Allerdale Historic Environment Review

Allerdale’s historic environment consists of a wide range of historic assets including: Hadrian’s wall and associated structures, pre-historic structures and archaeology, medieval churches, defensive castles, mansions and pele towers, C17 and C18 farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings, medieval farming and coastal villages, medieval towns with many Georgian frontages and buildings as well as Victorian developments. There are also historic planned areas such as the Georgian streets in Maryport and Portland Square, Workington and the Victorian resort of Silloth.

Allerdale’s designated historic assets include:

Listed Buildings: Total (1,328)
Grade I (29)
Grade II* (33)
Grade II (1,266)

(It should be noted that these figures are based on the number of listings, but many listings include more than one building, so the total number of buildings that are listed is greater).

Conservation Areas: 21
Ancient Monuments: 80
Historic Parks: 1
World Heritage Sites: 1
Listed Buildings

It is very difficult to explain or define the range of listed buildings. However there are certain factors that have created some common features. Many of the surviving historic buildings are constructed of local sandstone, or rubble dressed with sandstone. There are many individually designed buildings, some such as churches & pele towers, as well as vernacular farm buildings or cottages which are many centuries old. From the late 18th Century, many buildings were built, or faced with a local Georgian style architecture, frequently consisting of a rendered facade with sliding sash windows (in straight rows and columns) with distinctive sandstone bands surrounding them. Until the mid 19 Century, most roofs (of buildings which survive today) were covered with local ‘green’ Cumbrian slate. After this the railways brought in cheaper welsh slate which started to be used in most new buildings.
**Conservation Areas**

Most of Allerdale’s Conservation Areas fit within 3 broad categories: the main towns: (Cockermouth, Maryport, Wigton & Workington); the coastal settlements (Allonby, Bowness, Port Carlisle and Silloth) and; the rural villages.

Each of the Conservation Areas, has its own pressures and physical problems, however there are some common problems that exist in most of them. Most have some buildings whose historic appearance has been lost or degraded by inappropriate coverings (such as cement render or pebble dash), and by insertion of windows of a style/opening method which does not fit the historic character of the building. The main towns all have areas where the quality of the public realm (ie public spaces such as roads, pavements, squares etc) does not adequately compliment the quality of their historic layouts and buildings. For example many areas could be significantly enhanced (and some have) by reducing the amount of tarmac and replacing it with natural paving materials.
Cockermouth

Cockermouth’s Conservation Area encompasses most of the pre-20th Century development in the Town. Its medieval market town layout is very evident, particularly the oldest parts; Market Place, Castlegate, the Castle & Kirkgate as well as parts of Main Street. Some of the buildings in this area have considerable 17th Century and possibly older elements behind the facades, and a very high proportion of buildings in this area are listed. Much redevelopment and re-facing of buildings was carried out in the Georgian period. From the late 18th Century the town developed larger industries initially using water from the two main rivers. A number of the industrial buildings have been converted providing a visual link to the earlier industrial character. Many Victorian terraces were developed on the, then, edges of the town, particularly on the higher land to the south. Some of these are high quality terraces adorned with architectural detailing which adds significantly to the character of the conservation area. The greatest detractors from the character of the Conservation Area are the quantity of traffic travelling through its heart, some of its public realm and some remaining poorly quality shopfronts and shopfront signs particularly on Station Street.
Maryport

A Roman fort was developed immediately to the north of the present town the outlines of which are still very evident and are included within the Conservation Area boundary. A fishing village and port existed on the site of Maryport at the mouth of the Ellen until Maryport Town was created in the mid/late 18th Century by Humphrey Senhouse who built a new port and town (named after his wife Mary) on a grid plan on the high ground just inland of the harbour. The Conservation Area is characterised in part by the harbour and 18th/19th Century buildings associated with it but is centered around the new town which is made up of a shopping core and long terraces of mostly simple but well proportioned local Georgian style town houses, set along quite spacious
hilly streets. On the northern side are some larger detached properties, with more elaborate architectural features. Flemming Square is at the heart of this and provides an architectural focus to the Georgian ‘new town’. Further east are Victorian terraces, which are different in style but reflect the grid lines of the earlier town & also contribute positively to the Town’s character. The biggest problem faced by Maryport’s Conservation Area is the lack of maintenance and under use of some of the buildings as a result of the poor local economy, as well as some poor quality shopfronts.
Wigton

Wigton is a medieval market town at the centre of a large agricultural area. Its churches and former market places give the town its layout, whilst its narrow central streets form the shopping core. The town grew significantly in the early 19th Century with industrial developments and this led to a large expansion of residential development, mostly in the local Georgian style. Wigton has a number of institutional, public & ecclesiastical buildings within the Town Centre which provides a variety of architectural styles, which break up the predominance of Georgian fronted buildings in the centre. It also has some small Victorian terraced housing with the Conservation area which add positively to the character of the conservation area. The amount of traffic in the shopping streets detracts from their environment. Some of the larger buildings are in a poor state of repair and there are some poor quality shopfronts.
Workington
Workington has three Conservation Areas:

Portland Square
This is a relatively homogenous area of attractive Georgian townhouses, built by the Curwen Family of Workington Hall just to the north, in the 1770s. It is on high land to the east of the main town and is set out in a grid around Portland Square, a long rectangular cobbled space. Whilst the area is now almost entirely residential, much commercial activity occurred throughout in the area into the early 20th Century. Its present (limited) commercial activities occur around Wilson Street and Market Place which is closer to the existing town centre. On the eastern side of the conservation area are some very large detached and semi detached later Victorian residential developments. Some buildings in the area suffer from a lack of maintenance, due largely to
the relatively poor local economy.

**Brow Top**
This area is essentially two streets running east-west back to back. The buildings with the greatest character are those facing north from Brow Top. These overlook a lower plateau which was estuary before the 17th Century, and probably the reason for the first development of this site. The buildings are 18th Century and 19th Century and range from large classical ‘villas’ and other large detached properties, reported to originally be home to sea captains and the like, to smaller terraced properties. The south facing properties to the rear form the north side of Finkle Street, one of the Town’s shopping streets, and are dominated by their ground floor shop frontages. Control of the overgrown vegetation on the north side of Brow Top would enhance the quality of the local environment and may allow greater appreciation of the quality of the architecture. Improved shop fronts and signage would enhance the character of the Finkle Street side of the Conservation Area.

**St Michael’s**
St Michaels Conservation Area is named after the large church at its northern edge which, together with St Michaels’s school is set within an open area of grassland. St Michael’s (former) rectory, is a 16th Century Grade 1 listed building which is of significant architectural character. St Michael’s was one of the first parts of Workington to be developed, however, the majority of the existing architecture is Victorian, built after the railway station which also provides a context and character to the Conservation Area. The area suffers from being dissected by two busy roads as well as some underinvestment in its buildings and its public realm.
Coastal Settlements

Silloth
Silloth was built from 1856 as a seaside resort with a small deep water dock and served by a railway from Carlisle. Behind the beach and promenade is a strip of trees and The Green, a very large grassed area separating the sea from the main town. The main part of the town was developed on a grid pattern and is fronted by Criffell street which is set behind a wide cobbled street overlooking The Green. Criffell Street consists of large three storey Victorian buildings, many of which were designed as hotels and B&Bs. The Green and the impressive architecture fronting it provides a very distinctive Victorian Seaside Resort character which gives the impression of being a much larger town than it is.
Allonby
Allonby is set on a wide sweeping bay with extensive views south to Maryport and north to Dumfrieshire. It originated as a fishing and farming settlement with local services providing for farms further afield. It has strong Quaker links and a history of attracting wealthy incomers and benefactors, which has led to the construction of many interesting buildings in a variety of architectural styles. It has thrived into the 20th & 21st Centuries as a destination for holiday makers and day trippers as well as a desirable place to live.

Bowness on Solway
Bowness is on the site of a Roman fort on Hadrian’s Wall and is built up on the banks of the Solway Estuary. Its 12th Century St Michael’s church is thought to be built on the granary of the Roman fort. It is the largest village on the western Solway Plain and has grown organically with much vernacular architecture including farm buildings, as well as later Victorian properties. In 1869 a railway bridge was built to link Bowness to Annan, Scotland which linked into the Maryport to Carlisle line, but the bridge was demolished and railway closed in the 1930s. This may have reduced its use as a holiday destination, but it remains very popular for day trips & cyclists & walkers.

Port Carlisle
Port Carlisle is one mile east of Bowness on Solway and was developed as a port in the early 19th Century in order that boats could dock and make their way by canal to Carlisle. Most of the large sandstone docking quay remains and is an important part of the history and character of the Conservation Area. The canal was used until the 1850s after which the canal basin was turned into a railway line, which itself was closed in the 1930s. The old sidings and station platform can still be seen. Port Carlisle’s houses were built at the time as the construction of the canal in the early 19th Century mainly on one single sided street. The architecture is simple but very well proportioned and almost all of its buildings are listed.

Rural Villages
The remainder of Allerdale’s Conservation Areas (excluding Papcastle and outside of the national park) are small rural villages which developed around a number of small farms grouped together. Many of these are linear in their layout but a few are clustered around a village green. In addition to being a collection of farms these villages were local centres which also served outlying and more isolated farms. Much of the architecture is vernacular in origin, some with later additions or frontages added in a more polite (mostly
Georgian) style. Many of the former farm buildings are purely residential now and some of the villages have few if any working farms and often no local services, although schools churches, pubs & shops still exist in some.

Papcastle
Papcastle does not fit within any of the above categories. It is adjacent to the site of a Roman fort and is surrounded by a rich archaeology. It modern origins come from mills and industries using the river although it is largely residential now and functions as a suburb of Cockermouth but retains the character of a distinctive settlement. The village is set on a south facing slope and has grown organically with a variety of vernacular buildings including farmsteads and small cottages as well as a number of larger detached houses of more polite architecture of various styles.