Retreat Farmhouse bears a date stone of 1671, making it one of the oldest properties in this part of St Bees and probably about contemporary with High House Cottage a short distance up the road. Some of the fenestration and external doors prevent the building achieving its full potential though. Although not easily visible, its gardens are very attractive and well maintained.

A separate property, The Retreat, a little further down the hill dates probably from the 18th century, and contributes positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It contains some elegant Venetian windows, composed of a central taller round-headed light flanked by two lower rectangular ones separated by mullions. A simple cornice accentuates the distinctive shape of the top. The larger one facing the street is very impressive with its gothic “Y” tracery in the round-headed portion. Smaller Venetian windows are found in the north and south gable ends. The remainder of the fenestration, however, is not suited to the house or location.



Figure 39 The Retreat

The Retreat also contributes to local character by being located right on the edge of the street, a distinctively historic arrangement that pre-dates motor traffic and reminds the visitor of St Bees' antiquity.

This effect is compounded by the single-storey extensions that both the Retreat and neighbouring grade II listed Croft House have been fitted with at some point during the 20th century. These extend toward one another on opposite sides of the road, although the one appended to Croft House is slightly less visible on account of it being more tucked beneath the embankment and trees. Both extensions end in a garage door, adapting these attractive buildings with mixed results to the needs of private car ownership.



Figure 40 Croft House, a handsome grade II listed 18th century house makes a positive impression on this part of the conservation area

The bottleneck between Croft House and The Retreat makes a juncture between two sections of High House Road that have distinct characters. The lower section is more densely built up, although many of the properties make no particularly valuable contribution. To the north-east of the bottleneck, the historic properties are arrayed on the northern side of the road in a looser arrangement, and the opposite side of the road is characterised by a grassy embankment under mature trees, the top of which marks the boundary of the area.

This lower section of High House road, between Croft House and Manor Stead/Cross Hill House, features more bungalows and has a more suburban character than the upper section but a less historic character than the lowest section. However, there are several buildings of note.



Figure 41 Khandellah (L) and Apple Cottage (R)

Khandellah is labelled erroneously on the 1898 and 1923 OS Maps as “Khendellah”, although appears to have been named “The Lodge” prior to that. Apple Cottage was formerly the property’s cart lodge, although has since been split off. Khandellah in particular is a fine, attractive house with deep, almost Italianate eaves and two-storey canted bay windows.

Throughout the length of High House Road, one is aware of two gradients: that of the road itself, whereby “down” is towards St Bees and “up” is away from it, but also a gradient perpendicular to the road, whereby those houses on the northern and western side are below it and those on the southern and eastern side (some outside the conservation area) are above it, and tending to be screened more by planting as well as the embankment itself, both of which become more pronounced as one moves away from the village.

The side street at Khandellah, unhelpfully also named High House Road, is a more recent addition. The house nearest the main road was the first constructed of the three, with the others occupying the site of former extensive glass houses within the garden of Khandellah.

On the south side of the main road are a number of unremarkable bungalows, interspersed with more interesting buildings. The Old Telephone Exchange is a tiny building dating from the early 20th century that has been converted into a house.



Figure 42 The Old Telephone Exchange

Fleatham House was constructed in the late 19th century on an elevated greenfield site among trees. Confusingly, this was close to the homophonically named but differently spelled Fleetholme Farm, which, still more confusingly, was renamed Fleatham Farm at roughly the same period as Fleatham House was built. This appears to have been more than just a name change, as a range of agricultural buildings appears to the east of the house at this time too.

The extensive gardens of Fleatham House have more recently been split up and sold off for the development of a number of private houses. Fleatham Farm's late 19th century barns have also been subdivided and are now 1-5 The Croft, and the farmhouse is Fleatham Farm and Fleatham Cottage, both fronting High House Road.



Figure 43 Stopped chamfer at the corner of Fleatham Farmhouse. This was probably either to allow space to pass behind the dwarf wall, or it predates the wall and was originally to protect the corner from passing carts etc.

Opposite Fleatham Farm is a fascinating row of houses called Grindal Place, likely early 19th century, which are partly interesting because they have no vehicle access and partly because the row is entered via a small path onto High House Road that almost completely hides them. Like much of St Bees' fabric, its charm is in that it clearly predates both mass motor transport and mass-produced building materials, which have induced often dislocating, depersonalising effects on the formation of place.



Figure 44 Entrance to Grindal Place on High House Road, a whole row accessible only to pedestrians

A cluster of attractive grade II listed 19th century houses flanks the entrance to Vale View, where there is an impressive pair of mushroom shaped gate piers. Vale View itself also contains a terrace of grade II listed 19th century houses, tucked away around the corner where they are not visible from the highway.

This is a key part of St Bees' appeal, the sense of treasures being tucked away, of a village that is at its best when free of traffic and consisting of handsome historic houses set in a network of red sandstone walling, gardens and snickets, usually against a backdrop of mature deciduous trees.



Figure 45 Mayfield, a very elegant grade II listed house dating from the 19th century. The irregular arrangement of plots, interspersed with mature planting and beautiful boundary treatments, are what gives this character area its nature.



Figure 46 The distinctive piers dividing the two sections of Vale View. Note also the cobbled surface, which appears to have been damaged by the passage of heavy vehicles.

The character of this area has been harmed by the insertion of both a parking space in what was a garden, necessitating the removal of a section of the wall and increasing the vehicle traffic that is likely contributing to damage of the cobbled lane, and by an unattractive although fortunately neat lean-to structure on the opposite side. These have not had a flattering effect on the conservation area or the setting of the piers and listed houses.



Figure 47 The impressive listed houses on Vale View, which occupy one of the quietest, most attractive corners of the conservation area, with a view over the grassy valley floor.



Figure 48 Numbers 8-16 Finkle Street, a mix of two-storey cottages that have mostly retained their chimneys. Number 16, at the far end, is a grade II listed house dating from the early 19th century. This image demonstrates some of the traffic problem that St Bees faces.



*Figure 49 Manor Stead and Cross Hill House, five hundred years old and listed grade II**

Manor Stead and Cross Hill House were originally a single late medieval hall house. Jointly they constitute St Bees' most historic residence. Externally, the building has been altered fairly little, although inside its full-height hall has been partitioned to create an upper floor. Its setting has been harmed very little too, and it makes a powerful impression over this little green. Behind, walled gardens divide the building from those on Main Street. A plaque on the south gable attests that this was the birthplace of Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of

Canterbury in the reign of Elizabeth I, and patron of St Bees School and the bridge over Pow Beck.



Figure 50 The side elevation of 1 Lonsdale Terrace and frontage 7 Finkle Street opposite the end of Cross Hill are unusual in being battlemented. They would be very striking had they not suffered a raft of unfortunate alterations. There is great potential here for improvement.



Figure 51 Lonsdale Terrace, a grade II listed row of houses dating from the mid-19th century.

Halfway along Finkle Street, Lonsdale Terrace forms one of St Bees' most evocative compositions: a row of mid-19th century grade II listed houses in pastel colours that are

visible from large areas of the surroundings including the road from Whitehaven that leads into St Bees, where they form a prominent and charming part of the backdrop.

Though formerly owned by the school and combined together for use as a boarding house, they have since received permission to be re-divided. This has also had the unfortunate effect of extending the area in front given to parking. Each of these houses originally had garden in front, but these gardens have been steadily reduced in number and size. As a compensation, this does at least reduce the need for on-street parking these houses would otherwise generate.

The houses are not in the best of states, and there is great potential here for sensitive refurbishment to improve their fortunes.

At the bottom of the hill is a building that looks as though it might be at home in Cleator Moor – the village hall or “Hodgett’s Club” built in around 1882 as a liberal club by Alfred Hodgett, resident of Abbots Court, another very handsome building that lies shortly outside the conservation area on the other side of the valley. The village hall is of two tall main storeys that project well above the buildings around it, although it is not an intrusive component of the urban fabric, being well hidden near the bottom of the valley and steeply pitched.

It is of coursed red sandstone rubble, with ashlar frontage containing mullioned and transomed cross windows. Its connection to the buildings to the east is improved by a lower vestibule entry volume that articulates the difference between the two.



Figure 52 Looking up the charmingly tight and blind junction at the bottom of Finkle Street and Main Street. It is hugely beneficial to the character of the village that areas like this were never widened and straightened for road traffic during the twentieth century.

3.1.3. Character Area 3 – Main Street

Main Street is a ribbon that runs from the centre of the conservation area, where the three character areas converge, in a southerly direction, until it reaches the edge of the conservation area after approximately 0.4 miles. It ascends the side of the valley as it progresses, and approaches the sea, offering glimpses of the water from the top. Being west-facing, during afternoon and evening the sun is on the sea and shines brightly, giving these glimpses an even more arresting quality.

The buildings lining Main Street are mostly terraced and of two-stories, some with small front gardens, but most directly fronting the pavement.

The numbering on the street is unusual. When buildings were given numbers, during the 1890s, the decision was made to number them sequentially from the corner of Finkle Street, southwards to the end of the development (where the current conservation area boundary is also located), and then back again on the west side of the street. It is more common to find streets numbered in alternating fashion, with odd numbers on one side and even ones opposite.

It began developing at around the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, which affected St Bees in 1539. Edmund Grindal's early 16th century hall house on Cross Hill is the most historic surviving building in the vicinity of Main Street. The street developed as a string of farms and houses, until it joined up, with much of the current fabric being 19th century. Most of these had gardens or allotments to the rear, which gave in turn to strip fields, although some of these areas have subsequently been filled in by later development.



Figure 53 Stone House Farm is a grade II listed building, prominently visible although set back from the pavement with a front garden that is also bounded by a barn.

Stone House Farm is possibly early 18th century, with later additions and alterations. It features an ornate date stone over the entrance reading "Stainton" and "1712". The house

makes a positive contribution, with an attractive frontage that conserves St Bees' historic structure as a series of radiating linear streets divided and surrounded by farm land.



Figure 54 The gable end of the barn bears this date stone.

Although worn, the barn stone is still readable. Generally it is held that the top letter in such arrangements is for a surname and the two below for a husband and wife, so this datestone effectively reads "I and T A, 1660". The datestone was not necessarily originally made for this building; it may have been moved, but even if it was originally made for here, the date may equally not refer to the date of construction, but may be a date of importance to the people initialled, such as the year of their marriage.

This particular stone is clearly saturated, almost certainly caused by the coating of cement render the gable has received at some point. This will have the effect that any moisture entering the wall, e.g. from the footings or top, will have few options for escaping, other than through the porous stone itself. This is likely to lead to significant damage within the next few years unless it can be removed and replaced with a suitable lime render.

Just up the road from Stone House Farm, at the corner of 132 Main Street, there used to be a substantial stone water fountain, though this sadly disappeared sometime in the 20th century.



Figure 55 Queens Hotel, Main Street.

The Queens Hotel is within one of the most historic parts of St Bees, the north end of Main Street, Cross Hill, and Finkle Street, where the village began developing in the post-medieval period. The Queens Hotel has origins in the 17th century. In the past it's also been known as the Queen's Arms.



Figure 56 Opposite the Queens Hotel, on the raised end of Cross Hill, is this stone, which was used by the smithy that existed next door to the Queens Hotel until the 1950s, for mounting iron hoops to wooden cart wheels.



Figure 57 The Manor House Inn

The Manor House is located where Cross Hill meets Main Street. Note the infilled carriage arch in the centre, which would have given access to stabling and a yard at the rear. This building is an amalgamation of several, dating from the late 18th or early 19th century, with further alterations and additions. It is grade II listed.

At this point near the bottom of Main Street, and further up, there are some very interesting level changes where surfaces join at different heights, with attractive retaining walls, glimpses and vantage points branching off. As with most of St Bees, it is too small to be comfortably navigated by road traffic, which is both a cause and symptom of its traffic congestion, and a source of St Bees' engagingly historic and "human-scale" environment (human-scale in the sense it was designed to be traversed on foot or by/with an animal).



Figure 58 129 Main Street features an extremely lush front garden that gives a very pleasant, cottage-like appearance and softens the largely hard surfacing of this area. There is very little vegetation in general visible from the public areas of Main Street. Although beautiful, creepers can damage render and soft masonry.



Figure 59 125 and 126 Main Street. From historic map evidence, 126 (former Co-Operative Society premises) appears to have been originally constructed as a barn in the 19th century; 125 is somewhat older.

125 and 126 Main Street are attractive buildings although could hardly be more different. 125 is a well proportioned and detailed example of a house dating probably from the early 19th century. 126 is positioned end-on to the road, and features an extraordinarily moulded and decorated gable, crowned with a beehive. It appears originally to have been a barn, and

to have been converted to a Co-Operative branch, their symbol being the beehive, in around 1902.

The garage door, however, does not make the best impression, and is likely to be the part most people notice from the pavement, being at eye-level. Its opening would possibly have been a shop front or other enriched entrance following the 1902 conversion.

This arrangement of a barn perpendicular to the street is reminiscent of the one at Stone House Farm too, and appears to be a local typology. Writing in 1815, author and playwright Richard Ayton writes of St Bees, “[It is] a village in the ordinary style of the county, consisting of a row of rough and uncouth cottages, with a barn interposing between each...”

These two appear to be examples of the type of barn to which he was referring.



Figure 60 Nursery Cottage, a picturesque 17th century house.

As with a number of properties in recent years, what was the front garden at Nursery Cottage has been replaced with gravel and a parked car. The change has been neatly executed, and is clearly fulfilling a need, but there is no denying that parked cars are harmful to the conservation area’s character and appearance.



Figure 61 Sandstone cottages typical of Main Street: simple in appearance, two storey, and fronting the pavement. Though there are plenty of cottages like this on Main Street, the area's variation is one of its strengths. Note the completeness of the chimney stacks, an important detail, even if many are missing their pots.



Figure 62 Historic access gaps, such as this between 18 and 21 Main Street, allow glimpses of more secluded areas behind, providing interest.



Figure 63 East Croft, 27 and 28 Main Street, a lovely symmetrical pair of houses constructed in the latter part of the 19th century. For the most part, the detailing has survived well, with the porch being a particular highlight. It is to the advantage of these properties that both halves still match.



Figure 64 Orchard House (115 Main Street) is a grade II listed late 18th or early 19th century house with a distinctive late Georgian "double plan", consisting of two pitched volumes with a valley between them.



Figure 65 The entrance to Seacroft Drive from Main Street

The Seacroft Drive housing estate dates from the late 20th century. In the first edition OS map, this area is fairly open, with a building well set back from the road, at an angle to it, labelled “Inns of Court”. This term in current usage refers to the four inns of court in central London, to which UK barristers belong; it seems likely that in this sense it also had a legal meaning, possibly a local courthouse.

This building had been replaced by a large house by the end of the 19th century named Seacroft House, which was accessed via a curving drive. Today, a house called Seacroft House sits on the same site, but it is clearly a more recent building, and the gardens have been split up into plots for small individual dwellings. Nonetheless, this estate retains a spacious and pleasant feel, helped by its outlook with green fields and the sea to the west.

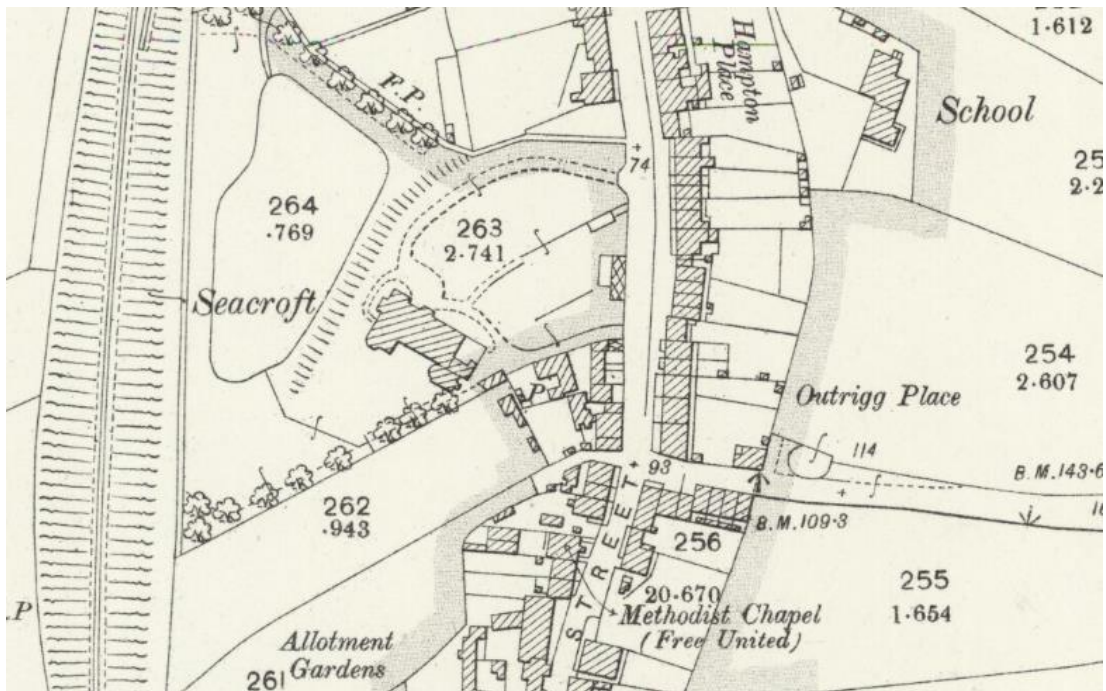


Figure 66 The late 19th century Seacroft House visible within its large plot. Note the railway running north-south to the west of Main Street. This is still the main West Cumbria coastal line, and effectively prevents modern development from spilling further west than it already has.



Figure 67 Numbers 45, 46 and 47 Main Street

Towards the brow of the hill, Main Street again splits and becomes multi-level, as it does nearer the bottom where Cross Hill joins it. Some of the Victorian properties up here are more elaborate than the cottages, such as those shown above. The red sandstone is very attractive, and complemented by dressings around the openings. 45 features a symmetrical frontage with tripartite sashes flanking a central door; 46 and 47 are matching, featuring round-headed doorways with fanlights.



Figure 68 Numbers 48, 49 and 50 Main Street.

At 48-50, fenestration has suffered and the fore-walls have lost their iron railings (as did many, to contribute iron to the war effort). Number 50 appears to have had its render removed and the stone painted, and a soil vent pipe runs up the middle of the façade. Number 49 has been pebbledashed; it additionally used to feature a moulded triangular pediment above the front door, which gave this trio a centre point and emphasised their symmetry. With this gone, and the windows and colours no longer matching, the effect has been lost. However, the fore-walls themselves have been retained, and the rooflights that have been inserted into the front aspects of the roofs are mounted flush, so they don't protrude.

The increased height caused by the step in road height elevates these properties above those on the opposite side. This arrangement appears to have been caused by a mid-19th century road-straightening project, the purpose of which was to provide better access between the sandstone quarries on Outrigg and the station at the bottom of Main Street, from which it was transported. Much of it likely made its way to Barrow-in-Furness along this route. This left the "old" Main Street as the narrower, higher level part, with the new part lower and wider.

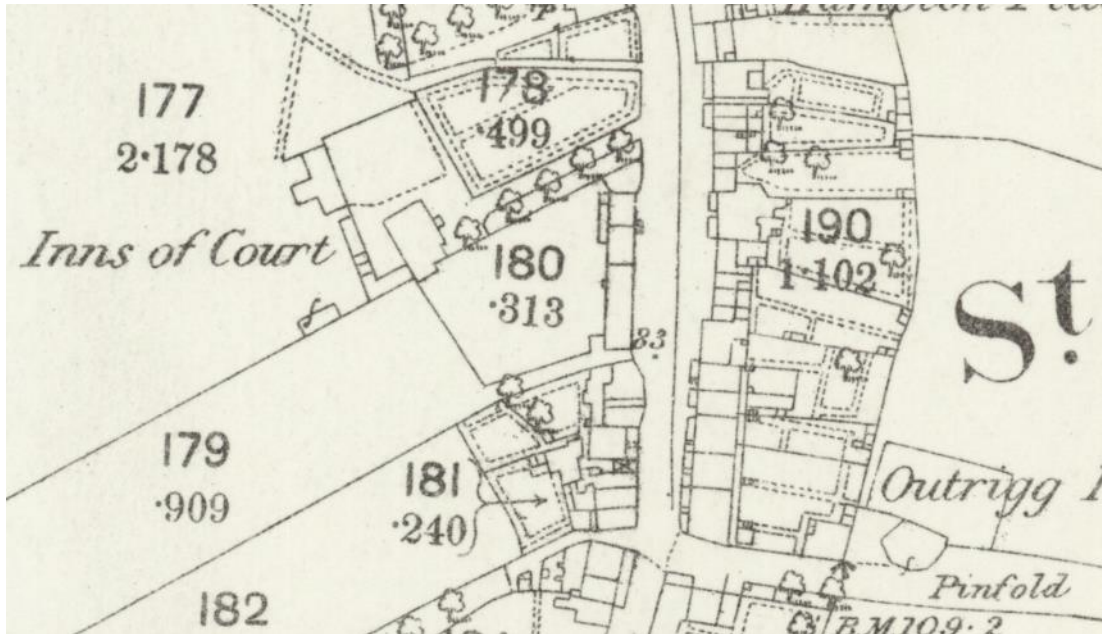


Figure 69 The straightening and grading project that left Main Street split level can be seen in this map, with the upper and lower sections divided by a straight line northward from the corner of Outrigg.

At the junction between Main Street and Outrigg, there was an iron lamp post as recently as 2011, but this has regrettably been removed and replaced with a rather ugly steel example. St Bees was one of the first villages within the region to have gas lighting in the early-19th century, but the recently lost iron lamp post appears to have been an electrical one, likely dating from the early- or mid-20th century.

The conservation area extends a short way up Outrigg, to include a 19th century pinfold (visible in the above map), which has survived in remarkably good condition. A pinfold is a pen where stray animals are impounded until reclaimed for a fine by their owner.



Figure 70 Former Methodist Church (L), 107A-109 Main Street. A simple repainting at 107A has made an enormous improvement to the appearance of this building within the last few years.

The Methodist Church dates from 1865. It is unlisted although contributes strongly to this part of the street. Being set back slightly, it is not widely visible, so one almost stumbles upon it when walking along. It ceased use as a place of worship in 2019, and is more vulnerable as a result. The tall gothic windows with their Y-tracery will not be cheap to replace should they become irreparable, which adds to its vulnerability. There is an engraved plaque above the porch, although it is too worn to be legible. The above photo highlights again the harm caused by insensitive lamp post insertion.

At a narrow point in the street, one encounters a pair of attractive and very different listed buildings: Redbourn House, an 1870s Victorian villa on the east side of the road, and Fairladies Farmhouse on the west side, which is both much lower and sitting lower in relation to the street. The latter likely dates from the 18th century, but may contain earlier fabric. Both are grade II listed, as is the impressive wall with its cast iron in front of Redbourn House.

The International Bee Research Association's gazetteer of bee boles – houses in which straw bee hives or *skeps* were located – describes Redbourn House as having three filled-in bee boles located in a south-facing stone wall to the rear. Although on private land and not visible from the public areas of the conservation area, they are a rare and valuable part of local history and should be protected.



Figure 71 Redbourn House, an impressive and lofty grade II listed Victorian dwelling with baroque elements and separately listed boundary wall with railings



Figure 72 Fairladies Farmhouse and its attached barn, which is also grade II listed



Figure 73 Fairladies Barn,

Fairladies Barn is a converted former agricultural building associated with Fairladies Farm, now in use as a bed and breakfast. The substantial buttress halfway along is presumably a more recent addition added to prevent movement.

The buildings south of Fairladies Barn are a varied and engaging mix of two-storey cottages in red sandstone and painted render. A number of buildings in this area (and elsewhere in St Bees) also feature date stones including names and initials, which are important elements of local character and distinctiveness. These should be protected, both when altering buildings and in preventing them becoming saturated.

Between numbers 83 and 84, the tight terraces become more open, and there are views offered amongst the vegetation: a narrower glimpse uphill toward the higher buildings to the east, and a more expansive vista toward the sea and St Bees Head to the west.

83 Main Street is of note for its Keswick Codlin apple trees, one of the village's historic plantings. The species is an early and productive culinary apple, which was originally discovered in the 1790s growing at Gleaston Castle near Ulverston. The cultivar was propagated by John Sander at Keswick, who began distributing it under the name Keswick Codlin shortly after.

The examples at number 83 form a small cluster overhanging the boundary wall at the rear of the pavement.



Figure 74 The barn at Town Head Farm

Opposite the entrance to Sea Hill Lane, one finds Town Head Farm. The leasehold of the estate was gifted to the Parish Council in the late 19th century, allowing them to generate income, part of a plan by the owner that involved using rent to progressively buy more and more properties until vast tracts of local housing could come under the control of Parish Councils, who would be able to ensure the rights of tenants. In reality, this ambition never amounted to anything, however the “Pagan gift” (after its bestower, Reverend Alfred Pagan) enabled the council to engage in various charitable activities for the benefit of the community.

The barn remains in use for storage and has not been converted, which is to the advantage of the local area, promulgating a half-millennium old character of agricultural buildings and land uses along Main Street, even if this barn has become cut off from its fields.



Figure 75 Grainger House

Grainger House is a grade II listed house from the late Regency or early Victorian period. Note the diagonal staining demarcating the route of an internal chimney that passes across a pair of blind windows. 81 Main Street, adjoining it, is about contemporary with it and bears a date stone reading “John and Jane Noble 1838”.

Opposite these properties is an undeveloped area, which appears from historic OS maps never to have been developed, but instead to have been a small field or garden. It is separated from the road by a tall and attractive “cock-and-hen” wall of snecked red sandstone, whereby the copings are alternately laid down and upright.



Figure 76 The attractive wall (its cock-and-hen coping stones are obscured by ivy) separating the road from an area of vegetation that, like the barn at Town Head Farm, allows the area to retain aspects of its agricultural history. Sites like this are vulnerable to infill buildings, or even pressure from car parking. The gradient of this plot has likely been its saving grace by making such development difficult.



Figure 77 Penrhyn Villa, a semi-detached pair dating, from the plaque, from 1877.

Both halves of Penrhyn Villa (“penrhyn” is a Welsh word meaning “headland”, an appropriate name given their location overlooking the sea) have been repainted in recent years, and benefit from colour schemes that are harmonious with one another. It is also apparent that number 75 has lost a moulding with drip detail to match those above the front doors from its first floor window, and further drip details below the eaves. At the same time, it has gained two rows of quoins, and both properties have gained bands around the upper floor windows.

3.2. Materials

St Bees conservation area is strongly supported by its materials, principally in the eponymous red sandstone that, though relatively soft, lends many of the village's buildings a warmth and solidity that collectively creates a distinctive and very pleasant impression. This is a material that lends itself both to modest terraced dwellings and ornate civic structures, and has been successfully incorporated into modern buildings as well. It can be used effectively alongside a range of other well-judged materials.



Figure 78 Red sandstone on Cross Street (Thimble Cottage in the centre), creating a wonderful richness and softness in combination with vegetation, slate roofs, and timber windows.



Figure 79 Removal of render gives an opportunity to see what's underneath.

Number 89 Main Street in Figure 79 has red sandstone rubble walls. Care should be taken with solid wall construction not to cause damp issues internally with cementitious wall coatings. Lime render and plaster should be used as a first option (advice on lime is freely available from the Council; it's a complex topic).

With construction of this sort, there should also not be any injected damp proof course, and damp treatments such as tanking slurries and waterproof membranes should only be necessary in rare and judicious cases. In the long run, these may exacerbate damp issues and harm building fabric rather than help.

In Figure 79, note the outline of an old doorway between the ground floor door and window. This property and the one to its left appear from map data to have been built as a pair and then divided in the late 19th century. In the middle, to the left of where the render has been removed, there is a stone bearing the inscription, "Thomas and Bridget Noble 1818" (Note the abovementioned date stone from Number 81 – also Nobles, dated twenty years later than this. These two date stones likely refer to two generations of the same family).



Figure 80 Coloured render also has a strong tradition in St Bees, with buildings providing uplifting splashes of pastel or earthy hues that contrast well with the deeper qualities of red sandstone. Painted render also has the ability to show off more ornate detailing, as is the case here with the paler blue house.



Figure 81 Lakeland slate roofs are characteristic of the conservation area, and sit well with red sandstone or coloured stucco. Their replacement with tiles is rarely beneficial to the area's appearance, and normally resisted.



Figure 82 Timber sash windows have generally been one of the heaviest casualties in St Bees, however, where they are retained (even in a somewhat anachronistic brilliant white colour) they complement the area. Much can be done to improve the performance of timber single-glazed windows, and where renewal is necessary a suitably specified double-glazed example is often acceptable, and provides a balance between insulation and appearance.

3.3. Uses

The valley character area is characterised principally by the school and priory, although in addition to these institutional uses there are a number of residences, and also the station. The valley area differs from the other two in that it also contains large areas of grass, belonging to local farms and to the school in the form of playing fields.

High House Road is almost entirely given over to dwellings, but there is a civic building and a pub near the bottom of Finkle Street. Further up, houses are positioned facing the street and feature large gardens behind them, whereas lower down, the houses are more densely packed in terraces and some feature gardens at the fronts.

Main Street, like Finkle Street, is also mostly residential. Though there used to be more shops decades or a century ago, a number still remain, along with pubs and guesthouses. A few buildings near the top of the hill retain some agricultural function, although have been cut off from farmland by more recent housing development.

4. Public Realm

4.1. Views, Vistas, Glimpses



Figure 83 From Vale View, looking down Pow Beck valley toward Whitehaven. St Bees is surrounded by gentle slopes of wonderfully rich greenness, and where these haven't been compromised by modern housing they still provide a tranquil setting to many of the village's locations.



Figure 84 In places, the green surroundings have been lost, though this is fortunately fairly minimal



Figure 85 Abbey Road offers a very pleasing vista across the valley towards High House Road and Main Street on the other side. The prominence of the priory's tower places it within the majority of the views across the valley.



Figure 86 The view back toward the south side of St Bees from Abbey Road or Station Road evidences the amount of housing development that has taken place, to the point that Main Street is quite hard to pick out in the above view.



Figure 87 A key vista one appreciates when entering the village from the Whitehaven direction looks over the roofs of the school towards the other side. The pastel colours of Lonsdale Terrace are visible in the middle of this view, and make a particularly evocative impression.



Figure 88 The view from Pow Bridge is one of the key views in the conservation area, taking in both the priory and school buildings, and the greenery to either side and behind.



Figure 89 Views from High House Road and Finkle Street are often more directional due to the higher density of buildings. Intrigue plays a part here, glimpses of places that are tucked away and invite the passer-by to investigate. In this example, the quality of this snicket is heightened by its cobbled surface.



Figure 90 Further up High House Road, intermittent views between the houses and mature gardens become accessible, looking over the valley.



Figure 91 Surviving carriage arches such as this one on Main Street provide a glimpse into the semi-hidden spaces behind.



Figure 92 Interesting glimpses feature throughout Main Street, and provide moments of relief from the continuous terraced frontages.



Figure 93 Near the top of Main Street, the entrance to Sea Mill Lane offers a glimpse of the sea and golf links, admitting the sound of the waves too in what makes for quite a dramatic moment. From the majority of St Bees village, it is not possible to see the sea, and easy to forget it's so close until glimpses like this unexpectedly insert themselves into the close-knit urban fabric.

4.2. Roads and Paths

The pavements lining Main Street used to be cobbled, though as with many historic areas throughout the country, all has been swept aside in favour of tarmac. While it may be easier to walk on, walking in the road no longer being practical due to traffic, its loss has had a harmful effect on St Bees' character and appearance.

Cobbles do however survive in a number of the snickets that lead down the backs of rows, particularly around High House Road.



Figure 94 A few cobbled snickets survive in the Finkle Street/High House Road area, and these are precious, their enclosedness and texture a key part of their charm.



Figure 95 Tarmac causes more problems the older it gets. Any movement beneath it results in cracking, and repair leads to mismatched patches that move and wear relative to the original. Eventually, an unsightly mass of scarred material results, and furthermore contributes to surface water runoff.



Figure 96 This area of pavement at the end of Cross Hill has an attractive flagged surface and, interestingly, red sandstone curbs that add a strip of colour along the edge. Being quite soft, red sandstone is not commonly seen as a curbing material.

4.3. Boundaries



Figure 97 One of the many red sandstone walls that characterise St Bees' conservation area on High House Road. Dressed rubble with half-round copings. Many of these bound the gardens of large properties or define snickets, as here, leading up the side of Grindal Place.



Figure 98 Iron railings survive in places, often as part of attractive red sandstone perimeter treatments. The mixture of high quality ornamental ironwork, red sandstone and vegetation creates a richness, colour and even smell, particularly after rain, that can be very pleasing.



Figure 99 This property on High House Road features impressive squared rubble walling, with grand gate piers and a very attractive gate forming a feature.



Figure 100 Squared red sandstone rubble wall with half-round copings and vegetation on High House Road. Though the vegetation is a key part of the sensory qualities of this area, it can also damage masonry if left unchecked.



Figure 101 This "cock-and-hen" walling is only a few years old, but it is a well-executed example of a locally distinctive typology. Its use on Abbey Road successfully frames the street and entrance to a house.



Figure 102 This wall on the corner of the B5345, just outside the boundary of the conservation area, is quite noticeably bulging. Many of the walls in this area are retaining walls, and the mix of little slopes and steps cut into the incline is characterful. However, these retaining walls need monitoring to make sure they do not lose integrity.



Figure 103 Hedges feature more prominently in the northern part of St Bees. This snicket is outside the conservation area, but contributes to its setting. Featuring a neatly mown hedge, lawned surface, and high stone wall, this particular one is a fine example.



Figure 104 Characteristic red sandstone walling with triangular copings near the station and Grindal House

5. Natural Environment

5.1. Open Spaces

Pow Beck valley is the main open space in St Bees, and forms a key element of its character and appearance. Within the conservation area, it is composed of fields, the priory grounds, and various recreation and sports grounds. Apart from this there is little open space within St Bees beyond a variety of private gardens. Some notable green areas include the lawns in front of Vale View, the lawn in front of Manor Stead and Cross Hill House, and the grounds of Fleatham House (although these have been greatly reduced in recent years).

5.2. Water

Pow Beck runs along the valley. The pedestrian route alongside the 16th/19th century bridge is actually a small separate bridge that takes people closer to the water, where they are able to enjoy an enclosed, picturesque little space, as well as appreciate the dual arches underneath the bridge that belie its phasing.

There is a view of the sea from one or two spots on Main Street, and this catches the sun in the afternoon and evening, being west of the village. The on-shore wind carries the sound of breakers too up to these locations on milder days, and when the sea is rough, its rumble can carry throughout the entire village.

5.3. Trees

Trees are relatively few in the valley and along Main Street, although there are trees around the priory that distinguish its precinct from other adjoining areas, and trees along High House Road, increasingly as one progresses outward from the centre of the village. Due to the slope that runs perpendicular to High House Road, these appear heightened on the south-east side, but the view is between and over them on the north-west side.

Trees also characterise the grounds of Fleatham House, which are raised and form a backdrop to the lower part of High House Road, though this impression has been slightly eroded by the insertion of a number dwellings.

6. Key Characteristics

- Winding, close, intimate streets, frequently either inconvenient or impossible to get a car along.
- A variety of high quality materials: red sandstone, painted render, Lakeland slate roofs, cobbles. However, windows in particular have suffered, with a very great number of units that are poor even by the standards of uPVC.
- Landscaping is important in St Bees with level changes, retaining walls, and the paths between them natural products of its valley setting, and serving to establish interest in various locations.
- Red sandstone houses and civic buildings, and rows of pastel-hued houses, set along winding or tucked away streets that offer glimpses to the passer-by are a key ingredient of St Bees' character. The presence of vegetation in many areas perfectly complements these, softening their appearance and adding interest.
- Low, varied buildings. Very little in St Bees is tall; even the former Methodist Church on Main Street nestles within the streetscape, alongside the surrounding buildings. The priory tower is the principle point of prominence, but this is set within trees, and appropriate given that it is St Bees' most significant building.
- The greenness of the valley is a key point of note. It retains fields along most of its sides, however, these have been built upon in patches, and the southern half of St Bees, when viewed from the north (e.g. Abbey Road, looking past the priory), now primarily gives the impression of being a collection of detached housing. Main Street, set within it, appears small and somewhat lost.
- The school and priory between them create a place of tranquillity and beauty, beside which the converted farm buildings of Abbey Farm sit well. The space around this area is to its advantage, although on the north side of Abbey Road, development has been patchy in its success.
- The split level sections of Main Street add interest and variety. Along with various locations clearly not designed for modern road vehicles they engender the irreplaceable charm of a place that was suited to a different time and economy. This is one of the key strengths of the village now.

7. Summary of Issues

- Poor vehicular access and parking spaces create a pressure to widen, open up, demolish walls, and tarmac surfaces. This is one of the main threats the conservation area faces and is fundamentally opposed to what makes it valuable, which is its dense, ancient character.
- Widespread loss of suitable windows, and their replacement with an assortment of inelegant plastic units in varying styles.
- Because of the arrangement of St Bees on either side of a valley, it is difficult to insert new houses in a way that will not be highly visible. The modernising, suburbanising effect of late 20th century housing developments on the conservation area and its setting have already had a noticeably harmful effect, not to mention contributed to the pressure on the small streets from traffic. It may in theory be possible to create a successful development using innovative design, but a number of the existing areas demonstrate a poor level of integration.
- Main Street retains its shape and character, although has suffered from some lost detailing (e.g. windows), the volume of traffic, and the loss of non-residential uses. Its tarmac surface and pavements, though necessary to deal with the vehicles, have also robbed it of a certain softness and irregularity.



Figure 105 Poor quality pointing risks harming the characteristic appearance of St Bees' red sandstone. In certain cases, it will be contributing to damage to the fabric of the stone itself. This is particularly apparent where stone surfaces have delaminated or powdered away, leaving an edge of pointing standing proud.

8. Appendices

8.1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT Analysis)

- Strengths
 - Historic character is largely intact; there has not been much demolition.
 - The key assets of priory, school, bridge, and Manor Stead/Cross Hill House survive well, and other important assets are also almost complete.
 - The streets have avoided modern widening and straightening schemes. Where Main Street has been straightened, the strange way in which it was accomplished in the 19th century has left an interesting split-level arrangement.
 - The greenness of the valley is largely unspoilt. Not only is this beautiful, but it allows St Bees' agriculturally-developed layout to retain a connection with the fields that were an integral part of it.
 - Material qualities, urban grain and vegetation complement one another in a distinctive and holistic language of place that is recognisably "St Bees".
- Weaknesses
 - Road traffic has caused significant harm to the character, necessitating tarmacking of roads and pavements, choking of the narrow streets with parked and moving cars, and insertions here and there through historic boundaries to create parking.
 - A lack of neatly integrated, discreetly hidden communal carparks requires the main streets to do the majority of the heavy lifting when it comes to parking.
 - Widespread loss of attractive timber fenestration.
 - Difficulties with cement render and pointing that are generally unattractive and damaging to red sandstone, and may in the long run contribute to damp problems rather than cure them.
 - Some housing development has taken place in a way that has harmed the setting of heritage assets and the conservation area.
- Opportunities:
 - Changing the many poor quality uPVC windows in St Bees, particularly on Main Street, for more attractive timber units would bring a great improvement in appearance.
 - Finding a way of reducing the traffic burden and number of parked cars in the conservation area would bring great benefits. This could perhaps be combined with provision of charging points for electrical vehicles.
 - Train and cycling alternatives provide a possibility of reducing car demand.
 - Minimising the incursion of tarmac surfaces would be beneficial.
 - Finding ways of allowing small independent shops etc. to survive on Main Street would improve the life of the place and potentially also be more rewarding to tourists as well as residents.
- Threats
 - Housing development harming the setting of the conservation area and its assets.
 - Decline in condition of historic, solid-walled buildings from under maintenance and poorly specified alteration.
 - Loss of historic character to provide ease of car use.

8.2. Gazetteer of Designated Heritage Assets

List Entry No.	Name	Address	Grade	Designation Year	Construction Year
1086679	Abbey Farmhouse	Abbey Road	II	1979	1679
1086680	Barn range adjoining south end of Abbey Farmhouse	Abbey Road	II	1979	Likely 18 th century
1137347	Pow Bridge	B5345	II*	1984	1585
1086684	Manor Stead and house adjoining to north	Cross Hill	II*	1967	Early-16 th century
1086685	Mayfield and house adjoining to east	Finkle Street	II	1984	19 th century
1312334	16	Finkle Street	II	1984	1818
1086686	Croft House	High House Road	II	1984	18 th century
1312335	Barn to north east of high house	High House Road	II	1984	1810
1137383	1-11	Lonsdale Terrace	II	1984	Mid-19 th century
1086677	Grindal House	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1860
1086687	Manor House Hotel incorporating numbers 10, 11 and 12	Main Street	II	1984	Late-18 th /early-19 th century
1086688	Forecourt walls, railings, and gate piers to number 52 (Redbourn house)	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1870
1086689	Grainger House	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1838
1086690	Fairladies Farmhouse and adjoining barn	Main Street	II	1984	Late-18 th century; possibly earlier core
1086691	Nursery Cottage	Main Street	II	1984	17 th century
1137390	Redbourn House	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1870

1137416	Stone House	Main Street	II	1984	1712
1312344	81	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1838
1312348	Orchard House	Main Street	II	1984	Late-18 th /early-19 th century
1336025	Forecourt wall, gate, and end piers to front of Grindal House	Main Street	II	1984	c. 1860
1336027	Priory Church of St Mary and St Bega	St Bees Priory	I	1967	c. 1120, with later alterations
1086681	Former chancel to priory church of St Mary and St Bega	St Bees Priory	I	1984	Late-12 th century, late-13 th /early-14 th century, early-19 th century
1086682	War memorial in parish churchyard to north of lych gate	St Bees Priory	II	1984	1921
1137319	Wall, to west of priory church nave, incorporating medieval cross and lintel	St Bees Priory	I	1967	19 th century, incorporating medieval fragments
1137338	Lych gate to north east of priory church chancel	St Bees Priory	II	1984	Early-20 th century
1312351	Sundial in churchyard to north east of priory church chancel	St Bees Priory	II	1984	1649
1336028	Cross in churchyard to north of priory church nave	St Bees Priory	I	1967	Likely 10 th /11 th century
1336029	New College Hall	St Bees Priory	II	1967	1863
1086678	St Bees school buildings around quadrangle to south west	St Bees School	II	1967	Late 16 th century and early/mid-19 th century
1336026	Railings and gate closing west side of quadrangle at St Bees School	St Bees School	II	1984	c. 1842
1086683	War memorial adjoining south end of west parapet to Pow Bridge	Station Road	II	1984	1923
1412068	Signal Box	Station Road	II	2013	1891
1312314	1-5	Vale View	II	1984	19 th century
1336030	Ashley House	Vale View	II	1984	19 th century

8.3. Area Maps

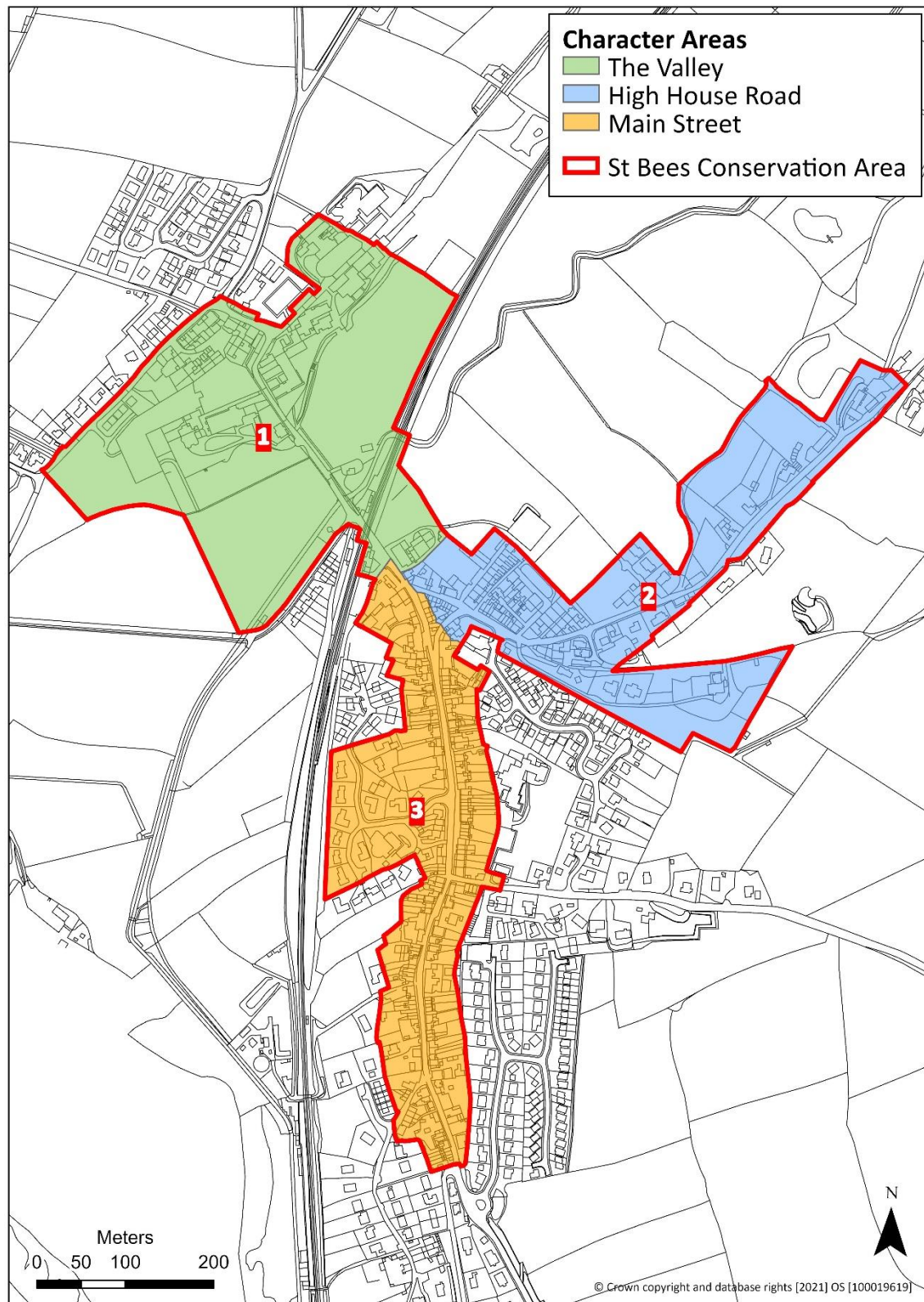


Figure 106 St Bees conservation area, showing the three character areas used here to appraise it.

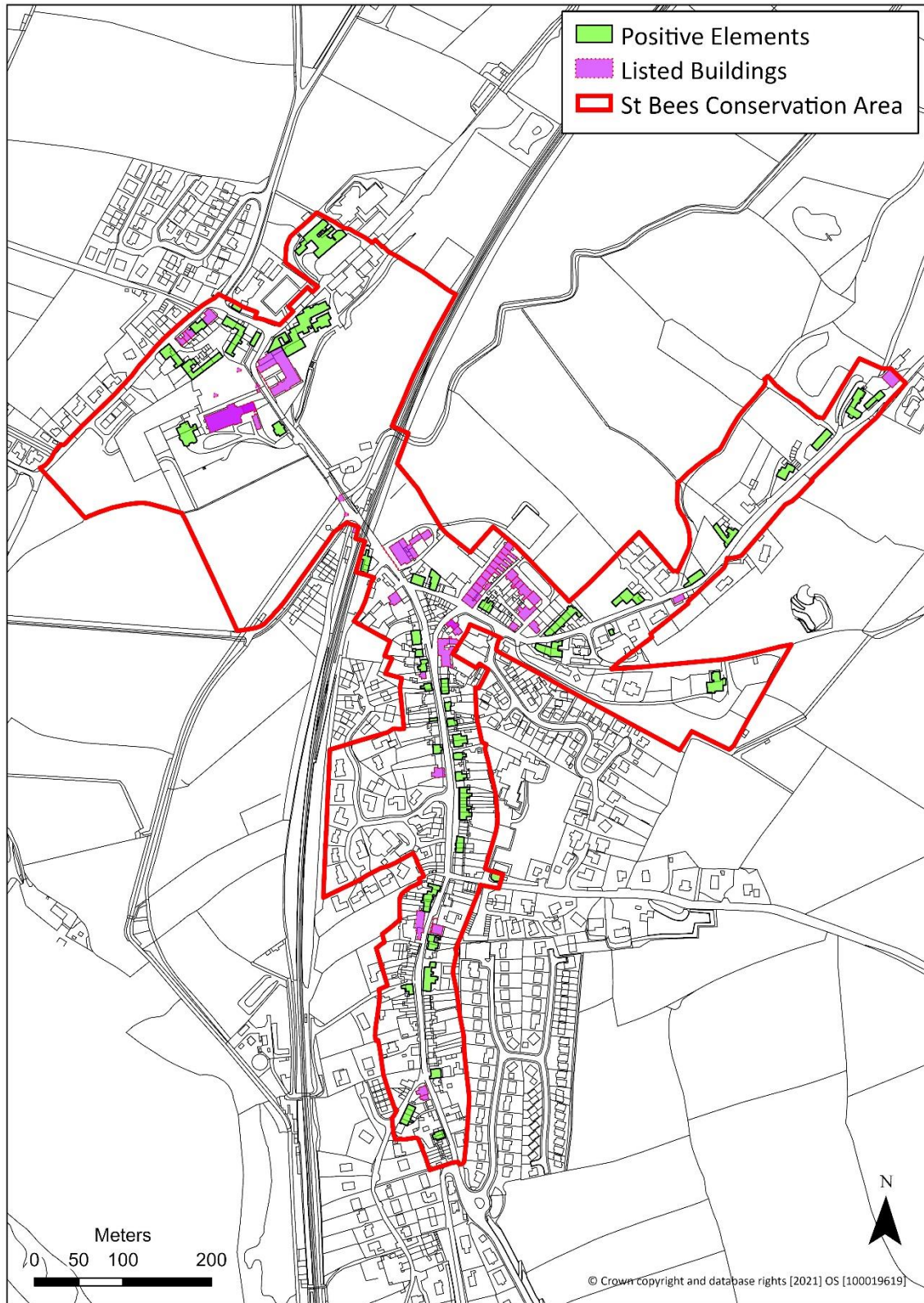


Figure 107 St Bees conservation area, showing listed buildings (purple) and other positive townscape elements (green).

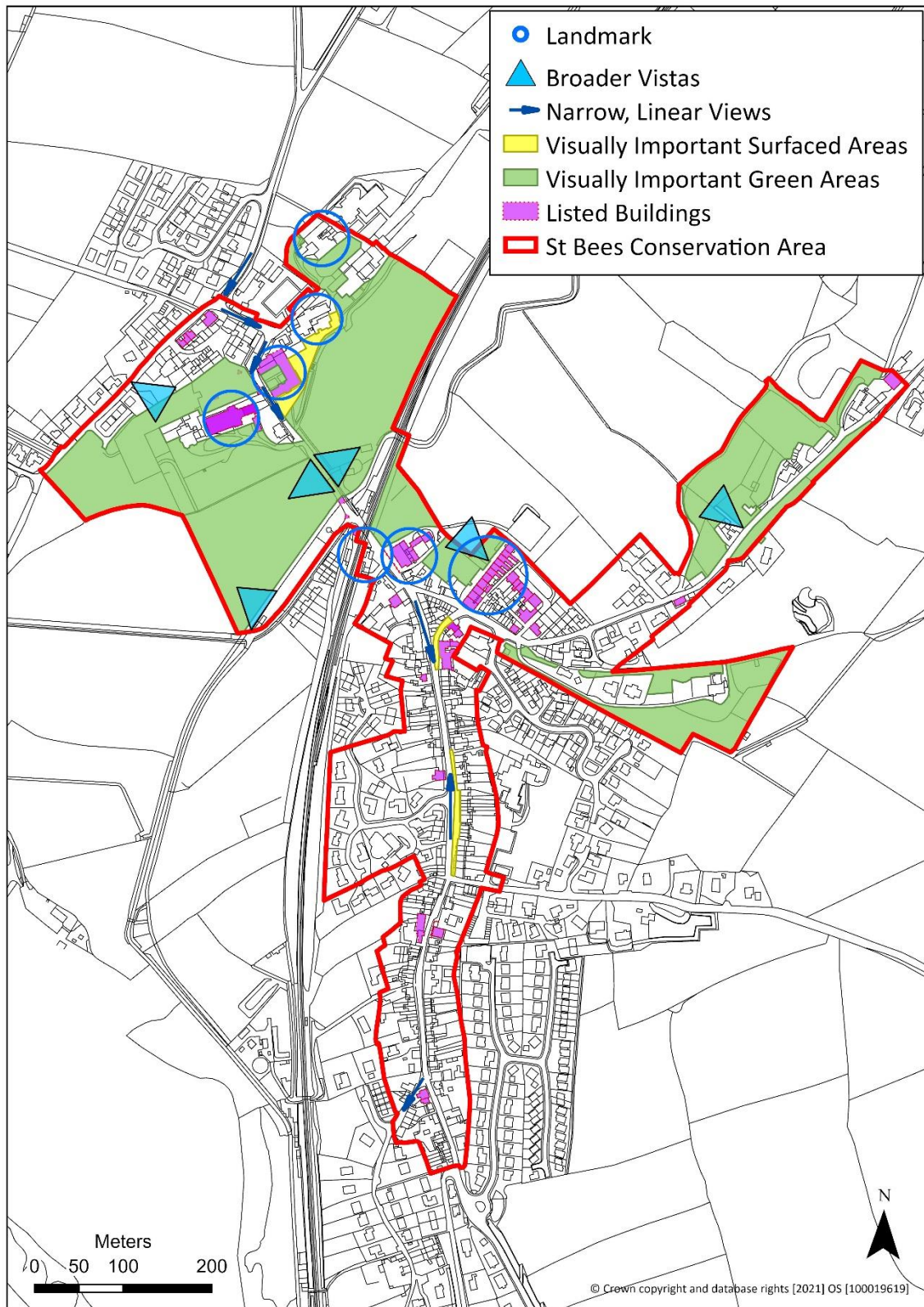


Figure 108 St Bees conservation area, showing views, vistas, landmarks, green areas and important areas of hard surface. Listed buildings are in purple.

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