

North York Moors National Park Authority

Item 7, Botton Historic Area Assessment

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To present Members with the draft Botton Historic Area Assessment, which was considered when preparing the Local Plan, and to seek approval for consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1 Botton is a widely dispersed settlement at the head of Danby Dale which is managed by the Camphill Village Trust and Esk Valley Camphill Community. These registered charities have provided people with learning disabilities the opportunity to live and work within a largely self-sufficient community since 1955. Recently, the village has had to respond to changing legislative requirements with carers having to operating under a 'Shared Lives' arrangement alongside residents. Residents are supported through the day-to-day life of the community, allowing for work, social interaction, education, training, cultural and leisure activities. The village has influenced a unique natural and built environment, enhanced by local traditions and culture.
- 2.2 The varied architectural character of the village is attributed to buildings from different periods, ranging from the initial vernacular farmsteads and dwellings to the modern Steiner style buildings associated with the Camphill movement. This has resulted in a dispersed settlement with accommodation and facilities in eight neighbourhood areas all with individual characters, set within 600 acres of agricultural land, gardens, and planted woodland.
- 2.3 Given the area's history, its unique architectural character, and its contribution to the landscape within the National Park, the Authority considered that a specific character appraisal for Botton Village would be useful to inform future applications for the area. The preparation of an appraisal was also recommended in the supporting text to Policy CO9 – Botton Village.

3. The Historic Area Assessment

- 3.1 A Historic Area Assessment (HAA) provides a comprehensive review of the development and distinctive features of the historic built environment. This HAA is a level-3 (detailed) assessment, based on archival research and fieldwork. It helps determine the character of the area, explain its significance, and highlight issues that have the potential to change this character. The aim of this appraisal is to improve the understanding of Botton to help inform principles and development decisions made by the relevant planning and conservation bodies.
- 3.2 The HAA was undertaken in 2021 which assessed the origins and development of the settlement (from early occupation up to recent developments) and also identified six key character areas. The HAA provides a detailed architectural assessment including styles, materials, details and landscaping.

3.3 The full HAA and location map is provided in the Appendix.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Historic Significance – The first Camphill Village Trust development pioneered an alternative community-based approach for people with learning difficulties which inspired other villages internationally. The site developed from the foundations of earlier occupation with evidence relating to the prehistoric period, Robert de Brus in the 12th century, Medieval, Quaker and traditional farming communities. The philosophies were informed by key families who grew neighbourhoods around the existing farms on the Botton Hall estate, each expanding with their own identities, events and working opportunities. There are four listed buildings with others recommended for designation and the potential for conservation area status.

4.2 Aesthetic Significance – Vernacular farmsteads integrated within modern Steiner inspired architecture with expressive forms, natural materials, and views of the surrounding landscape. The character reflects the change in narrative before and after the arrival of the Camphill community. Botton has been divided into six areas of individual character based on the afore mentioned neighbourhoods and developments surrounding individual farms, estates, and central facilities.

4.3 Communal Significance – A strong collective identity based on the principles of Camphill philosophies which has influenced the local built environment and inspired an identity, traditions, and culture. The buildings, landscape and green open spaces hold many fond memories for the community. These, as well as paths and the garden of remembrance is especially important as a communal place of reflection with exceptional views across the valley.

4.4 Key Issues - Many of the buildings are currently unoccupied leading to neglect and decay with an eventual erosion of architectural, historical, and communal significance. Furthermore, increased traffic and light pollution has a negative impact on the landscape. Management change also has the potential to erode the function and character of the village. These issues reinforce the requirement for this report to inform any future development which along with Policy B09 ensures the significant qualities and character of the neighbourhood are maintained and are compatible with the on-going care and support for residents.

4.5 Future development principles - To remain sympathetic to the architectural character of the village, both vernacular and Steiner inspired, and retain the dispersed settlement form whilst allowing for on-going care and support through a range of facilities for the residents and visiting communities.

5. Conservation Area designation and Article 4 Direction

5.1 The HAA noted a future potential opportunity to formally designate Botton as a Conservation Area with an Article 4 direction which would prevent the loss of significant features such as the expressive Steiner forms, vernacular detailing, and sculptures.

5.2 Through consultation we hope to understand the desire to make Botton a Conservation Area with a possible Article 4 Direction. We think the area warrants this to prevent further unsympathetic alterations to the buildings and landscape.

6. Financial and staffing implications

6.1 None. The HAA was carried out by a summer Intern (which was part funded by the University of York) and its review has been carried out by existing officers.

7. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

7.1 Objective 11 of the Management Plan seeks to ensure that the National Parks historic environment is better understood, conserved, explained, and managed.

7.2 The adoption of this HAA will help inform the Authority and those involved in managing the settlement as well as third parties with an interest in the area.

8. Legal and sustainability implications

8.1 This assessment adheres to Government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', which advises local planning authorities to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. This document is based on guidelines issued by the Government's adviser on the Historic Environment, Historic England, in 'Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments', which defines the assessment as a practical tool to understand and explain the heritage interest of an area. However, no appraisal can ever be entirely comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space in the area, should not imply that it is of no interest.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That Members support the HAA and approve officers to carry out a 6-week consultation. Officers will report back to Members on the outcome of the consultation and next steps.

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Background documents to this report

1. Appendix A: The Historic Area Assessment of Botton
2. Appendix B: Botton Location Map