

## Appleby Heritage Action Zone Conservation Area

### Description of Appleby Conservation Area

Appleby is a small market town in eastern Cumbria. It was established after the Norman Conquest and developed as the county town of Westmorland. The River Eden runs in a loop around the oldest part of the town creating a naturally defensive position. On the hilltop at the south end of the town sits the castle, which dates back to the 11th century. The buildings at the castle site have been re-constructed and amended over the subsequent years. Both the main castle building and surrounding registered parkland were developed at the instruction of Lady Anne Clifford, the town's most famous resident. Appleby is perhaps most famous now for its annual horse fair whose origins date back to the 17th century. With a station on the line of the beautiful Carlisle to Settle Railway, tourism is very much a major contributor to the local economy. The central part of Appleby was designated as a conservation area on 18 November 1969 and revised in April 1981.



St Lawrence's Church in Appleby, burial place of Lady Anne Clifford. © Historic England



The lower end of Boroughgate, Appleby. © Historic England

### **Character of the Historic Environment**

Appleby was laid out in the Middle Ages in a classic grid pattern, with numerous burgess plots running off a central road, which also served as a market place, identified by the 2 market crosses. Whilst Appleby remains a small market town, the evidence of its former status as a county town is to be found in Boroughgate, which is unusually wide and runs from the castle through the middle of the old town and ends at the medieval St Lawrence's Church at the bottom of the hill – where a cross road (Bridge Street) leads to a bridge over the river. The impressive stone buildings of Boroughgate include a mix of former coaching inns, hotels and banks and perhaps most impressive of all a Moot Hall, dating back to 1596, which is still in use with the town council chambers above the shops and tourist information centre below. The upper part of Boroughgate has an avenue of lime trees, further enhancing the quiet, stately character of the town. The Lady Anne Clifford connection to the town is very visible, her elaborate tomb is in St Lawrence's Church (which she refurbished); she endowed the St Anne's Hospital Almshouses along Boroughgate and rebuilt parts of the castle - which she claimed was her favourite home.



Boroughgate in Appleby – the wide main street at the heart of the town centre conservation area with the Moot Hall in the distance. © Historic England

## Economic Profile

Appleby is ranked in the 50% least deprived parts of the country using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the neighbouring Bongate area is amongst the 30% least deprived area. However these broad measures hide some underlying factors such as affordable housing and access to services. The parish of Appleby has a population of 3,050 (2011 census) with a much higher proportion of that population being over 65 (26.3%) compared to the national average of 16.4% and the Eden Local Authority average of 21.9%. 97.8% of the population are white British. The census also showed that Eden's population is generally healthier than the rest of Cumbria and England.

Appleby has a lower average household income (mean household income of £23,770 compared to Eden's average of £32,673 and national average of £36,265). Appleby's economy profile shows that retail is the largest employment sector (14%) and construction a close second (14%) with accommodation and food just behind at 12%. With over a quarter of the local economy linked to the shops, cafes and accommodation, attracting visitors to the town is important to the future economic success of the place. Independent businesses make up 82% of the shops in Appleby - contributing to the small and local character of the town. However, vacancy rates amongst the shop units have steadily increased from 2012 (5%) to 7%, 9% and now 12% in 2015. Qualitative data in the 2015 Appleby Town Centre Health Check highlighted a lack of footfall being a key challenge facing businesses; this is supported by a noted downward trend in visitors to the Tourist Information Centre in the historic Moot Hall. A business confidence survey of

2015 found the biggest challenges facing businesses were online competition, footfall, attracting visitors and employing staff. Crucially 37% of businesses reported that their turnover was down on the previous year and 47% indicated profitability was down too. In December 2015 50% of the 98 business units in Appleby were flooded, further affecting business confidence (the Chamber of Trade reported it to be down by as much as 75% in the first half of 2016).

### **Risks to the Conservation Area**

The lower part of the town was inundated by the December flooding of 2015. This had a serious impact on several local businesses and left key buildings such as St Lawrence's Church underwater and its railings damaged. This flooding came on top of the decline in the number of visitors to the town and with several important buildings vacant and needing refurbishment the conservation area was placed on the Historic England 'At Risk Register'. Intervention and support was needed to improve the visitor offer which was seen as crucial to boosting the local economy – which would in turn lead to a revival in the fortunes of the historic environment.



Aerial image of Appleby as the flooding of winter 2015 begins to subside. © Environment Agency

### **Opportunities and Potential**

As part of the response to the flooding and also the longer term issues, Appleby became the North West's first Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) in April 2017. The main activities in Appleby can be summarised as: improving the historic environment and repairing a

number of listed buildings, including the Keep at Appleby Castle and the White Hart Hotel; boosting tourism through a series of projects including a town trail to showcase the town's rich heritage; and engaging local people through initiatives like Heritage Open Days and surveying the town's listed buildings. Using these opportunities the partners hope to demonstrate the economic potential of heritage to enhance the economy of this historic town.

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