

**Sessay**

# Draft Conservation Area Appraisal

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

**Hambleton Local Development Framework & Emerging Local Plan**



**HAMBLETON**

**DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**Front Cover:** *St Cuthbert's church and lych-gate, 1848 by William Butterfield.*  
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## 1.0 Introduction

### Definition and Purpose

- 1.1 A Conservation Area is defined as an *'area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'* (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 1.2 The purpose of a Conservation Area is to acknowledge significant historic places and to cherish the local distinctiveness of areas that are valued by communities. 2017 sees the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act 1967 which established the concept of Conservation Areas nationally. Whilst Conservation Areas usually contain individual buildings, structures or monuments of importance, these tend to be protected through the listed building or scheduling process, a Conservation Area designation responds to wider townscape and landscape issues. In looking at Conservation Areas, views, vistas and other aspects of context are significant to consider in addition to individual historic fabric.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to:
- Define and record the special interest of Sessay, to ensure a full understanding of its evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values with a view to designation.
  - Increase public awareness of the aims and objectives of Conservation Area designation and to stimulate interest in the protection of the area's character and appearance.
  - Assist Development Management in the determination of planning applications, and Listed Building Consent applications in the context of area based place-making.
  - Identify areas for potential preservation and enhancement to inform a later Management Plan, if the area is taken to designation.
  - Suggest buildings for inclusion on a local list of buildings which are not included within the statutory list, but which have value to local people and communities for their historic and architectural importance.
- 1.4 The SPD will also assist Development Management particularly in the application of Policies DP28 (Conservation) and DP29 (Archaeology) of the Hambleton Local Development Framework (LDF) as well as policies within the emerging Local Plan. Further information on these policies can be found within the Development Policies document, which is available from: [https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/info/20039/planning/283/adopted\\_local\\_development\\_framework/4](https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/info/20039/planning/283/adopted_local_development_framework/4).
- 1.5 This appraisal is for the residents of Sessay especially those living and working within the proposed Conservation Area, applicants for planning permission, their agents and architects, Development Management Planners and others involved in proposals for works within a Conservation Area.
- 1.6 Whilst this document may provide some clarity on the architectural & historic significance of the proposed Conservation Area, it is not meant to be an all-encompassing document and areas or features which are not mentioned should not be considered unimportant when they lie within the area.

### Statutory Duties of the Local Authority

- 1.7 Under section 69 (1a&b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), local planning authorities are required *'from time to time to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or*

*appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance and...shall designate those areas as conservation areas'.*

- 1.8 Sessay has not previously been assessed by Hambleton District Council for potential Conservation Area designation.
- 1.9 Under section 71 (1-3) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), *"it is the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas...proposals under this section shall be submitted for consultation to a public meeting in the area to which they relate...and.. The local planning authority shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting"*.
- 1.10 When making a decision on an application for development in a Conservation Area, local planning authorities are advised, *"special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of that area"* (Section 72 of the Act). While this should ensure that harmful change is not allowed, some changes, not normally requiring planning permission (known as permitted development) could still damage the special qualities of the area. Local authorities have special powers to issue directions removing certain permitted development rights from properties if it can be shown that it is necessary. These are known as Article 4 Directions.
- 1.11 There are currently 53 Conservation Areas within Hambleton District (48 outside the National Park). There are also a small number of Article 4 Directions, however this is not currently proposed for Sessay.

### **Community Involvement**

- 1.12 In September 2014 following a public consultation, Sessay and Hutton Sessay Parish Council published a Community Plan. One of the Action Plan tasks is to *"Review the case for Conservation Area status to protect the history, character and natural appearance of Sessay"*. A one to five year period was set to implement this action.
- 1.13 To inform Hambleton's new Local Plan process an initial call for sites took place in 2015/16. Landowners, agents and developers were invited to put forward sites for development. Over 500 sites were submitted as part of the exercise from across the District. A list of preferred and non-preferred sites along with a summary of the site assessments is available within the Preferred Options document. This was consulted on in late 2016. Hambleton District Council then asked if there were more suitable alternative sites which could be considered, the 'Call for Sites' exercise finally closed in February 2017.
- 1.14 In order to inform the selection of sites process, at an extraordinary meeting of Sessay and Hutton Sessay Parish Council in December 2016, it resolved to formally submit a Landscape Character Assessment including a draft boundary for a Sessay Conservation Area. The Parish Council also resolved at this meeting to ask Hambleton District Council to exercise its duty to consult upon a proposed Sessay Conservation Area designation. The landscape assessment was eventually incorporated into the *"Hambleton Settlement Character Study"* and formed part of the 'Call for Sites' consultation, the full document is available here: [https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/localplan/downloads/file/25/hambleton\\_settlement\\_character\\_study](https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/localplan/downloads/file/25/hambleton_settlement_character_study)
- 1.15 Hambleton District Council received no representations on the Sessay Landscape Assessment or proposed Conservation Area boundary during the public consultation.



## Policy Context

- 1.16 This appraisal has been undertaken taking into account existing and emerging planning policies at both national and local level. Government & Historic England have issued expert guidance on the subject of Conservation Area Appraisals; this appraisal should therefore be read in conjunction with the following documents:
- The Hambleton Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs.
  - National Planning Policy Guidance; especially the *National Planning Policy Framework* Section 12 (NPPF, March 2012).
  - Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, Historic England (2016) <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/>
  - The Sessay & Hutton Sessay Community Plan 2014 is referred to as a background document: [http://www.sessay.org/images/pdf/Sessay\\_village\\_plan\\_double\\_spread.pdf](http://www.sessay.org/images/pdf/Sessay_village_plan_double_spread.pdf)

## 2. The Conservation Area and Character Areas

### Evidence for a Conservation Area

- 2.1 In 2011 a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 'Your Heritage' funded project was established in Sessay, the project completed in 2016 and has involved the production, amongst other things, of a 70 panel village history exhibition and booklet by the local community and a comprehensive set of essays on the villages' history called '*Essays from Sessay*' (180 pages), edited by Janet Ratcliffe. The latter publication has provided documentary and anecdotal evidence to inform this appraisal. Historic images of Sessay and further information on the history project can be downloaded from the Sessay Archive at: [http://sessayarchive.macmate.me/Sessay\\_Archive/Photo\\_Archive/Photo\\_Archive.html](http://sessayarchive.macmate.me/Sessay_Archive/Photo_Archive/Photo_Archive.html)

### Conservation Area Boundary and Character Changes

- 2.2 The 'Hambleton Settlement Character Study' 2016, divides Sessay into 3 distinct character areas:
- A Little Sessay (including the Old Rectory)
  - B Sessay Village
  - C Little Hutton
- 2.3 For the purposes of this appraisal and public consultation, a **Core Character Area** has been identified, the central focus being Little Sessay and William Butterfield's architectural composition around St Cuthbert's church. The core area extends to include the former Rectory and elements of the surviving medieval landscape associated with the site of the former manor (now incorporating three farmsteads, Rooper Hill Farm, Church Farm and Village Farm). This core area could be said to represent the south side of Sessay Village.
- 2.4 The appraisal then considers two potential extensions to the core area towards the centre of the current village and to be considered further during public consultation:
- Extension 1** A distinct range of 8 estate cottages dating to the time of Butterfields engagement, indicated on the 1858 Dawney Estate Plan by Powell of Harrogate.

**Extension 2** A Western boundary extension, extending from Village Farm north to include Churchward House & Plum Tree Cottage (probably early C19th) which face onto the village cricket field and the former Downe House Farmhouse (mid C19th by the York and North Midland Railway architect G T Andrews & listed at Grade II).

### Geographic Location

2.5 Sessay is approximately 20 miles north of York, 4 miles south-east from Thirsk and 2 miles west from the A19. The East Coast Main Line (ECML) runs along its western edge. Little Sessay is to the south of the present village green, with Little Hutton to the north.

### Landscape Setting

2.6 Little Sessay nestles within a gently undulating landscape, interrupted by the meandering Birdforth Beck as it flows to join the nearby River Swale. Land here is carpeted by deep sandy alluvial soils, becoming Keuper Marls (layers of mudstone and siltstone) in the higher parts.

2.7 The fertility of the land with its ready source of pure water must have contributed to the location of the manor here with the associated medieval ridge and furrow fields, to maximise crop production. This areas gentle topography allows the land to drain back into the beck. Today, field margins and the beck are still lined by native hedgerows and mature trees. In recent times the rich soils have contributed to the establishment of a productive fruit farm whose fields of soft fruits add to the idyllic setting of St Cuthbert's church.



Fig 1: View of St Cuthberts across fruit fields at Church Farm



Fig 2: Ridge and furrow field overlaid with a later designed landscape.

2.8 Around 1800 part of the medieval landscape was incorporated into a designed landscape associated with one of the many phases of remodelling at the Rectory. There are a number of attractive views across the designed landscape from the Rectory gardens, beyond its ha-ha, out towards the White Horse of Kilburn. Similar views can be appreciated from several locations along the village street walking from the Rectory to the Church (Fig 2).

2.9 To the north and at Little Hutton the geology changes dramatically from fertile sandy soils to heavy boulder clay; here can be found the site of the old Sessay Brickworks and an extensive landscape of modern fishponds; land here is prone to surface water flooding with neighbouring fields regularly being waterlogged. The topography throughout the village centre and to the north is generally flat, rising gently from west to east towards Highfield Farm. Drainage to the north is towards Scarfe Shay Beck. This northern part of the village and its landscape has been much altered and is crossed by overhead service wires, current

evidence suggests that Little Hutton and the north end of the village generally, is not of sufficient architectural or historic interest to merit designation.

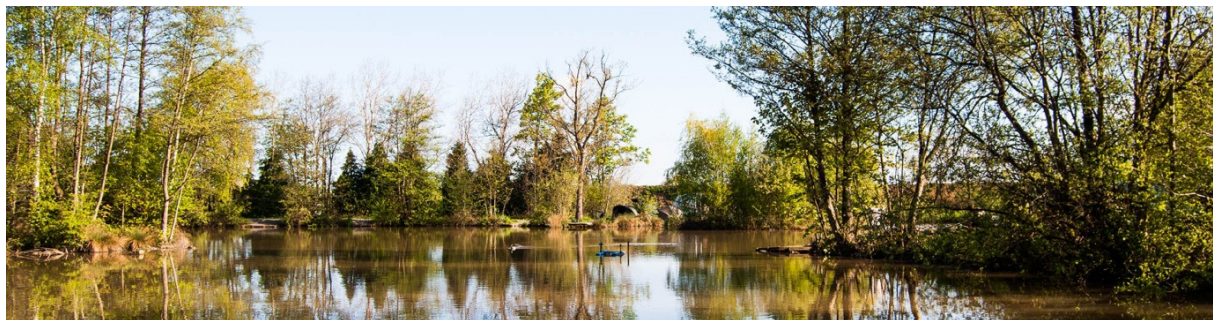


Fig 3 Sessay Fish Ponds utilising the natural clay soils close to the surface

### 3. Historic Development and Archaeology

#### History

- 3.1 Sessay is an ancient farming settlement mentioned in the Domesday Book as Sezai and in other medieval texts as Cessay; it is known to have had an established church by the C11<sup>th</sup>. Remnants of the ancient manor house and anecdotally the medieval church remain as undesigned archaeology at Little Sessay to the South, where an extensive and early ridge and furrow field system still dominates and shapes the landscape.



Fig 4: Air view (1984) clearly indicating the medieval ridge and furrow fields  
© Aeroscene Ltd

- 3.2 At the time of the Norman invasion, the manor at Sessay was in the possession of the Bishop of Durham and St Cuthbert's Church, Durham. It became a Mesne lordship and was held after the Norman invasion first by the *Percy* family and then by the *Darrel* family from the end of the 12th century into the late 15th century. The Darrell's being in the top rank of the North Riding gentry. When the family line of succession ended, it passed by marriage to the *Dawney* family in 1525. One descendant, John Dawney was made Viscount Downe in 1680.
- 3.3 Sessay is the only place in England with this name, its true origins remain uncertain although a common held belief is that it may derive from the old English word *secg* meaning sedge and the Anglian word *ēg* meaning *island or dry ground surrounded by marsh*. Therefore, it is



literally *Sedge Island*, a compelling interpretation given Sessay's ancient landscape and wetland field system still evident today, a subject this appraisal will return to.

- 3.4 By the 1700s the settlement had moved and was well established to the north in its present day location. Mid C18th and Tithe maps clearly indicate a regular pattern of burgage plots to either side of the village street. Sessay's village hall and playing fields are today located on land that was once the village green.
- 3.5 The Parish was part of the Dawnay family estate for over 400 years before being split and sold at auction in 1918. The 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount Lord Downe commissioned the eminent Victorian architect William Butterfield to design a new church, school, bridge and several estate cottages for Sessay in the mid C19th. The East Coast railway which runs nearby was opened in 1841. Most of Butterfield's buildings and structures survive and contribute to the special character and appearance at the southern end of Sessay village.



Fig 5: John Speed's map 1610



Fig 6: Map indicating site of Hall & late C18th horse race

### Archaeology

- 3.6 Amateur archaeology undertaken by the Brigantian Club along with community archaeology supported by York Archaeological Trust in May 2013 has reinforced Historic Environment Records (HER) records that point to the probable site of the manor as being close to Rooper Hill and Church farm. The record of metal finds dating from the Roman, Medieval and Tudor periods can be found in *Essays from Sessay*.
- 3.7 Church Farm's name is perhaps a clue to it formerly being the site of Sessay's medieval church, close to the manor. Other evidence includes the existence of stone column fragments and a C13th stone font to be found at the rear of Church Farm along with yew trees, which are often associated with graveyards.
- 3.8 Sections of external walls of what appear to be outbuildings associated with the manor and likely to date from the mid 1500's still survive in a modern barn at Rooper Hill (Fig 7) and to the east behind Church Farm. Recent geophysics has however proved inconclusive so the precise location of the manor and also Sessay's medieval church still remains a mystery.





Fig 7: Fragments of mid 1500's high status fabric surviving within a modern barn at Rooper Hill



Fig 8: C13th stone font at Church Farm

- 3.9 There is documentary evidence that a corn mill once stood adjacent to Birdforth Beck in fields downstream from the church, its precise site is unknown although its general location is recorded in field names used on C18<sup>th</sup> and C19<sup>th</sup> estate maps (Mill Close, Mill Garth, Mill Bogs & Mill Leat). The mill was pulled down in the winter of 1781.
- 3.10 The list description for the Grade II bridge over Birdforth Beck refers to "*Road Bridge. Probably Medieval arch, otherwise mid C19<sup>th</sup>*". The Grade II cross base close to the east porch of the church is also described as "late medieval" in origin.
- 3.11 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the proposed Conservation Area.

#### 4. Architectural Qualities and Building Styles

##### Architectural and Historical Character

- 4.1 The architectural and historical character and appearance of the character areas is disparate, but can be defined by:
- William Butterfield's landmark Victorian stone built church, Lych gate, school and bridge built in the C14<sup>th</sup> Gothic style, set within a walled enclosure and wider medieval landscape.
  - The predominantly C18<sup>th</sup> grand Rectory and mature walled garden, with its naturalistic designed landscape dating from around 1800.
  - Modest, largely C19<sup>th</sup> two storey workers cottages, farmhouses or short humble terraces often with linear ranges of outbuildings (originally housing stock that would have been grazed on the village green), interspersed with later higher status buildings such as Downe House.
  - There are many modern bungalows lining the village street in Sessay but it is worth noting that there are also a number of well-designed single storey mid C19<sup>th</sup> cottages with classical proportions set back from the street within mature gardens.
  - The village street, field boundaries and beck are generally lined with mature trees and/or mixed hedges. The farmland within the proposed Conservation Area consists mainly of medieval ridge and furrow fields and associated dew ponds and pathways. The landscape is historic and rich in biodiversity, containing EU protected species.

## Building Materials and Local Details

- 4.2 The prevalent local building material used for walls is handmade red brick with a wide tonal range; handmade clay and modern interlocking red pan tile being used on most roofs. Lime render is not a traditional material in Sessay and is used rarely.
- 4.3 Cottages dating from William Butterfield's period in the mid C19th are generally roofed with flat blue/black glazed clay tile or Welsh slate; roofs of this period often incorporating hipped gables and dormers (occasionally cat-slide dormers). Butterfield had a preference for using medieval style long & narrower bricks than today's standard dimensions for his own work. Some original late medieval bricks appear to survive in boundary walls associated with Church Farm.
- 4.4 Many buildings display elaborate, notably tall, and occasionally very elegant brick chimneys, most topped with plain buff or red terracotta 'long tom' pots, although some original pots have been removed or replaced. Sessay's mixture of chimney's punctuate and animate the sky line in an otherwise flat landscape, adding visual interest to the street scene and architectural points of reference.
- 4.5 Many cottages have gabled porches emphasising and protecting entrances and architecturally helping to animate their elevations.
- 4.6 Most of the villages traditional recessed multi-paned timber vertical sliding sash windows with single glazing and lead weights have been replaced with modern C20th casements in recent years, other than in listed properties.
- 4.7 Path Head and Honeysuckle Cottage (Grade II) retain most of their traditional wooden joinery with fine frames and astragal glazing bars. Joinery in the village is generally painted white although historically this would not have been the case as brilliant white wasn't available until after WWII.



*Fig 9: Path Head and Honeysuckle Cottage GdII  
Outside the proposed conservation area, by Wm Butterfield.*



*Fig 10: Village farm traditional openings*

- 4.8 A number of mid C18th cottages incorporate small areas of exposed oak frame under hips or within gables (e.g. Apple Tree, Honeysuckle and Pear Tree Cottages). Oak floor and roof



timbers survive in a number of Sessay's cottages and farm buildings, oak has also been used for a number of modern extensions (e.g Midsummer Cottage and The Old Barn).



*Fig 11: Oak roof at the Horse Engine House, Village Farm*      *Fig 12: Modern extension at Midsummer Cottage uses local handmade brick and incorporates a structural oak frame*

## 5. Spatial Analysis

### Open Spaces, Landscape and Trees



*Fig 13: Village street junction at St Cuthbert's*      *Fig 14: View from Rectory gates towards St Cuthbert's*

- 5.1 Sessay village has developed as a linear plan; most properties being set back facing on to the village street, there is a fairly consistent building line only broken in a few places until the development pattern changes at Sessay Cottage Terrace. Mature street trees and hedgerows overshadow and reinforce boundary lines, although there is a generally open aspect to the village street with occasional views out to the wider landscape beyond.
- 5.2 The centre of the village with its cricket field and Village Hall is open in character with extensive views out over farmland towards the White Horse at Kilburn. The northern end of the village contains mostly modern housing developments of limited character or local distinctiveness.



- 5.3 At the south end of the village the street comes to a cross roads marked by a triangular piece of common land, the street heads west to Pilmore and east to Hutton Sessay. This triangular parcel of land is historically associated with the church and school and contributes to their setting. The linear plan arrangement found in the centre of the village changes to a rural dispersed form of development with informal curving boundaries closely responding to the topography and harking back to this lands medieval origin.
- 5.4 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within areas proposed for designation, although 3 TPOs can be found outside the proposed boundary, but within the village settlement.
- 5.5 Conservation Areas should not be designated primarily to protect veteran trees as the criteria for *special architectural or historic interest* as set out in the NPPF is unlikely to be met. In Sessay the special historic interest of the area and value's ascribed to individual historic buildings within it, derive significance from their landscape setting, there may therefore be the potential for further TPOs if the area is designated.
- 5.6 Significant trees, ancient landscape and hedgerows are presently unprotected. Sessay's Village Plan proposes "*...an audit of local trees with a view to understanding their current health, planning for their future and obtaining preservation orders where appropriate*".
- 5.7 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens in areas proposed for Conservation Area boundary.

#### **Focal Points, Views and Vistas**

- 5.8 Standing on high ground overlooking Church Farm and Rooper Hill there is a panoramic view in all directions. To the east is the prominent prow of Roulston Scar on the Hambleton escarpment, to the south is Thormanby, to the west, Pilmoor, New Mills and Fawdington and to the north lies Sessay village centre. This spot is thought by some to mark the site of a fortified encampment existing prior to the medieval manor; the defensive nature of the location with the later manor nearby certainly reinforces this theory.
- 5.9 Other attractive and significant vistas and views across the landscape are marked on the Sessay Settlement Characterisation map within the 'Hambleton Settlement Character Study'. Most notable is William Butterfield's composition of St Cuthbert's Church and school from the bridge at Birdforth Beck, framed by mature yews and other trees lining the beck. The stone tower and shingle spire of St Cuthbert's is also a noticeable and legible reference point within the wider landscape (see Fig 1).



Fig 15: St Cuthbert's church and school as seen from Birdforth Beck Bridge, one of the most picturesque scenes in Sessay.



Fig 16: Mature trees line the approach to the Rectory

- 5.10 Trees framing the western side of the street between the Rectory and church lead the eye along a gentle curve in the street, the pavement view punctuated by the Rectory gates and eventually the school and church spire. An enticing and welcoming glimpse of the Rectory can be viewed from its entrance gates (Fig 16); here mature trees embrace the street and pavement, underneath a sylvan glade, carpeted by snowdrops and daffodils in the spring.
- 5.11 Opposite Downe House (proposed extension 2) and its adjacent terrace, distant views of the White Horse of Kilburn can be seen across the village playing fields, between a row of mature street trees which encroach onto the pavement.

## 6. Area Character Appraisals

### Core Character Area

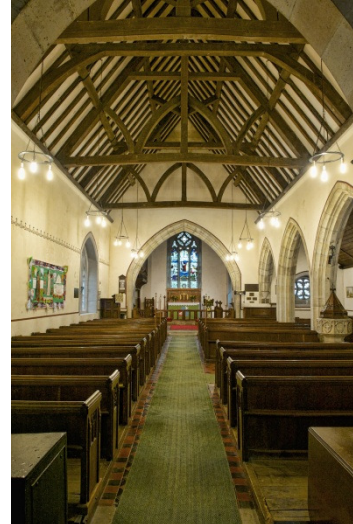
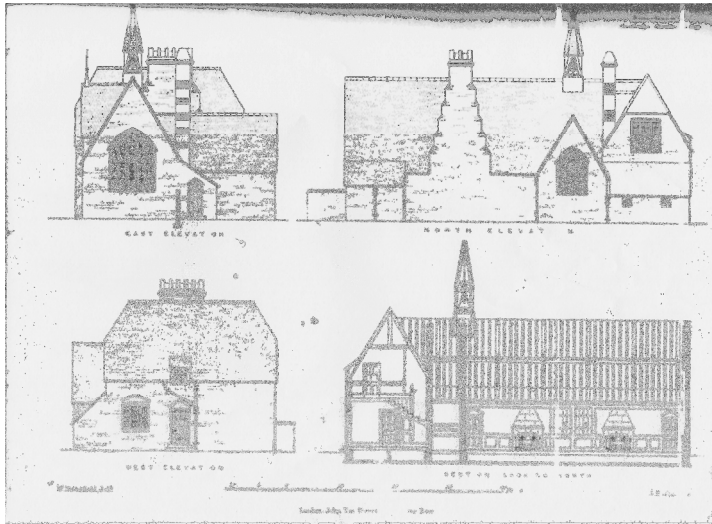
- 6.1 The centrepiece of the proposed Conservation Area is St Cuthbert's Church (Grade II\*) by William Butterfield replacing an earlier Georgian church on the same site. Butterfield's biographer Paul Thompson discusses at length how Sessay church demonstrates the architect's belief that buildings should appear deeply rooted in their landscape,

***"...in the process of composition itself...were the governing principles of the picturesque and the sublime. Both followed from the discovery that buildings should be seen not as isolated objects, but as part of the landscape".***

Butterfield's commission at Sessay overlooking a medieval landscape provided an ideal opportunity for his vision of architecture to excel.

- 6.2 Butterfield designed St Cuthbert's church in the medieval gothic style, ideally suited to its context. The Church has a notable oak shingle spire and lych gate roof; both the church and school are stone built with a diminishing coursed stone roof. Butterfield's commission choreographs the various components within space, he harmonises them by adopting a single architectural style and materiality. Butterfield designed the buildings, structures and landscape to coalesce, a classic example of what we might today call place-making. There can be no better case made for designating a Conservation Area in Sessay than to

acknowledge and protect the true spirit of William Butterfield's intent, a unified composition of built form thought by scholars to be one of this architect's most successful.



Figs 17: Drawings from *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica* (Second Series 1857) indicate designs for a school and masters accommodation similar to Sessay. Fig 18: The interior of St Cuthbert's Church with its oak crown-post roof trusses and quadrant braces.

- 6.3 The church yard at St Cuthbert is well defined; it remains in use today and contains several notable gravestones and tombs recording familiar family names and personalities.
- 6.4 William Butterfield's mixed school and two bay Masters House of 1848 in coursed rubble and ashlar was enlarged in 1910 and again in 1949. The school still retains its separate outdoor privy's for girls and boys now in use for storage; each room in the school also originally had its own segregated entrance and cloaks.
- 6.5 The former Rectory (architect unknown) and now a private residence and fine art book business, dates from the C18th, it is the grandest house in Sessay and contains a fine walled garden with Ha-Ha. Formerly three storeys it was reduced to two following a fire in 1926. The reverend Mathew Dodsworth was a notable Rector of Sessay and an early English botanist. In 1690 he was living at a previous Rectory in Sessay, the site of which remains unknown. One of the earliest volumes in the Natural History Museums Sloane Herbarium was made by Dodsworth, it contains some of the first known records of English native plants.



Figs 19/20: Sessay community re-enacting Edwardian garden party at the Old Rectory in 2012; and the 3 storey Rectory before the 1926 fire.

- 6.6 Village Farm has been much altered and its townscape significance compromised by the addition of a modern farm bungalow, barn and various outbuildings. The farm does however



retain an early C19th brick and pan tiled barn with a mid C19th horse engine house, both listed in Grade II and unconverted at the time of survey. To the west lies one of Sessay's surviving ridge and furrow fields with associated ponds. A similar listed barn, engine house and cart shed can be found nearby at Manor Farm, these are now converted to residential use and are not within the proposed boundary.

6.7 Sessay Cottage Terrace was Butterfield's first residential commission in Sessay dating from the early 1850's. Over recent decades it has been much altered and is not designated. It was unusual for Butterfield to use pantiles for this work, other cottages in the village are generally clothed in flat grey/black tile. The land associated with this terrace once contained an orchard, some mature pear and apple trees still survive. The Old Barn originally formed part of the group and was found to contain a strong underlying geometry within its proportions. Overall, the form, scale and height of Butterfield's terrace was designed to diminish as it progressed back into the landscape from the main street.

6.8 The Arts and Crafts style sits comfortably within the proposed Sessay Conservation Area and its medieval landscape. It is notable that architects of the day adopting this style believed that factory production was monotonous and led to the deskilling of the individual worker, which destroyed any natural creativity. They felt the solution lay in the medieval past and medieval architecture with its rich variety of ornament, embodying those individual craft skills being lost through the copying of standard forms.



*Fig's 21/22: Sessay Cottage Terrace by Butterfield dates from the early 1850's, now much altered and extended, but still recognisable.*

### **Extension 1**

6.9 Extension 1 is a proposed addition to the core character area because it contains a distinct and attractive range of 8 estate cottages dating to the time of William Butterfield's engagement in Sessay. The cottages are all indicated on the 1858 Dawney estate plan by Powell of Harrogate and despite some alteration still survive remarkably intact as a group.



Fig 23: Dawney Estate map



Fig 24: Pear Tree Cottage & The Old Cottage



Fig 25: Apple Tree Cottage



Fig 26: Lanreath and in the distance the Old Post Office

6.10 A postcard from the 1920/30's indicates that the cottages were originally more open to the street, with their boundary treatment generally consistent. Today the cottages are mostly obscured by mixed trees and tall hedges, their gardens front and rear being generous and now mature.

### Extension 2

6.11 A western boundary extension is proposed from Village Farm north to include and acknowledge the significance Churchward House & Plum Tree Cottage (probably early C19th), also Downe House. These properties form a composition when taken together with the row of mature trees that face onto the village cricket ground. The inclusion of this group would bring the boundary of the Conservation Area into the public heart of the village.

6.12 Downe House (mid C19th) is a bold and confident building by the York and North Midland Railway architect G T Andrews who was Sherriff of York in 1846/7. Originally a public house before becoming a farmhouse and now a single residence, the building is nationally significant and listed in Grade II. Downe House would provide n solid statement building at which to start (or end) the Sessay Conservation Area.





Fig 27: Oval View, looking towards Downe House



Fig 28: Downe House and outbuildings

### **Current Activities and Uses**

- 6.13 Employment in the proposed Conservation Area is based primarily at its 3 farms. Although Village Farm was vacant at the time of this assessment, the associated land was let and farmed for both arable and stock.
- 6.14 The Rectory is the headquarters for Potterton Books.
- 6.15 Other than St Cuthbert's school and church, all other building uses in the area are residential.

### **Landmark Buildings**

- 6.16 There are 5 landmark buildings within the proposed Conservation Area:
- St Cuthbert's Church Grade II\*
  - St Cuthbert's School Grade II
  - The Old Rectory Grade II
  - Village Farm Grade II
  - Downe House

### **Unlisted Buildings and Positively Contributing Buildings**

- 6.17 In addition to 9 listed buildings or structures in the proposed Conservation Area, there are a number of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the areas character and appearance.
- 6.18 Buildings identified as having a positive impact on the Conservation Area will vary, but commonly they represent good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provide public spaces with interest and variety. Most importantly they are valued and make a positive contribution to the special interest or character of the Conservation Area.



6.19 Some of the buildings and structures considered to make a positive contribution include:

**Core area**

- Rooper Hill (cottage)
- Church Farm (cottage and barns)
- Sessay Cottage Terrace & The Old Barn

**Extension 1** (the 8 Butterfield estate cottages)

- New Cottage
- Hazel Cottage
- The Rowans
- The Old Post Office
- Lanreath
- Pear Tree Cottage
- The Old Cottage
- Apple Tree Cottage

**Extension 2**

- Churchward House & Plum Tree Cottage

6.20 Buildings identified as being of local interest are shown on Map 2.

**Public Realm: Streetscape, Street Lighting and Street Furniture**

6.21 There are no extant cobble stone or hoggin (compacted clay/gravel) surfaces remaining in Sessay. Pavements and street surfaces are all tarmac with concrete kerbs. There are a series of public rights of way across fields that are not made up or well marked.

6.22 There has been a tendency in recent years to over engineer and urbanise Sessay's public realm, streetscape, lighting and signage, particularly around St Cuthbert's church and school where high levels of traffic and pedestrian movement can exist at certain times of the day.

6.23 There is a single pavement on the eastern side of the village street running from St Cuthbert's to the centre of the village, edged for much of its length by native hedgerows, these require regular maintenance and are planted too close to the footpath. The footpath is itself very narrow and there is no footpath on either side of the street to the north of the village where further housing development is planned. Sessay's Community Plan contains a short term action to "Investigate ways to maintain verges and pavements and improve footpaths".

6.24 There are very few active street lights in the village making pedestrian movement at night or during winter months particularly challenging given the area's narrow or missing pavements.

**Distinctive Local Features**

6.25 Within the Conservation Area there are a number of building and landscape features offering a distinct identity, these are generally set out in the text above. The area does however contain several wildlife ponds linked to Sessay's local ecosystem. Some ponds are designed within gardens (e.g. the rectangular pond on the south side of the approach to the Rectory, shown in an Estate Field Book as existing since at least 1797) and other larger ponds and rills (small streams) that may be medieval in origin linked to water management associated with the ridge and furrow fields. Historic maps of Sessay indicate ponds scattered throughout the village, understanding the function and ecological significance of these

features and their role within the landscape could potentially help with future surface water management in the village and to better appreciate and foster the area's biodiversity.



*Fig 29: Two silted up dew ponds associated with a ridge and furrow field adjacent to Village Farm*



*Fig 30: Great Crested newts (an EU protected species) have been recorded in Sessay, they are often associated with ridge and furrow fields and natural pond ecosystems, now becoming increasingly rare due to modern farming practices.*

### **Problems and Negative Factors**

- 6.26 Much of the proposed Conservation Area is of high aesthetic quality, but there are a number of issues that detract from the areas special interest.
- 6.27 The setting of St Cuthbert's School is compromised by poor boundary treatment, the design of its play areas, inappropriate and unattractive signage and light pollution at night. Car parking and traffic management associated with the village school and drop off facilities are also unresolved. Parked vehicles cause visual clutter, damage to grass verges/ highway edges and devalue an area of common land which provides public open space, and when clear, otherwise adds to the landscape setting of both the listed church and school.



Fig 31: Signage and boundary treatment at Sessay school



Fig 32: Sessay's narrow pavements

- 6.28 St Cuthbert's Church is suffering from a declining congregation. The lack of toilet & kitchen facilities restricts its wider community benefit. Sessay's Community Plan has an action point to work with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to help provide such facilities. The high architectural significance of this building in Grade II\* combined with the church's open and limited interior space makes resolving the issue challenging.
- 6.29 Village Farm was vacant at the time of undertaking this appraisal and in need of repair and reuse. Land between the listed barn and Lyng Easthough to the north lacks enclosure and edge definition onto the village street. Associated modern buildings such as the farms bungalow, modern barns and outbuildings detract from the character of the area. The current vacancy at Village Farm offers redevelopment and enhancement potential.
- 6.30 Some properties (most notably within Sessay Cottage Terrace) have had their window proportions altered and some UPVC windows and doors incorporated. Although several properties in the area proposed for designation have had modern double glazed windows installed, these generally do not detract too harmfully from the overall character and appearance that is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- 6.31 Many properties have had modern conservatories, extensions, car ports or garages added to them, these are of mixed design quality, size, materiality and style. The designation of a Conservation Area should provide an opportunity to encourage a more consistent palate of materials for new development and some reinstatement of original architectural features.

**Neutral Sites and Areas**

- 6.32 Neutral areas neither enhance a Conservation Area nor do they significantly detract from its quality. They mostly contain buildings of the modern era in good condition but built in styles that fail to reflect the vernacular style or local character of the area and their siting often disrupts the traditional plot pattern of the area. Neutral areas offer the potential for enhancement over time.
- 6.33 Most neutral areas are found around the 3 farms, Rooper Hill, Church Farm and Village Farm, where modern farm sheds, barns and other outbuildings have been erected close to positively contributing or designated buildings.



6.34 Ivy House at the rear of Sessay Cottage Terrace has been included as a neutral building within the proposed Conservation Area boundary because it is early C19th in origin and forms an urban edge to Back Lane and to the village street. Although much altered and extended, it also holds potential for enhancement over time at an important junction. All other properties from Ivy House on this eastern side of the village street running through to Village Farm have been excluded from the boundary as detracting from the architectural and historic interest of the area.



Fig 33: Village Farm sheds and Outbuildings



Fig 34: Church Farm modern open barn

3.35 Oval View in proposed Extension 2 is considered to be a neutral site due to its modern build and indistinctive detailing; the form, height and alignment of this terrace and the rhythm of its fenestration does however continue a theme adjacent to the earlier Churchward House & Plum Tree Cottage.

### Summary of Issues

6.36 The following is a list of the main planning issues affecting the proposed Conservation Area in Sessay:

- Vacant listed building and redundancy of Village Farm is an opportunity for development to enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- Traffic management and parking associated with the school, church and common land is poor and needs to be resolved.
- Public realm, signage, lighting and streetscape associated with the school and church is poor.
- The lack of w/c and kitchen facilities at the grade II\* listed church restricts its role in the community.
- The influx of plastic windows and number of the traditional multi-pane windows which have been replaced with large pane sash windows or modern casements, which provides an opportunity to encourage the reinstatement of lost architectural features and details.
- The design, location and materials used for house extensions, garages, car ports and conservatories.
- Alterations to traditional chimney stacks with reductions in height and/or pots removed.
- Interlocking clay and concrete tiles are replacing traditional pantiles.
- Inappropriate streetlights combined with narrow or non-existent pavements. There is a need to consider a street pavement connecting to the north of the village.
- New development should encourage elements of local distinctiveness and character.

- Sessay is prone to flooding and requires a Surface Water Management Plan. Although the problem lies primarily to the north of the Village, a management solution needs to be holistic.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

6.37 There are 8 Listed Buildings and other designated structures within the core area for potential Conservation Area designation.

1. The Old Rectory, now house, C18th with later additions and alterations, reroofed after a fire in the 1920s. Grade: II, Listed: 1 May 1952, ID: 332897, OS Grid Reference: SE4615675117
2. Barn with Attached Horse Engine House on North-West Side of Farmyard at Village Farm (Early C19 with mid C19 engine house); Grade: II Listed: 20 December 1988 ID: 332898 OS Grid Reference: SE4578775103
3. Sessay Church of England School and Masters House, 1848 by William Butterfield, enlarged 1874, 1910 and 1949. Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332888, OS Grid Reference: SE4640874759
4. Church of St Cuthbert, Race Lane, 1847-8 By William Butterfield for Viscount Downe, Grade: II\* Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332889 OS Grid Reference: SE4642574729
5. Lychgate to Church of St Cuthbert, 1847-8 by William Butterfield, Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332891, OS Grid Reference: SE4641274708
6. Bridge over Birdforth Beck Approximately 60 Metres to South-West of Church of St Cuthbert. Possibly medieval arch, otherwise mid C19, Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332893, OS Grid Reference: SE4639774678
7. Churchyard Wall at Church of St Cuthbert, Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332892 OS Grid Reference: SE4646574740
8. Cross, approximately 5 metres to south-east of porch of Church of St Cuthbert, Cross on shaft and base. Late medieval and C19, Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332890, OS Grid Reference: SE4641974717

### **Listed Buildings and other designated assets within the 2 potential Conservation Area extensions.**

1. Downe House Farmhouse, formerly public house, now house and attached cottage. Mid C19 by G T Andrews. Grade: II, Listed: 20 December 1988, ID: 332899, OS Grid Reference: SE4568875234

### **Notable Non Designated Heritage Assets**

6.38 The North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) holds data on non-designated heritage assets in Sessay, accessible via the following web link: <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23824/Historic-environment-record>. It is hoped to identify individual non designated heritage assets through public consultation and nomination.

## **7. Management Plan**

- 7.1 The purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan is to provide a clear and structured approach to proposed development, repairs and alterations which have an impact upon the proposed Conservation Area.
- 7.2 The aim of the Sessay Management Plan would be to identify buildings and spaces which have the potential for improvement or further enhancement. Although Sessay is an attractive village, there are some buildings or spaces which could be improved or enhanced for the wider benefit of the Conservation Area. The Management Plan will therefore highlight such issues and suggest measures to address them.
- 7.3 It is hoped that through public consultation that these matters can be developed and a suitable Management Plan produced.

### **Further Information**

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