

# Conservation Area Appraisal



## Old Cassop

December 2009

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## PREFACE

### CONSERVATION AREAS AND CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

A **conservation area** is an area that is predominately historic in character and is special or attractive enough to warrant protection through the planning process. The historic centre of Durham or Barnard Castle are obvious examples as are many traditional villages in the County, such as Old Cassop.

Durham County Council, as the local planning authority, has a statutory duty to preserve and enhance the special character of a conservation area. It seeks to achieve this through designating them, reviewing them, producing appraisals and management plans and considering the character of a conservation area in the planning process.

A **conservation area appraisal and management plan** is a document that states what it is about a place that merits it being a conservation area and suggests courses of action to maintain and enhance its character. It does so by exploring the development of an area and how that is reflected in the present; in its buildings, street layouts, natural areas and archaeology. It works on the principle that once the special character of an area is understood then it is easier to assess and formulate

development proposals and to ensure that they are sympathetic and contribute to the character of the area. Its target audience is anyone with an interest in a conservation area, be it as a resident, property owner, developer, planner or local historian.

**The Old Cassop Appraisal and Management plan** is the latest in a line of appraisals covering the 14 conservation areas within the City of Durham District. It is split into three sections. Section 1 'General Character' gives an overview of the area's history and character. Section 2 'A Closer Look at the Old Cassop Conservation Area' provides an in-depth look in the form of a walk around the conservation area. Section 3 'Management of the Conservation Area' details the planning policy background, provides planning guidance and suggests areas for enhancement.

### PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This document was subject to a period of public consultation running from 9<sup>th</sup> March to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. The local Durham County Council Member, the Parish council and residents of the conservation area received a copy of the draft document, a one page summary and a feedback form. This was then followed up by a public meeting

held at the Cassop Community Centre on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009.

Four written responses were received. These all felt that the appraisal summarised the character of the area well and the attention paid to the village was welcomed. Various issues relating to current development within the village, traffic levels and lack of amenity space were also mentioned. These concerns were echoed at the public meeting where a long discussion was held on the purpose and practicalities of conservation area designation.

## GENERAL CHARACTER

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Old Cassop is a small village that lies five miles south of Durham and a mile to the north west of New Cassop. The village is situated on a hill that rises from Cassop Vale and forms a rough horseshoe shape bounded by Running Waters at the east and Shadforth in the north. Geologically this hill forms part of the boundary of the East Durham Plateau where it starts to merge with the Wear Lowlands and comprises a small detached section of the magnesian limestone belt that runs from South Shields to Ferrybridge. The underlying geology provides a strong landscape setting for the village which is located high on the

southern section of the hill and overlooks the A181 and Strawberry Hill to the north and the Wear Lowland to the east and northeast, including a distant view of Durham Cathedral.

The wider landscape setting is characterised by the contrast of undulating magnesian limestone hills and the broader more uniform Wear Lowlands. Agriculture is the predominant land use with grazing to the fore which presents a patchwork of green fields punctuated by roads, settlements and woodland.

Presently the village contains two farms, houses of varying ages, styles and types. The combination of working farms and houses within a relatively small area gives the village a character that is distinct from many other villages in the area, which have either become largely residential in nature or undergone significant expansion in the last century. That it retains a working rural character adds depth to the village's character.

The Old Cassop Conservation Area was designated in 1981 and encompasses the village together with the fields to the north up to the A181, Durham to Hartlepool Road. To the south, the Conservation Area boundary is tightly drawn around the back gardens of the village.

## 1.2 ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

The parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington lies in the small valley known as Cassop Vale. Little is known of the parish's early development except for a few small enclosures, identified from aerial photographs, of Iron Age (700BC-AD43) and Roman (AD43 to c.410) dates.

Firmer evidence slowly emerges in the medieval period. The origins of the place name 'Cassop' derives from the Anglo Saxon word 'hop' meaning valley and, either 'Cattes' meaning wild cat or the name of a person 'Casa'. This provides two possible meanings of 'Wild Cat Valley' or 'Casa's Valley'. This area was once part of a hunting ground for the Prince Bishops of Durham and located within the now defunct boundaries of Queringdonshire and the parish of Kelloe.

The first written evidence of a settlement within the area comes in 1183 when the Boldon Book states that 'In Cazhope, William de Kent holds four oxgangs, and serves on the Bishops embassies.' An oxgang was a measure of land equivalent to what one ox could plough in a year, around 15 acres.

This gives a total manor of around 60 acres, in the control of the Bishops of Durham, which is a relatively small area but still one that could be based on a village.

This manor was still around 60 acres at the time of Bishop Hatfield's survey in 1377. The Hatfield survey mentions further, albeit lesser, tenants and it is from this we can get a sense of the village of Cassop at this time. There were six tenants who farmed a total of around 330 acres, in addition to the 60 acres of the manor or original holding. Untenanted lands and tenants owning more than one plot are mentioned and this may indicate a village that has shrunk after the Black Death (c1348-50) or it could just indicate plots that were leased to family members or sub-tenants. A lease document of 1587 again mentions only six tenants, each holding only small areas of land. All these sources suggest that the original village of Cassop was a small one that may have followed a pattern of expansion in the 12th and 13th centuries only to contract in the late 14th century. The small size also suggests that some of the surrounding land was still reserved for the hunting grounds of the Prince Bishops.

In all probability this original village is now Old Cassop and the focus of the conservation area. The simple plan of the village, a single street off which lead four lanes, is characteristic of a medieval street village. Ridge and furrow earthworks in the fields north of the village and before Chapman Beck are evidence of medieval farming whilst the small size of the settlement reflects the size of Cassop in the records.

Whilst there are no medieval buildings left in the village it is this period that gives Old Cassop its layout and basic identity.

It is likely that farming remained the principle occupation of the village up to the 1830s when the first coal mines were sunk in the area. The growth of collieries was considerable with the Cassop, Bowburn, Crow Trees and Heugh Hall collieries being located in close walking distance to the village.

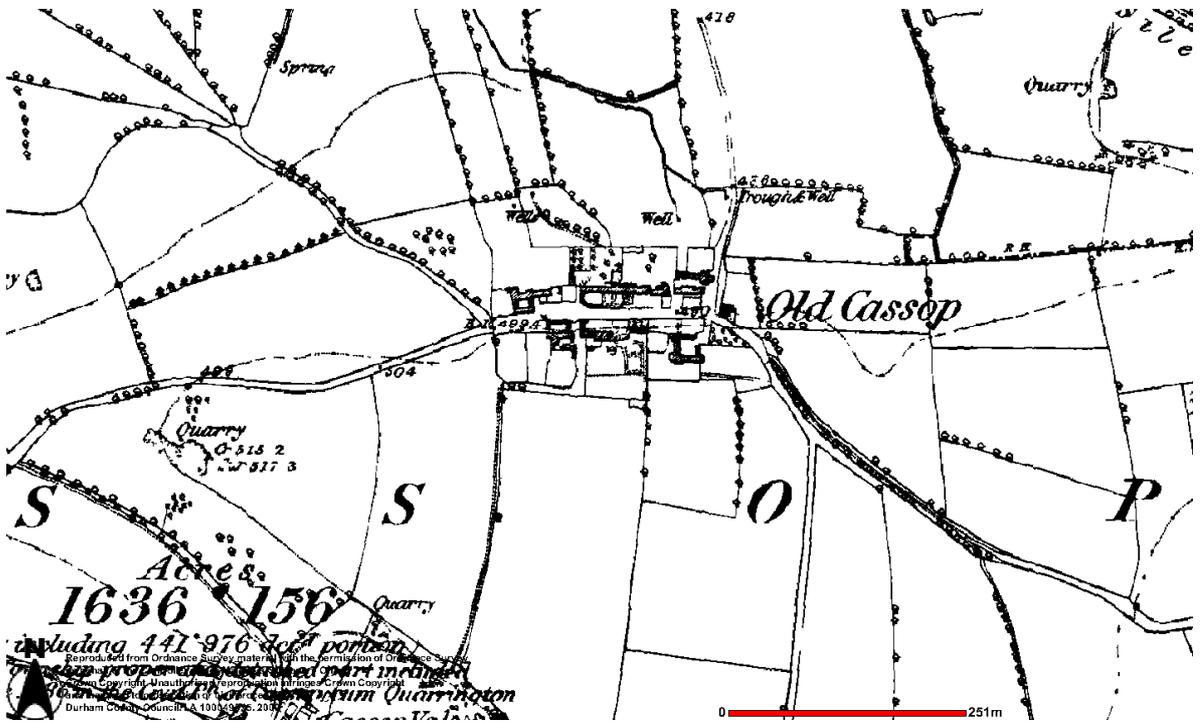
The unprecedented growth in population that followed led not to the expansion of Old Cassop but the creation of a new village, New Cassop, (now Cassop) and the creation of a new parish, Cassop-Cum-Quarrington.

Within the trade directories of the time a clear distinction is made between Old and New Cassop with the former being described as only being inhabited by a few farmers whilst New Cassop was a growing village with a new parish church and non-conformist chapels. This growth was short lived due to the closure of the Cassop, Crow Tree and Heugh Hall Collieries by 1894. However it was clear that whilst the countryside had been transformed around it, Old Cassop had remained essentially what it always was; a small farming community.

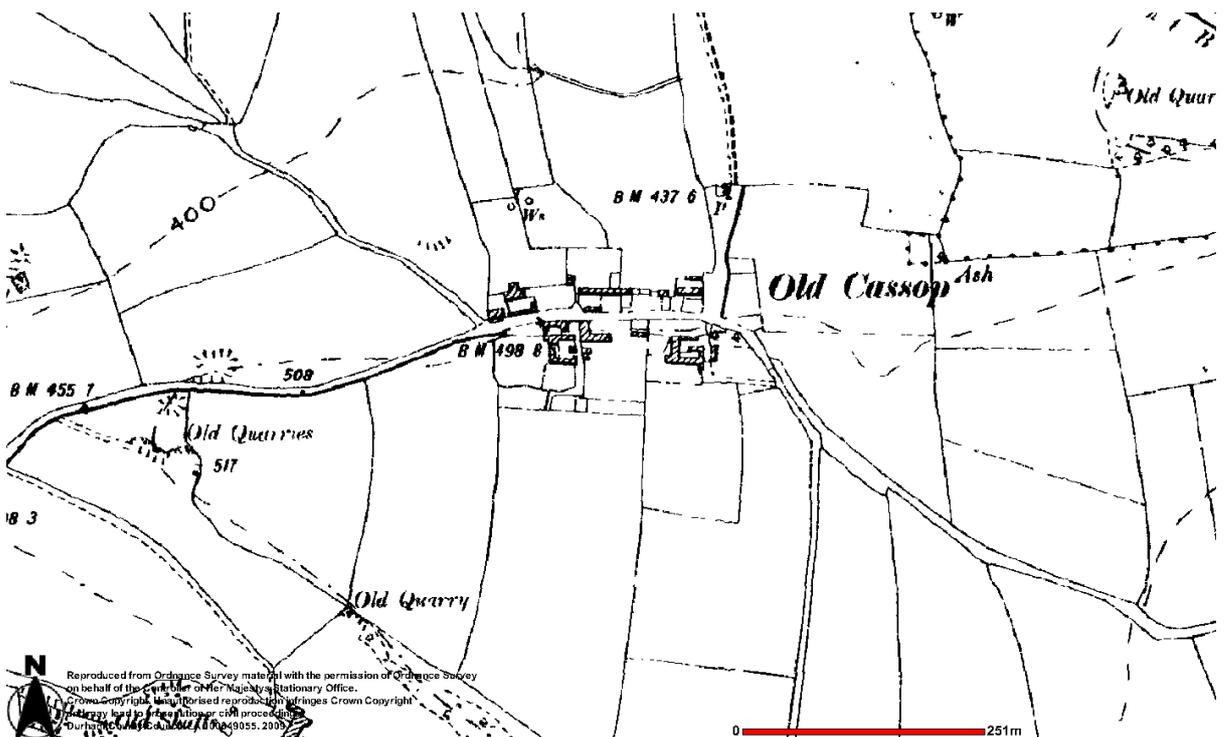
19th century maps (maps 1 & 2) show a collection of between four and six farms within the village. It is tempting to think that these correspond to the holdings of the six tenants mentioned back in 1587; at least it shows how the village remained at a similar size throughout the centuries.

The 20th century to the present has seen the number of farms in the village reduced to two whilst conversions and new houses have introduced a stronger residential character. Even with these changes the village has retained its small compact scale and its history and age can still be read through its remaining buildings, boundaries, field patterns and earthworks.

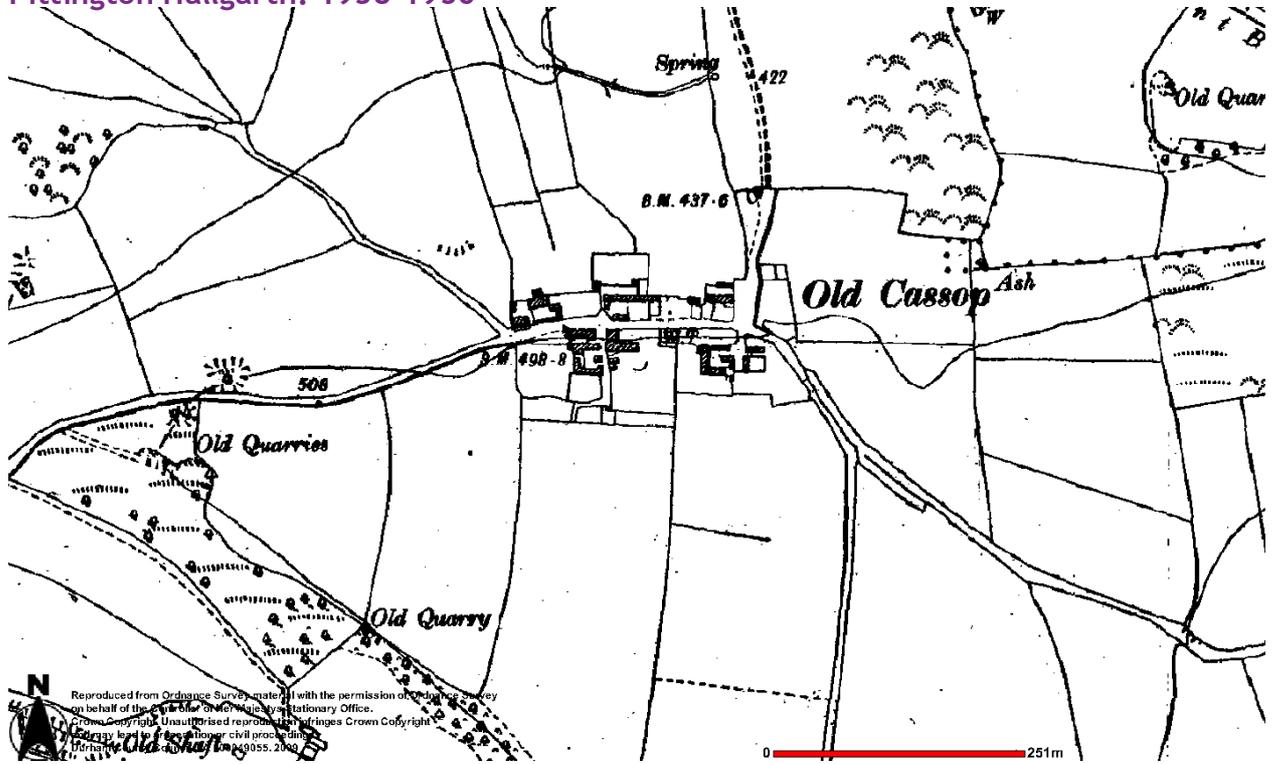
**Historic Map 1**  
**Pittington Hallgarth. 1856 to 1865**



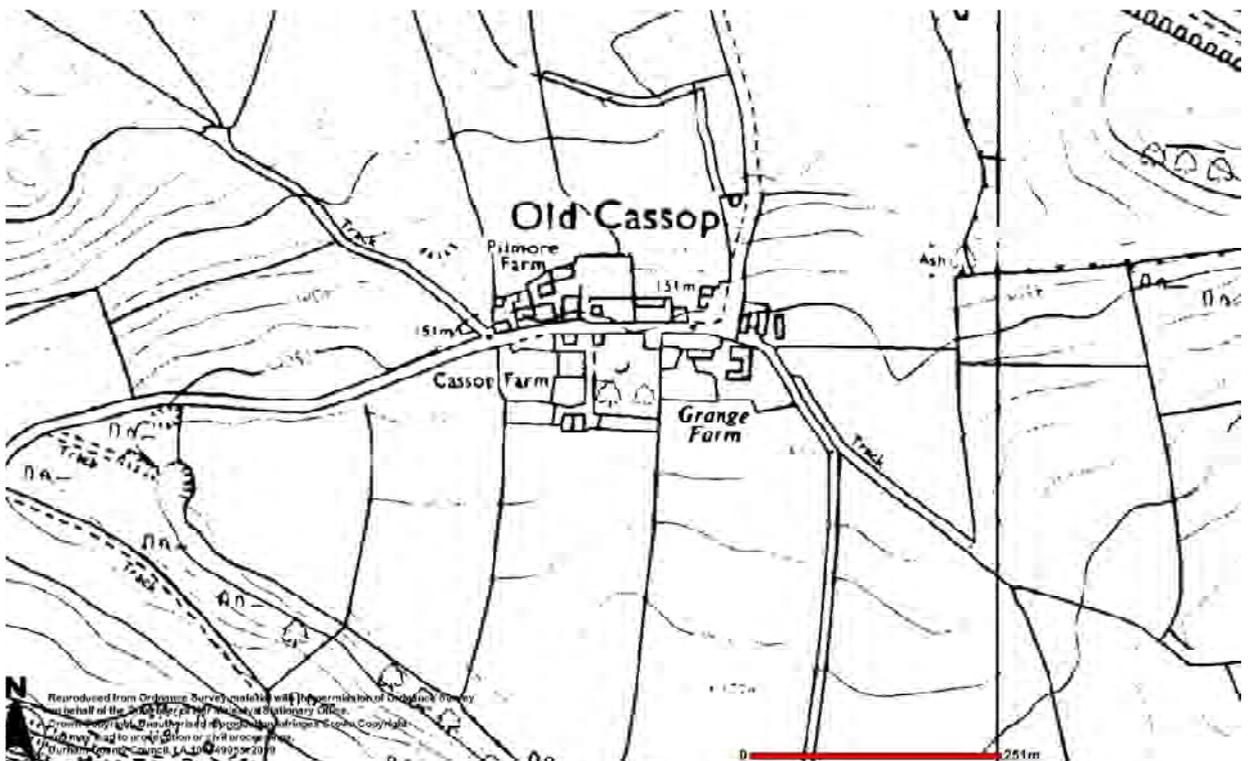
**Historic Map 2**  
**Pittington Hallgarth. 1894-1899**



**Historic Map 3**  
**Pittington Hallgarth. 1938-1950**



**Historic Map 4**  
**Pittington Hallgarth. 1970-1979**



### 1.3 BASIC LAYOUT AND CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The conservation area comprises the village of Old Cassop and the fields that lie between the village and the A181 (Map 1). The village is the principle focus of the conservation area whilst the fields provide its setting, especially when approaching from the A181.

A single road leads through the conservation area which winds south from the A181 up the vale to turn into and through the village before continuing west out to the Sherburn / Quarrington Hill Road. Two other tracks provide access out to fields south-east and north-west of the village. The roads and tracks are simple and largely unmarked and whilst there are problems with traffic cutting through the village the distance between the village and the main roads means that a sense of peace and seclusion arises.

The village is laid out on a single main street that runs in an east-west direction on a relatively flat narrow plateau. Buildings are situated either side of the street in detached plots with some back-land development focussed on the track running up to Cassop Farmhouse and Hill Crest.

The street pattern is enhanced by predominantly traditional boundaries of stone walls to the street and hedgerows to the margins. Single trees or small

groups of trees are found throughout and though they do not dominate they compliment and add to the overall rural character.

The Old Cassop Conservation Area encapsulates a small village that was largely untouched by a mining industry that transformed surrounding areas. The character of the conservation area reflects an evolving community, somewhat isolated in its landscape setting. Even if buildings and farming practices have changed the relationship between the village and the surrounding fields is something that has essentially remained the same over centuries.

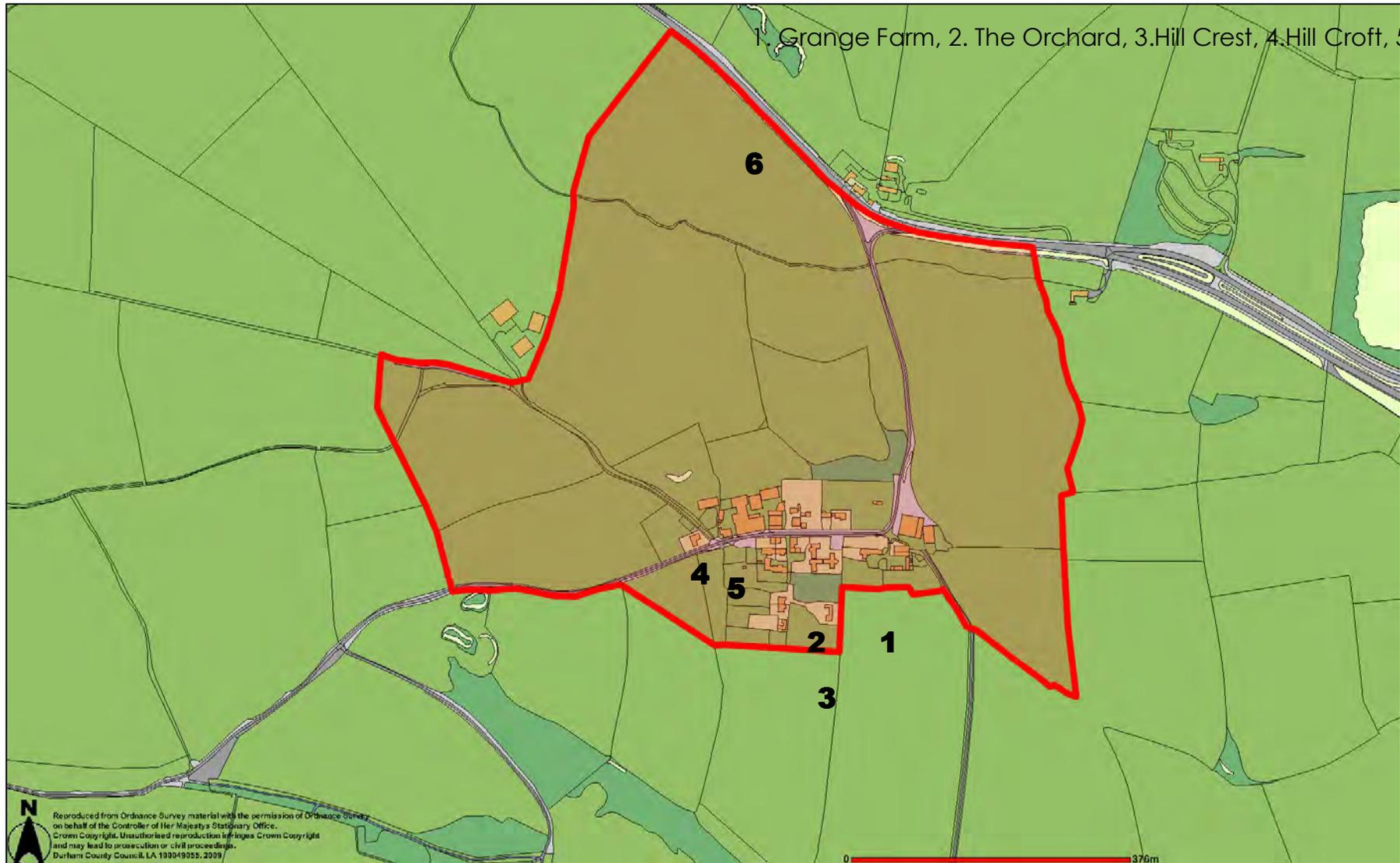
The historic and modern buildings of the conservation area are typical examples of their age and there is little pretension or grandness to them. When this is considered alongside the degree of modern change, both in terms of alteration and new buildings, it gives the impression that this is not the most historically and architecturally strong conservation area.

This initial impression is a little misleading in that it is the very simple layout and the small scale of the area which is in itself relatively rare and definitely worth preserving. The buildings both historic and modern, combine with the landscape, gardens, trees and archaeological features to

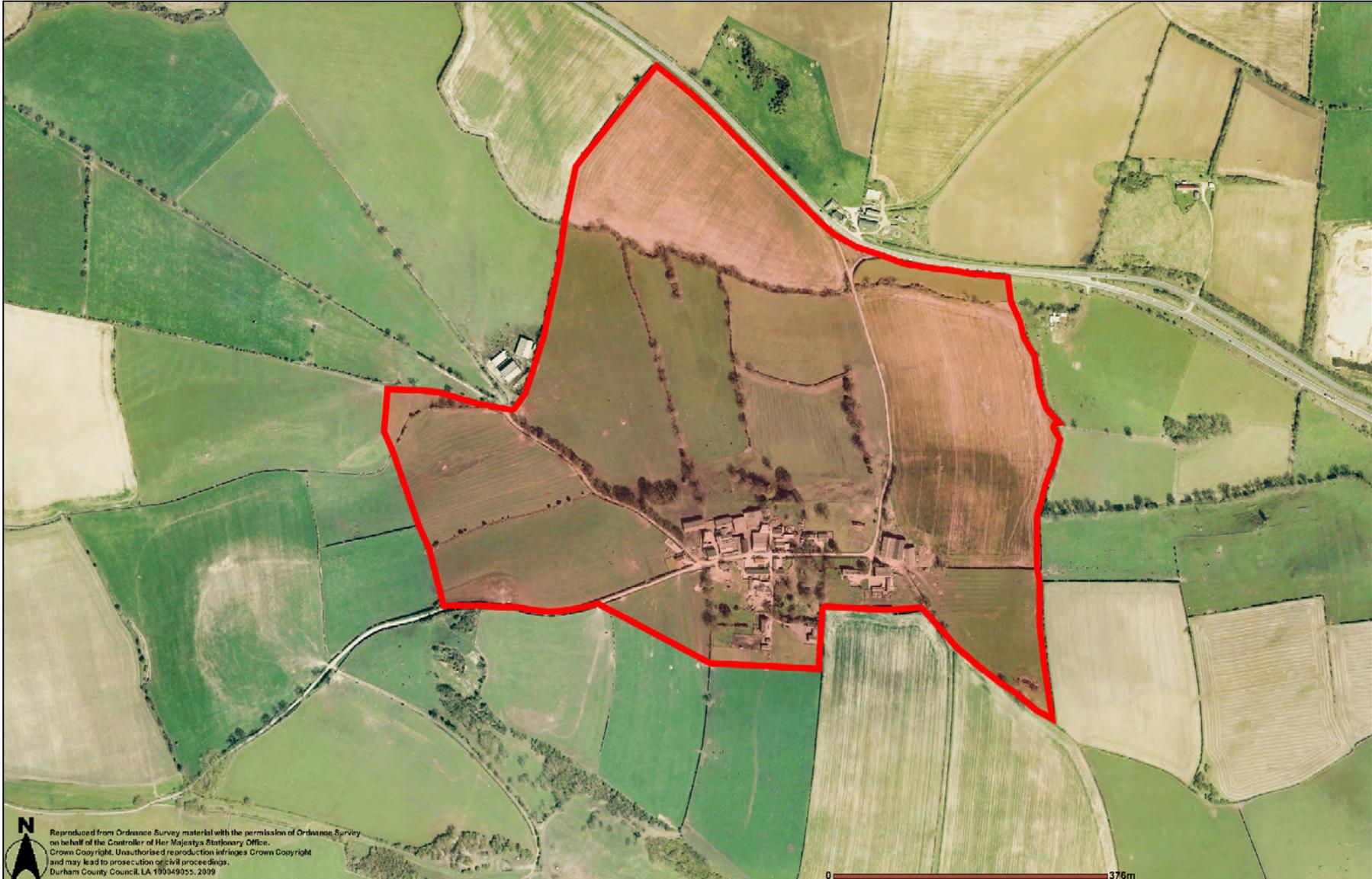
form part of an overall story that is more about continuity with the past and the local area.

It is clear that the character of the conservation area can be enhanced and improved upon but it is more important that change continues to be carefully managed and the fundamentals of the conservation area; the relationship of small village to landscape remain intact.

**Map 1**  
**Old Cassop, Conservation Area Boundary**



**Map 2**  
Old Cassop, Conservation Area Boundary  
Aerial View



## 1.4 BUILDINGS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

The buildings of the conservation area are all located within the village. They consist of houses, agricultural buildings and barn conversions of various sizes and dates. The majority of properties are sited facing the main street that runs through the village. A few 20th century buildings are sited more informally off a track to the south of the street but the predominant place for development is traditional, which is facing the road either directly onto the street or slightly set back with a small front garden.

The surviving historic farm buildings, either working or converted, provide the main built structure of the village. Two remaining farmhouses face the road standing slightly detached from collections of stone barns and shelters that form loose enclosed yards. Where farms and farm buildings have disappeared their plots have either been redeveloped with modern houses or left as gardens with the occasional overgrown ruined wall, stone dump or footing overgrown with turf.

Modern developments intermingle continually with the historic; modern farm buildings can be found detached or alongside historic ones, bungalows sit next to old buildings, some conversions have been so thorough as to disguise the age of a building.

Consequently the impact of modern development makes for an unusual rural conservation area, in which the historic qualities of buildings and landscape are significant without being over-dominant.

Though there is this mix of historic and modern buildings the traditional sense of community and togetherness, very characteristic of a small village is still maintained. This is in part due to the small-scale of the village and the absence of small suburban estates or rows of 19th century terraced houses. The style of all buildings within the area is based on simple traditional designs using a limited pallet of local materials: stone and brick for walls with or without a plaster finish, and slates and pantiles for roofs.

The height of buildings varies between one and two stories. This is significant when viewing the village from the bottom of the vale or the approach roads because the impression is of a collection of buildings without any single property dominating and this underlines the sense of community so important to the character of a small village.

## 1.5 HISTORIC BUILDING DETAILS

It is difficult to precisely date the historic buildings within the conservation area but it is likely that most are those shown on the earliest map of 1860 (Map 1). Outwardly farm houses have a balanced appearance with a vertical emphasis formed by window openings that once contained sash windows. Walls predominate over windows and doors, giving a solid appearance to a building. Decoration is minimal.

These characteristics present a very traditional rural character typical of the late 18th to mid 19th century, though considering the age of the village it is possible that the remains of older buildings may lie behind later facades.

Farm buildings are even simpler, comprising of roughly coursed rubble stone with little to no architectural flourishes. This suggests they were constructed by individual farmers at various times rather than by a large estate owner. Where farm buildings have been converted the results have been mixed; some have largely lost their agricultural character and have become domestic whilst others are still recognisable as former farm buildings and as such add more to the character of the conservation area.

Stone then brick are the chief building materials with the former

denoting the oldest buildings. The same is true of boundary walls. Roofs are generally slate with pantiles used on some agricultural buildings. Original windows and doors have not survived whilst minor architectural details such as door canopies, stone bands and decorated eaves are absent, with the exception of Pilmore Farm House which has carved stone 'kneelers' to each gable.

## 1.6 ARCHAEOLOGY

Interspersed within the village are a number of archaeological remains of former buildings, house plots, boundaries and tracks. Outside the village, ridge and furrow marks indicate a former medieval open field whilst many field boundaries probably indicate the way in which the land is subdivided after a local enclosure act. These features have not been properly surveyed or identified but it is clear that the village presents a relatively rare opportunity, in local terms, to explore the development of a Durham settlement largely untouched by the mining industry.

Aesthetically these features add considerably to the character of the conservation area, providing a sense of history other than the remaining historic buildings. This is particularly the case where such features are located close to or within the village.

## 1.7 OPEN SPACES AND GARDENS

The fields that surround the village give it its setting, allowing it to be seen from numerous vantage points and in turn expansive views can be found at the edges of the village out to the surrounding area. Whilst the landscape is divided into fields these are large and mostly unobstructed by tree cover or large modern farm buildings, allowing the rise and fall of the underlying hill to be clearly seen.

By contrast the village presents a tightly-grouped set of buildings that appear to huddle together in comparison to the surrounding landscape. The only open spaces occur within gardens and to the margins.

Being so small and rural there is no park or any such civic space. Rather it is the informal spaces of gardens, grass verges and surrounding fields that help the village maintain its rural character and tie it closely into the surrounding landscape. Gardens are very significant and the village contains a number of well maintained gardens that reinforce the simple quiet nature of the village. A few overgrown plots compliment the tended gardens, adding a note of wildness. In contrast a number of open spaces contain collections of farm machinery, piles of metal and wood that detract from the

character of the conservation area.

## 1.8 TREES

Trees play a significant role in forming the character of the conservation area.

There are no significant areas of woodland or veteran trees but mature trees of mostly native species occur within hedgerows, fields, gardens or bordering the grass verges of the main street. They do not occur in sufficient numbers to dominate any part of the conservation area. Rather they add to and punctuate its various parts, adding definition and visually softening the openness of the landscape or the buildings.

## 1.9 BOUNDARIES AND STREET SURFACES

There is a mix of boundary treatments within the conservation area. Fields are enclosed by a mix of mature trees, hedgerows and timber post/wire fencing.

Within the village traditional stone walls of roughly coursed rubble stone predominate both for farms and houses. Occasionally red brick is used as an alternative. Some walls are capped with stones laid vertically on edge, creating a jagged profile other employ flat stone copings.

A number of the larger properties have more traditional timber

boarded gates reinforcing the rural character.

Other boundaries include vertically and horizontally boarded timber fencing with occasional traditional farm gates providing access.

The main road through the village is tarmac whilst the two lanes are un-surfaced. There are no road markings or pavements, and instead grass verges border the lanes and soften the edges of the hard roads.

A number of houses have block paving, concrete or tarmac driveways which add a slight suburban feel to the village. Dirt tracks exist linking the farmsteads with the surrounding countryside.

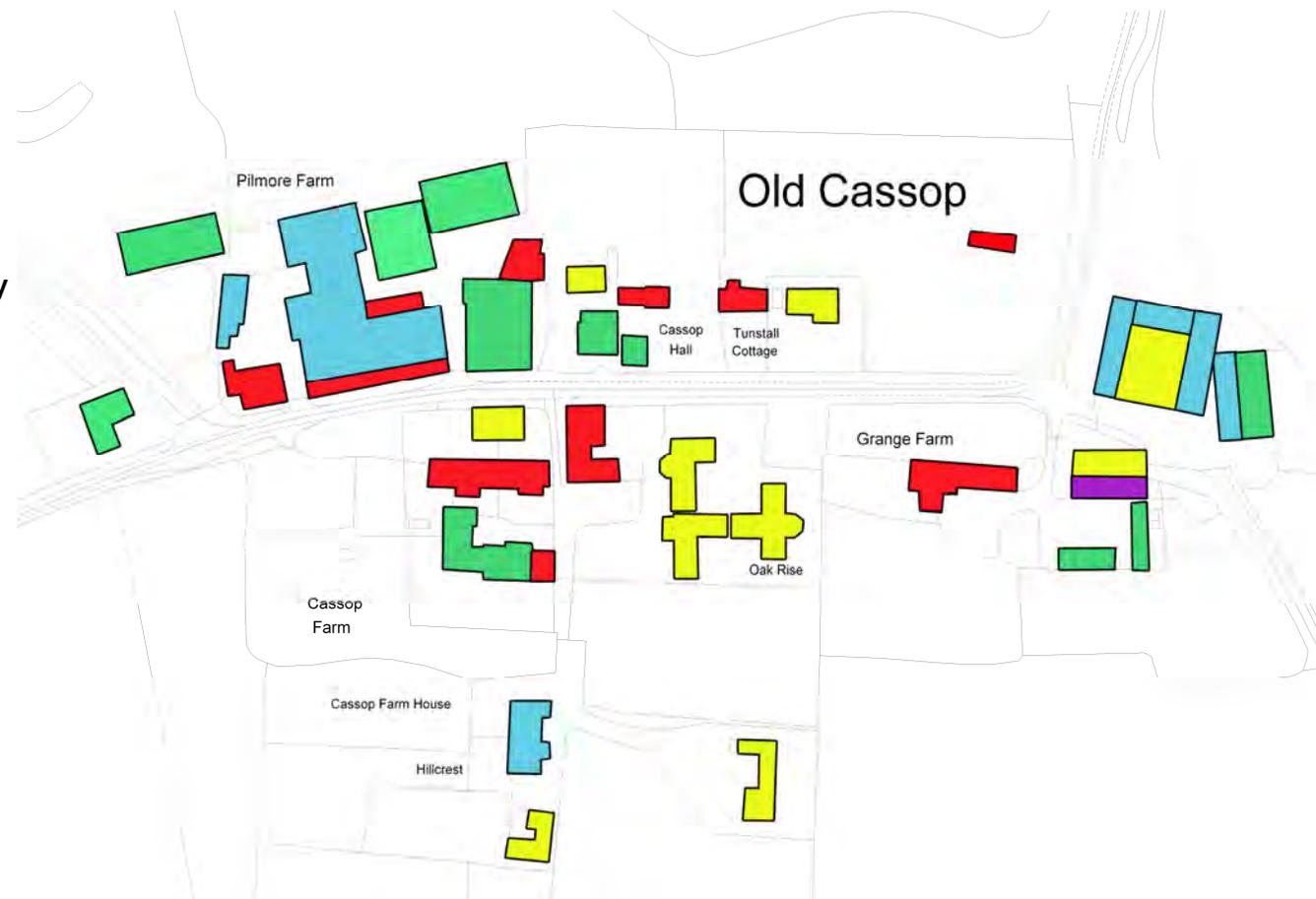
Throughout the village there is little street clutter such as road signs and street lighting columns. Telephone cables haphazardly line the street frontages and a number of the modern properties have prominent satellite dishes. However the overall impression is uncluttered and traditional.

**Map 3**  
**Old Cassop**  
**Periods of development**

Scale: not to scale

**KEY**

-  Mid/Late 19<sup>th</sup> century
-  Early 20<sup>th</sup> century
-  Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century
-  Late 20<sup>th</sup> century
-  c.2000 to 2008



## DETAILED ASSESSMENT

### A CLOSER LOOK AT THE OLD CASSOP CONSERVATION AREA

#### 2.1 FROM THE A181 TO THE EASTERN ENTRANCE OF THE VILLAGE

The northern boundary of the conservation area runs along the line of the A181. Looking from here Old Cassop can clearly be seen in its landscape setting and the visual relationship between the village and the fields that run up to the road presents a deeply traditional rural scene that would have been familiar to the medieval farmer in its basic components of stream, meadow, rectangular fields and then houses. In many ways this view sums up the character of the village and the conservation area.

The road leading to the village presents an immediate contrast. The busy 'A' road is replaced by a single lane and the expansive view is lost as the road dips down and then emerges again along the gradual climb to the village. A close sense of the landscape setting to the village is gained when walking this road. Looking to the west across the field clues to the village's medieval and post medieval past can be seen in the form of raised strips or beds caused by the ridge and furrow method of ploughing and the hedgerows enclosing long rectangular fields. A track and various marks in the earth towards

the start of the village suggest further past human activity as do the remains of a pond and drainage channel by the road halfway up the slope.



**Fig 1: The approach to the village from the A181.**



**Fig 2: View west across grazing fields adjacent to the main entrance into the village.**

Just before the village the lane levels out and turns sharply west to form the main village street. An informal junction is made here by an un-made track that leads south east through the farm yard of Grange Farm and then out to Cassop Vale. The track is a public footpath and probably one of the village's historic lanes.

Only a small section of the lane is within the conservation area but it provides interesting views across the back of Grange Farm where the remains of a track and boundary ditch can be seen.



**Fig 3: The un-made track leading through Grange Farm to Cassop Vale a public right of way.**

The junction is a significant point within the conservation area marking the eastern start of the village whilst allowing views north back to the main road and surrounding countryside. This is the opposite view to that from the A181 and provides another example of the village seen in

conjunction with the wider landscape.

Historically development came right upto this point on both sides of the road. Historical maps suggest that the north side contained a range of farm buildings that belonged to Cassop Hall. All that remains of these are various marks in the ground and one **single-storey cart shed**. The cart shed is of sandstone construction with some brick repairs and has a red pantile roof.

It is a significant part of the view north and as a reminder of the now lost farmstead. Unfortunately the building has been left to decay and in desperate need of repair.



**Fig 4: The single-storey cart shed, a historic building demarcating the main entrance into the village.**

## 2.2 THE VILLAGE

Moving west from the cart shed the village appears as a small collection of individual buildings that are brought together informally and organically. Each building contrasts with its neighbour without any strong sense of uniformity; rather it presents a sense of community.

Views from the main street are limited except for the vista along it and any sense of the landscape setting is lessened as long range views become restricted to gaps between buildings. A rural character is ever present, houses constantly combine with farm buildings, and all buildings combine with trees, grass verges and gardens to maintain a low density of development.

Opposite the cart shed and marking the eastern entrance of the village is **Grange Farm**. Located on a slight rise and set back from the roadside this large two-storey farmhouse makes a strong impression. It is constructed in stone with a slate roof. The name 'Grange' can often denote the centre of a farm belonging to a Church and this suggests a link between the farm to the Prince Bishops that could go back to its foundation. The age of the farmhouse is difficult to assess accurately as windows, chimney stacks and doors have been replaced and the front elevation covered in render. However the arrangement of windows and

doors strongly suggests that it was once a 'cross passage house' where living and service rooms were divided by a passageway that ran across the depth of the property. Considering this a likely date for Grange Farm would be late 18th century to mid 19th century.



**Fig 5: Grange Farm set back from the street frontage behind a large garden and rubble stone wall.**

The setting of the building and the visual link between village edge and open countryside is formed by the large garden enclosed by a coursed rubble stone wall. The garden is well maintained yet simple and contains a number of trees of differing ages and species.

Associated with the farm house to the rear exists a row of three single storey buildings dating from late

20th century. These are a mix of brick, stone and timber construction grouped in a u-shape around a small courtyard area. The buildings are used for storage and as animal houses with the end structure having a sheltered pen attached. Adjacent to these structures to the east, across a track lane, are larger Dutch barns and steel framed metal sheeted hay barns.

Diagonally opposite Grange Farm is **Tunstall Cottage**, a late 20th century bungalow set within a neat garden and in front of a back drop of mature trees. This building is not of any historical or architectural interest, though its simple design and garden help it to blend with its surroundings.



**Fig 6: Tunstall Cottage a modern bungalow facing Grange Farm.**

The 2001 development of **1 to 3 Oak Rise**, has clearly tried to reflect the rural character of the conservation area through a design influenced by farm buildings.

In this respect the development is successful though the overall

effect is lessened by the scale of the buildings which by contrast to the rest of the village, is too large to be placed in such close proximity.



**Fig 7: The Orchard immediately to the west of Oak Rise, a modern development with traditional aspects.**

Between this development The Orchard and Grange Farm is a small recess bounded by traditional stone wall. Historical maps show that this once formed part of the plot of three small terraced buildings, presumably cottages

**Cassop Hall** was once the largest farm within the village but the plot is now occupied by a bungalow and a small work yard. The bungalow is a yellow stone-clad building whose roof suggests an early to mid 20th century origin. The yard which stretches to the east and behind the bungalow contains sheds, trailers and piles of

timber. It is partially screened behind a brick wall of mid to late 19th century date. At the eastern edge of the plot are the remains of a brick two storey house.

This structure is a roofless ruin that presumably formed part of the long range of buildings that formed Cassop Hall on the 19th century maps (See Map 1 on page 5) A separate garden and gate can be seen on the maps which suggests that this was once a cottage.



**Fig 8: Cassop Hall a modern bungalow occupying a historic site within the village.**

Opposite the site of Cassop Hall lies another former farm complex that of **Old Cassop Farm**. Unlike Cassop Hall the old farm buildings survive and have been converted to housing. A narrow lane runs back parallel from the main road dividing the former farm buildings into two sets that were converted at different times.

The earliest conversion dating from the 1980s occupies the eastern side of the track and consists of **Cassop Farm Bungalow**, a single storey stone building running parallel to the track which then meets a two-storey farm building, **The Cottage**, that was originally of stone but is now rendered.

Cassop Farm Bungalow has been converted without too many alterations and retains a semblance of its original character. By contrast The Cottage has been heavily altered externally with render, fake-stone quoins and chimneys. Consequently the building retains little of its agricultural past and has a domestic character.



**Fig 9: Cassop Farm Bungalow a former barn with a prominent gable facing the roadside marking the entrance into the older farmstead.**



**Fig 10: The Cottage dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a former hey barn now much altered and in residential use.**

The buildings on the west of the track are a mix of new buildings and conversions. **Strawberry Hill Barn and Blue Barn** are impressive and imposing former barns that could have been a hay barn later converted to a byre. Its conversion has been sensitively achieved and its history can still be read.

In front of it is a brick garage that replaced a similar size brick structure dating from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Enclosing it and fronting the Main Street is a rebuilt stone wall. Behind Strawberry Hill Barn is **Swallow Ridge Barn** which is largely a modern building that appears to incorporate parts of a traditional stone barn in its eastern side.



**Fig 11: Strawberry Hill Barn and Blue Barn, two former long narrow barns of a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date, retaining much of their original character.**



**Fig 12: The detached double garage is of a traditional appearance and has been constructed from materials salvaged from the original barns.**



**Fig 13: Swallow Ridge Barn constructed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century incorporating part of an early grannery/cartshed dating from the mid 1800's.**

Continuing up the track between these buildings leads up a gradual rise to **Cassop Farm House** and **Hill Crest** a pair of brick semi-detached houses dating from the 1950s. These are substantial buildings designed in a simple solid style that compliments the general style of houses within the village.

This marks the southern extent of the village. Beyond this are a collection of small fields bounded by the remains of a old hedgerow within which are a line of mature trees. Tree cover and green space is important in this location as the village starts to give way to the surrounding countryside. The remnants of an old hedge boundary can be seen to the east of the houses and the houses themselves are a prominent feature when approaching the village from the west, where they are seen in conjunction with open fields, boundaries with mature trees and the main village street.

This small enclave is the only back-land residential development in the village. As such it is contrary to the main layout of the village which is focussed on the main village street. However the scale of development here is low and the overall impact slight so the main character of the conservation area is maintained.



**Fig 14: Cassop Farm House and Hill Crest although of a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century date these properties have a more traditional appearance sympathetic to their setting.**

Back along the village on the northern side of road and at the western extent of the village is Pilmore Farm and Hill Croft. **Pilmore Farm** is the most complete historic farm within the village. It consists of a farmhouse fronting the road with a range of historic stone and modern farm buildings arranged in an irregular courtyard behind and to the side of the main house. A large modern Dutch barn and two modern farm buildings are located east of this group.

The farmhouse was built between the 1860s and the 1890s and is a typically, for the village, simple but solid and well-proportioned building. The building is grey pebble-dashed rendered with

pitched grey slate roof and has white UPVC windows with original stone heads and cills.

The farm buildings are a mix of the historic and the modern, with the latter predominant. Originally the remaining historic barns comprised a group of stone buildings arranged in a small yard open at the farmhouse end. The low stone farm building that fronts the road and the two storey building just to the rear when combined with the farmhouse produce a strongly traditional view results.

Plimore Farm, like Grange Farm is a working farm and this results in the need for modern farm buildings and storage areas. These buildings and areas are located very much within view of the main village street, whereas those to Grange Farm are largely located off the lane that runs south east. As much as these elements may clutter the traditional village setting they also represent the continuing importance of farming and are to be expected where working farms occur.

**Hill Croft** marks the western end of the village. It is a 'L'-shaped red brick bungalow with pantile roof and plastic windows and doors. The property is slightly hidden by a high mature hedgerow enclosing the driveway and garden space.



**Fig 15: Pilmore Farmhouse a late 19<sup>th</sup> century detached farmhouse marking the entrance into the farmyard.**



**Fig 16: Pilmore Farm's early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Cow House.**



**Fig 17: Hill Croft a modern red brick bungalow.**

### 2.3 FROM THE WESTERN ENTRANCE OF THE VILLAGE TO THE EDGE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Moving west from Hill Croft immediately leads back into countryside. The road maintains its path along the hill climbing slightly until reaching a small copse and bend in the road which marks both a descent down hill and the boundary of the conservation area.

The elevated position of the road at this point and sparse tree cover allows panoramic views north and west. These take in a considerable amount of surrounding countryside and include a distant view of Durham and Durham Cathedral.

Looking east back towards the village Old Cassop is seen almost head-on and again the contrast between countryside and village can be clearly felt. A large **modern agricultural shed** has recently been constructed on the south side of the road in a field adjoining the village. This now dominates the view, though planned screening measures should, in time, reduce its visual impact. Also Pilmore farmhouse, Hill Croft and Cassop Farm House are prominent buildings within this view.

Between Pilmore Farmhouse and Hill Croft is a tree lined lane that follows the hillside down to a

group of large modern farm buildings. Such tree-lined lanes sometimes indicate the driveway to a large house but there is not evidence of that being the case here.

Rather it is noticeable that the boundaries of the surrounding fields converge on this road and this may indicate that it was once a path out to a medieval open field which has since been divided between farms.



Fig 18: View from west end of the conservation area back towards the village, both the agricultural and residential elements can be viewed in relation to each other



Fig 19: Views of the open countryside can be seen from the western edge of the conservation area.



**Fig 20: A view of the avenue of trees screening Hill Croft.**

## **MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

### **3.1 MANAGING CHANGE**

The long term success of a conservation area relies on ensuring that changes within it and to its setting respect its special architectural and historic character. The principle way in which this is achieved is through the planning system which is administered by Durham County Council.

Beyond the planning system the role of residents and building owners is also crucial. Everyday actions such as the maintenance of gardens, keeping buildings and boundaries in good repair using traditional materials and styles all combine to preserve the character and charm of a conservation area.

Enhancement projects, large and small, make a strong positive impression on the character of a conservation area. The reinstatement and repair of traditional street surfaces, building features, such as doors and windows, and green areas, such as greens and parks can all help improve the quality of an area. Generally such work is undertaken by the local authority when funding allows. They can also be undertaken by a local residents group, parish council or individual.

### **3.2 CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

The principle aim of the conservation area is to project the character of the village and its setting. The current boundary clearly seeks to achieve this and no need was found to change the current conservation area boundary either through extension or reduction.

### **3.3 THE OVERALL CONDITION OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

The majority of buildings within the conservation area are in use and well maintained. The exceptions to this are the ruined cart shed and the ruined house between Tunstall Cottage and Cassop Hall. The cart shed is of concern due to its prominence as a local landmark. Boundaries are also well maintained with the village. Hedgerows are also well maintained though in cases they become sparse and filled with post and wire.

The degree of modern alteration to historic properties is considerable and overall, negative in impact. If grant funding for historic building repair becomes available then it should be targeted towards reinstatement.

## THE PLANNING SYSTEM

### 3.4 THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Conservation Areas are protected in planning legislation through the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and through policies within the City of Durham Local Plan (2004). Both will be replaced within the coming years, with the Heritage Protection Bill and a County-wide Local Development Framework respectively. However the way in which protection applies will be maintained and can be summarised as follows:

- In controlling the demolition of buildings and boundaries;
- In considering the impact of development on the special character of conservation area when planning permission is required;
- In controlling minor operations such as (changing windows, doors or installing porches);
- In controlling works to trees.

These controls are explained in Appendix 2.

#### Relevant Policies within the City of Durham Local Plan

The Durham City Council Local Plan has policies that aim to preserve the scale and character of Old Cassop. Old Cassop has no

defined 'settlement limits' meaning that the scope for new housing or the redevelopment of existing plots is very limited and subject to fitting in with the character of the village (Policies H4 to H6).

Policies EMP 16, 17 & 17A relate to farming and rural employment. They aim to strike a balance between creating a strong rural economy and maintaining the character and natural value of the countryside. The cultural value of the conservation area, its buildings and green areas is protected through numerous policies relating to the environment (Policies E7, E8, E14, E15, E21 & E22).

#### Specific planning guidance

The following guidance is written in light of the appraisal and specific to this document. The guidance compliments the existing Local Plan Policies.

#### Demolition

**The demolition of all historic buildings within the conservation area will be resisted and re-use encouraged. The demolition of modern buildings is unlikely to be resisted, though in the majority of cases plans for re-development of a site will be required before approval is given.**

The Old Cassop Conservation Area contains as many modern buildings as it does historic ones. Its size means that historic buildings

are few in number and consequently all make a contribution to the character of the conservation area. An historic building in this instance can be described as one dating from the 1920s and before, though this measure is somewhat arbitrary and subject to consideration on a case by case basis.

### **New Residential Development**

**Residential development should seek to preserve or enhance the character of the Old Cassop Conservation Area.**

**This will be achieved not only by a good quality design but through the scale and density of development in relation to its plot, to the village and the surrounding countryside.**

Within a rural conservation area good design does not just mean building in the right materials and style. Density and scale are equally important if a village, such as Old Cassop, is to maintain its informal green character. Garden space, maintaining a focus on the main street and respecting openness and views to and from the surrounding countryside are equally important issues.

### **Changes to existing buildings**

**Changes to existing buildings should respect the existing character of that property and the area. Extensions should be kept subservient to the main property and avoid complex roof junctions and too much architectural detailing. Proposals that seek to re-instate appropriate historic features within historic buildings will be welcomed.**

Extensions to any building can have a strong effect on its appearance. This is particularly the case with barn conversions and historic buildings in general where poorly designed extensions can appear very discordant.

There is considerable scope for improving older properties through the reinstatement of historic features, such as windows and doors, though only when they are appropriate in style and date.

### **Agricultural Development**

**The continued use of historic farm buildings will be encouraged as will their maintenance and repair. New farm buildings should be sited in a way that seeks to minimise and mitigate their impact on the character of the conservation area.**

This document acknowledges the continuation of working farms within the village as central to its

character. It also acknowledges that there is a potential conflict between maintaining the traditional appearance of the village and the visual impact of modern farm buildings and associated storage areas. Consequently it is intended to encourage the careful choice of locations for such activities.

### **Permitted Development Rights and Article 4(2) Directions**

Within a conservation area planning restrictions are tighter but there is still a lot that can be done without planning permission by the owner of a dwelling house. These works are called permitted development rights and are summarised in Appendix 2.

Permitted development rights can be restricted by the Council through making an Article 4(2) direction. At present there is no Article 4(2) covering the Old Cassop Conservation Area. Considering the lack of surviving historic features it is not recommended to make one at this present time.

### **3.5 HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND UTILITY PROVISION**

It is not the role of a conservation area appraisal to comment on specific traffic or utility provision issues. It will though have an informative impact on any related proposals such as traffic calming measures or telegraph pole

replacements. As a general rule statutory contractors should have due regard to the status of a conservation area, most notably its small size, rural character and lack of street clutter.

### **3.6 ENHANCEMENT**

As a small village with little in the way of public space and amenity areas the scope for substantial enhancement works appears limited. In addition the small scale of the village suggests that the potential for public funding for enhancement works just for the village would unfortunately be limited. However that is not to rule out including the village in wider funding projects and the potential to enhance the conservation area through minor changes. Consequently an aspirational list of work can be drawn up and used to inform projects that cover the wider area.

Below is an initial list which is suggestive only and which can be expanded upon through public consultation:

1. The restoration of the cart shed in the field at the front of Grange Farm. Either through grant funding or owner action or both.
2. The under grounding of telephone wires to cut down visual clutter.
3. The reinstatement of historic details to buildings and

boundaries through grant funding or owner action or both.

4. Interpretation work on the archaeology and history of the village, especially its surviving archaeological features. Perhaps led by a local history group with outside funding and advice.
5. The clearance of piles of timber, machinery etc where possible.

## Appendix A

### WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

Old Cassop Conservation Area equals approximately 46hectars and was designated on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1981.

The conservation area boundary generally encompasses the small village and the outlying agricultural land associated with the two main farms. The boundary is tightly drawn around the village to the south. To the north, east and west the boundary is predominantly demoted by the surrounding roads, tracks and field boundaries.

Approaching along the A181 from the west, the conservation area commences approximately 250metres from Running Waters. From this point the boundary travels east following the curve of the highway, passing Cassop Smithy to the north, and continuing westwards towards Scribfield Farm. After approximately 600metres the boundary proceeds south following the tree line and hedgerows enclosing a large field to the north east of Grange Farm. The boundary continues along this route crossing a hedgerow following the edge of a triangular field of grazing land. It then turns sharply to the north-west following the edge of an un-made track back towards Grange Farm.

The conservation area then travels west following a hedgerow to the rear of the farmhouse. It then heads south before turning to the west along the edge of the land surrounding Hill Croft.

The boundary continues along this path for approximately 80metres and then turns south around the rear garden of Hill Crest. From this point the boundary travels north-west across an open field continuing to a narrow lane on the outskirts of the village.

From here the conservation area gently curves around the outside edge of the lane for approximately 270metres before turning sharply to the north-west. The conservation area continues along this path following field boundaries and crossing a pedestrian track until it reaches an un-made road to the rear of Pilmore Farm. It then proceeds to the east around the edge of three large agricultural sheds before heading north east. The boundary continues along this path following a hedgerow along the edge of two large open fields before arriving back at the starting point at the A181.

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