

Dumfries and Galloway Council

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2

Wigtown Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Supplementary Guidance - March 2024



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Introduction

This document appraises and summarises the character of Wigtown Conservation Area and how to manage it. It identifies and notes common themes, many significant features, historical layout, architectural detail and general setting and some examples of significant built structures and spaces. The management plan section suggests how the positive themes, features and details of character might be preserved or enhanced. The combined character appraisal and management plan will help guide the design of future proposals within Wigtown Conservation Area to have positive outcomes in respect of historic and architectural character. It will be used to assess the impact of new development, alterations, enhancement, upgrades or demolition proposals affecting Wigtown Conservation Area. It will also encourage regular maintenance by emphasising its importance.

What is a conservation area?

Conservation Areas were first introduced in the UK in 1967; the current legislative framework for their designation is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). Section 61 of the 1997 Act defines a conservation area as *“an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance...”* Local planning authorities are required to identify areas which merit this status and to review them.

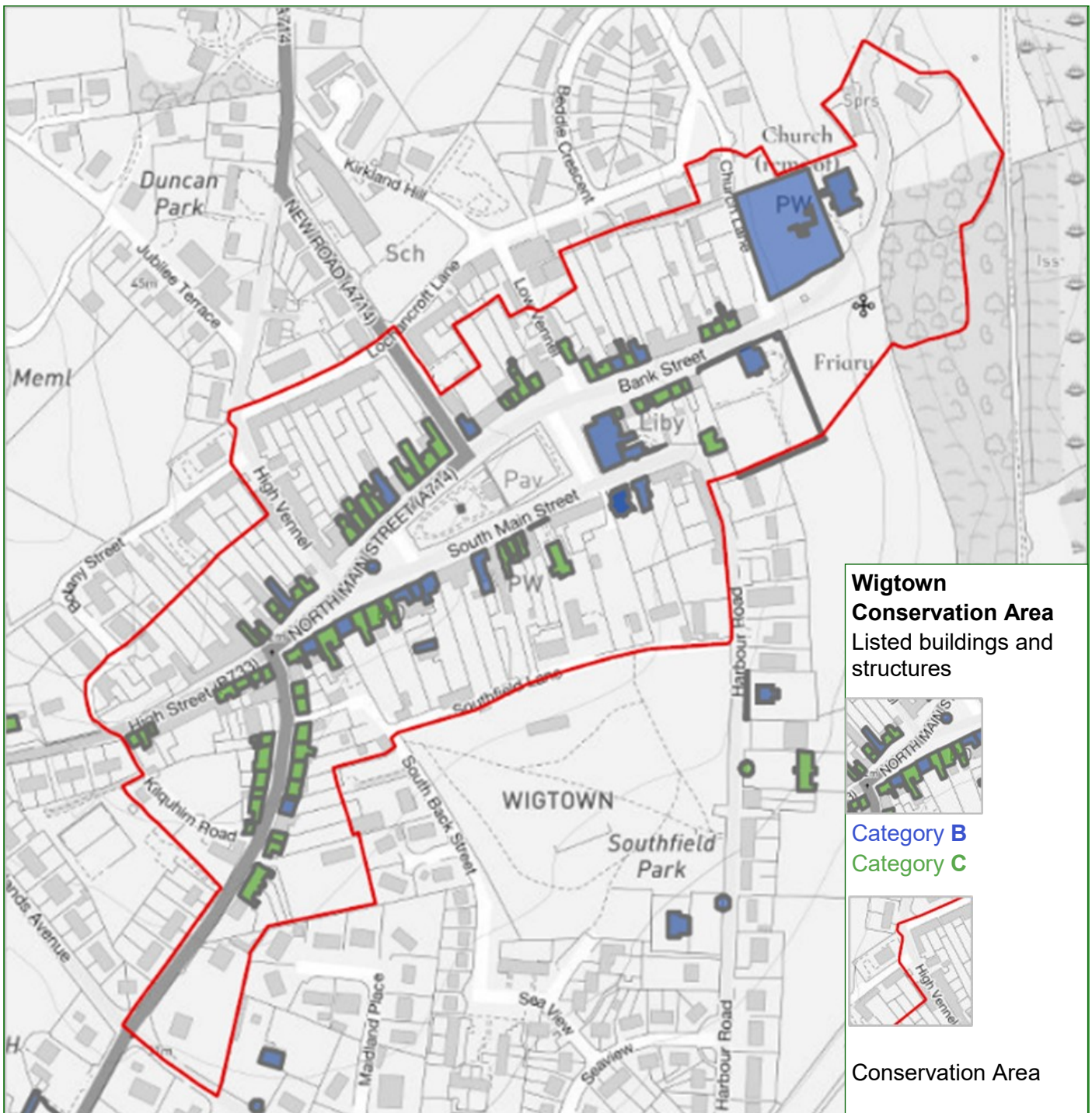
In a conservation area it is the character that is of interest, drawn from a combination of buildings and spaces. Planning controls seek to preserve or enhance the character of the entire conservation area by maintaining the integrity of its elements including the layout and pattern of development, architectural themes and many of its details.

Conservation area status does not prevent new development but requires that care should be taken to ensure that development is designed to preserve or enhance the historic and architectural character and appearance and not harm it. Design proposals for all new development, including proposed demolition of individual buildings, must address the context and demonstrate how they have done this so that the wider character will be preserved or enhanced. Alterations to, or loss of buildings and spaces that contribute positively to character are generally to be avoided.

Conservation area status does not prevent change that is necessary to a building or group that will improve the life of the building and the comfort of the occupants. However planning permission may be needed. It is important that buildings in conservation areas are adapted to reduce the effects of climate change, improve energy efficiency, move to lower carbon heat sources, and in some cases, generate renewable energy. These changes must be carried out in a way that is appropriate to the fabric and design of the building. The survival of the fabric of traditional buildings relies on the use of materials and techniques compatible with the original construction method. This will help preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the building and group and of the whole conservation area as the 1997 Act requires.

In a conservation area, development proposals should

- be based on a clear understanding of historic and architectural character and its significance to cultural heritage;
- be designed to avoid or minimise detriment to the architectural and historic character and cultural significance;
- demonstrate that the design of the proposal is the only way of achieving its benefits.



The boundary of Wigtown Conservation Area.

The spatial information and designations can be found on Past Map which is provided and managed by Historic Environment Scotland. Use the following link: [Pastmap](#)

On the Pastmap website, to find the information shown above at a more detailed scale put **Wigtown** in the Place search box and from the Data Layers select **Listed Buildings**, **Scheduled Monuments** and **Conservation Areas**. Choose BURGH of Wigtown in the Placename results and click **GO**

Planning controls in a conservation area:

Legislation requires that permission is sought for the following works in a conservation area:

Demolition of all or most of a building requires Conservation Area Consent. Where a building makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area there is a presumption against demolition. The decision to allow demolition requires national planning policies to have been met. It also depends on the intended use of the land afterwards and may require that a design has been prepared for any new buildings or other structures proposed on the site and an approved new development and demolition are part of the same contract. Conservation area consent applications are made online.

<https://www.eplanning.scot/ePlanningClient/default.aspx>

Alterations or additions to the exterior of buildings in a conservation area require Planning Permission e.g.: small house extensions; roof alterations including dormers or rooflights; chimney alterations; stone cleaning; elevation painting; application of render or any other form of cladding; changing windows or exterior doors; and creation of hard surfaces outside buildings. Development management decisions will consider how proposals impact on the appearance of the property itself; neighbouring properties; and the character of any part of Wigtown Conservation Area. Sometimes officers will request alternative designs which will remove, or significantly reduce, detrimental impact on character but will achieve an equivalent outcome.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15329/Apply-for-planning-permission>

Trees in conservation areas have special protection. Proposals to remove branches, fell a tree or carry out work affecting its roots

must be notified to the Council six weeks in advance which will allow sufficient time for the impact of the proposed works to be considered. The Council may decide that a Tree Preservation Order should be placed on the tree or group of trees if it/they make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. In those circumstances, the extent of the proposed works to the trees may be refused or alternative works which are more sensitive may be required.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15334/Protected-trees>

Attachments such as satellite dishes or equipment may need planning permission in conservation areas and they may impact negatively on character. It is usually possible to find discrete designs, locations or alternative solutions.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15329/Apply-for-planning-permission>

New buildings in a conservation area need Planning Permission. Design should take account of the context, character and themes of surrounding buildings and spaces. Pre-application guidance and advice may be sought in advance of submitting proposals using the link below.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15327/Planning-advice-and-enquiries>

An **Article 4 Direction** was introduced in Wigtown Conservation Area on 19th April 2000. Permission is required for works normally exempt from permission in Classes 30, 31, 41 and 67 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 (as amended). This refers to most works carried out by the Council or Community Council, including alongside or on roads, and all equipment installed by telecommunications operators.

Planning Policy

Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

In February 2023 NPF4 was adopted. It can be viewed at the following link: [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#) There are six overarching spatial principles and 33 policies.

Policy 7 Historic assets and places is of most direct relevance to conservation areas. It recognises Scotland's cultural heritage contributes to the economy, cultural identity and quality of life. Its principles and intent are *"to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places."*

The spatial principles and other policies in NPF4 also impact on the historic environment.

Just transition supports change needed to reach net zero including improving the resilience of historic assets to climate change, reducing carbon emissions through adaptation of historic buildings and protecting and improving the associated biodiversity. Making Scotland successful and sustainable includes protecting and enhancing the historic environment through the planning system. NPF4 seeks to preserve character, encourage maintenance and promote enhancement of historic places.

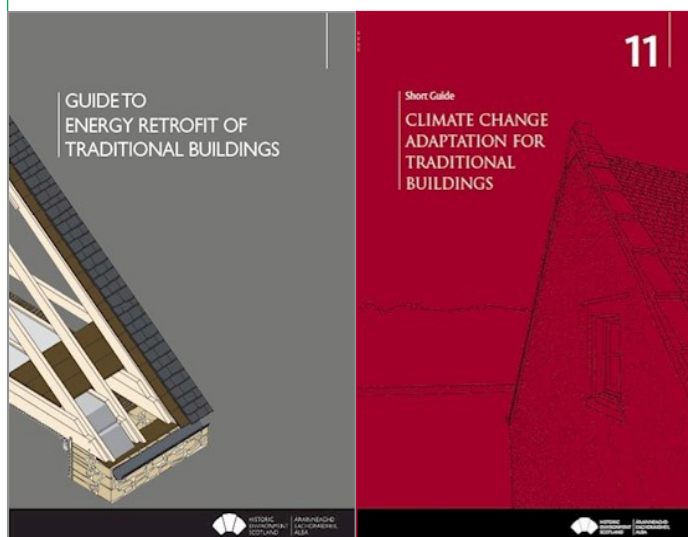
Conserving and recycling assets sets out a strong presumption in favour of reuse and adaptation of existing buildings and minimise demolition of all or parts of structures. *"We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste and building a circular economy."* Policy 7 reinforces this approach where buildings and places have historic designations or they are part of the wider historic environment. In conservation areas there is also a presumption to retain

buildings, maintain and adapt them to ensure their ongoing beneficial when they contribute positively to historic or architectural character. This minimises waste and takes account of the energy locked up in a building's materials, its embodied energy, and values the labour, skills and knowledge first used to create it. Compatible alterations to minimise waste, carbon emissions and energy efficiency should be carried out and demolition is always considered to be the last resort. These approaches are supported by a range of policies in NPF4.

NPF4 Policy 7 intends that conservation area character is understood, allowing appropriate decisions to be made. The preparation of character appraisals and management plans underpins that intention. Conservation areas are not intended to prevent development, or change, but to keep local historic character, identity and the unique sense of place; sensitively reduce the impact of the built environment on climate change; and maximise the economic benefits, which historic character supports, for the benefit of current and future generations of people.

Historic Environment Scotland has a range of learning resources and publications and guidance that set out and amplify national policy and good practice. [The Engine Shed publications and guidance](#)

Two of the available publications.



Local Policy

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to the stewardship of the historic areas across the region, recognising the important contribution they make to the local economy and quality of the environment. Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) was adopted in October 2019 and includes Historic Environment policies which are very similar in intent to those of NPF4. The policies are used as part of the decision making for planning applications. They can only be successful when owners and occupants understand the need for sensitive, appropriate adaptations and alterations and the importance of ongoing maintenance. This document is part of the advice available to inform how proposed development can be designed sensitively and appropriately to manage the character of Wigtown Conservation Area in line with the policy intent.

Policy HE2: 'Conservation Areas' promotes a sensitive and informed approach to development within conservation areas and refers to Supplementary Guidance (SG) such as [Historic Built Environment SG](#) and a range of [guidance](#) specific to places which can be found at those links. There is also [Planning Guidance](#) (PG) adopted by the Council including [Windows and doors in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas PG](#) to ensure that proposed change is appropriate areas and a general shop-front guidance.

Wigtown Conservation Area

The Royal Burgh of Wigtown is a small market town on the north-eastern side of the Machars peninsula in the county of Wigtownshire. It is on the west of Wigtown Bay where the Bladnoch River enters the sea, near where the River Cree enters the sea.

Wigtown Conservation Area was designated on the 6th September 1977.

On 19/04/2000 an **Article 4 Direction** was introduced to Wigtown Conservation Area to after significant heritage led regeneration funding. Some Classes covered by the direction at that time are no longer permitted development in conservation areas but Classes 30, 31, 41 and 67 of the [Order](#) remain subject to additional controls.

Wigtown has a population of about 920. It has services for the surrounding rural community: post-office, primary schools, community venues, sports, library, churches, several independent shops, cafés and a pub. Newton Stewart, 6 miles away, provides the others. Around Wigtown the economy is mostly agriculture or tourism. Employment is in farming, agricultural support, retail, vehicle service, food and drink, trades, professions and other service businesses. Bladnoch distillery is an important local employer. Other jobs are further afield in outlying villages, Newton Stewart or Stranraer.



Café and crafts, Agnew Crescent



B Listed Wigtown Town Hall and Library, built as the Sheriff Court in the 1860s; designed by Thomas Brown II. The tower includes part of a 1756 building. The red sandstone building with buff sandstone dressing in 'French Gothic' style. It faces west-south-west, dominating the eastern end of the Market Place and recreational space.

Wigtown has been of local and wider importance for many centuries. A 13th century castle stood on the shore of Wigtown Bay but over centuries the salt marshes built up and the Bladnoch and Cree rivers channels changed.

About 900 years ago the River Cree was forded north of Wigtown. Later, a small port was made for a ferry nearer the settlement. It was moved further south and east and was the harbour serving Wigtown for some time. In the 19th century a branch railway line served the harbour and town but a decline in use of the harbour followed through competition with more reliable and deeper harbours at Isle of Whithorn and Garlieston. The silting up of the river beds at Wigtown harbour continued and very few boats use it.

The routes to Wigtown are by road and the main through-road, from Newton Stewart south to Whithorn, by-passes the town centre.



Small boats used Wigtown Harbour up to the end of the 19th century but then silting up prevented much use.



Wigtown Conservation Area is focused on a central space which is roughly triangular in shape with the wider part at the north eastern end and the slim end at the junction with Agnew Crescent. The space includes a market place, bowling green and a small park. Most of the conservation area is in the commercial centre. Although the building types, density and detail of each street is different, for the purposes of this character appraisal and management plan, the conservation area will be considered as a single character area.

Below: Extract from 1846-48 1st edition 6 inch OS map of Wigtown, showing that the layout of the streets has changed very little when compared with the 20th century aerial photo below.





Above: The recreational space opens onto the north-eastern end of the enhanced space of Market Square with its B Listed New Mercat Cross dating from 1816. Below: Looking north-east along North Main Street towards the County Buildings and New Mercat Cross.



Purpose of Wigtown Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Wigtown Conservation Area Character appraisal identifies the significant elements of the townscape, providing the reason for its selection for designation and statutory protection.

The management plan, later in the document, is informed by the appraisal and provides guidance on how the identified character of Wigtown Conservation Area should be protected and enhanced.

Change is inevitable within a conservation area, to support social and environmental needs and challenges of the present. Buildings and spaces may need to be adapted to accommodate new uses, in sensitive and sustainable ways. Wigtown CACAMP will identify the historic and architectural character and guide change in order to retain, reinforce or enhance that character. This requires that owners and occupiers recognise the key positive elements of that character which need to be managed. In that way sensitive development will be carried out.

The original pattern of development in Wigtown; the designs of buildings and groups; the detail of traditional building construction techniques; and, the use of materials have each contributed to that character.

Wigtown CACAMP highlights the contribution and significance of:

- the setting, history and layout of the town;
- historic themes and features;
- the pattern of streets, spaces and roads;
- the range of buildings of different designs and age;
- the use of traditional and other materials; and
- the evidence of Wigtown's changing role.

Wigtown's economy has benefitted greatly from investment in its historic, architectural character and funding bodies seek long lasting impacts when they provide grants. The guidance promotes the proper, sustainable care and maintenance of buildings into the future.

Proposed change should:

Keep historic references which influenced layout, appearance and character of the conservation area.

Achieve good design for building adaptation, spaces and new development.

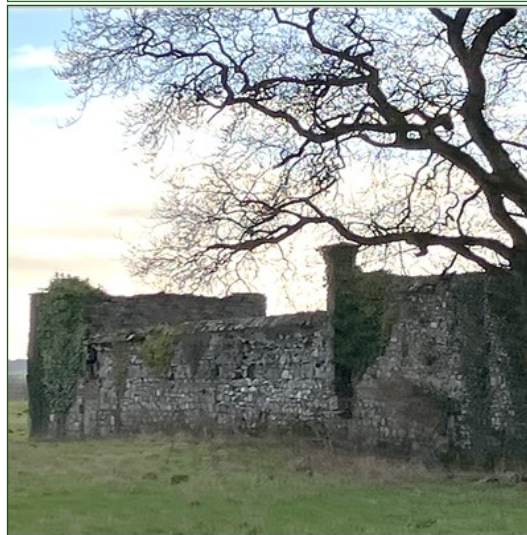
Respect the landscape setting and topography of the conservation area.

Catalyse ideas for enhancement with well-considered proposals.

Support regeneration applications and bids for grants which restore, repair and repurpose buildings and spaces.

Encourage the use of unoccupied historic buildings in poor condition.*

*Historic Environment Scotland manages the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland. The one entry in Wigtown is the Garden Houses at Bank House on Bank Street, which is a pair of roofless, square plan, buildings in the boundary walls of the large garden area of the former bank residence.



Early 2023 photo of Bank House and its garden wall buildings where the roofs have been missing since the 1990s. The walls are now deteriorating

Bank House was a popular bookshop, plant nursery and café for years but closed and is in new ownership in 2023.

The **aims** of the Wigtown CACAMP are to:

- identify and describe the elements and themes that contribute to the special architectural and historic character and interest of the area;
- set out how character and quality of the historic built environment should be protected and enhanced, including retaining buildings and finding uses to prevent their loss;
- identify where small-scale inappropriate changes to buildings, streets and open areas have the potential to erode the character;
- note the effects of existing development within the conservation area boundary and the general physical condition of buildings, structures and spaces;
- protect against the demolition of unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the general character of the conservation area;
- enable and support carefully managed change and evolution of the conservation area by endorsing development that makes a positive contribution to character; and
- identify wider opportunities for enhancement.



Eastern end of North Main Street

The guidance is divided into two parts:

PART ONE - History Development and General Character

The historical development of Wigtown and an overview of the significant themes and elements which come together to create its character.

PART TWO: Managing Character

Management requires the character to be preserved and enhanced particularly when making planning or enhancement decisions.

Proposals will be supported which maintain:

- the layout of the historic centre;
- the pattern of development;
- retention of elements of uniformity ;
- recurring architectural details;
- traditional building materials; and
- the form and features of buildings which contribute positively to character.

Good management will support and catalyse initiatives and actions, both individual and collective, which enhance character.



Above: The central part of North Main Street and some of the little market square. The buildings have traditional proportions but different finish material, heights and roof details; all features of the character of conservation area.

Below: The eastern part of South Main Street leading to Harbour Road. It incorporates modern buildings, simply designed to continue the general form but missing much of the elevation and roofscape detail such as window margins, natural slate, chimneys and the variations in height which feature in the older, traditional buildings.



PART ONE: HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF WIGTOWN CONSERVATION AREA

National and Regional Context

Wigtown sits in the southern part of the Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere and part of the conservation area lies within the Galloway Hills Regional Scenic Area. It lies alongside Wigtown Bay National Nature Reserve and within the edges of the Dark Sky Park.

Wigtown is a District Centre within the Mid Galloway Housing Market Area in the current Local Development Plan (LDP2). There is a housing site with permission for 43 dwellings approved in 2021 at Southfield Park, the old County show field. At the time of writing there is no indication that construction is likely to begin.

There are a number of planning objectives for Wigtown including to consolidate its role as district centre, encourage appropriately located housing development and retain established business and industry and development that supports the economic base of the small town. Alongside focusing on the economic benefits from being Scotland's National Book Town, the importance of the quality of the historic townscape and the landscape setting are recognised so there is an expectation of high quality design in appropriate densities. LDP2 makes reference to the archaeological importance of parts of the area that should be protected.

Wigtown has a historic association with the Covenanters with two monuments dedicated to them. One of these is on the edge of the salt marshes and the other is high up on Windy Hill, to the west. Within the

conservation area, in the old graveyard, there are headstones which are also significant in the story of the Covenanters.

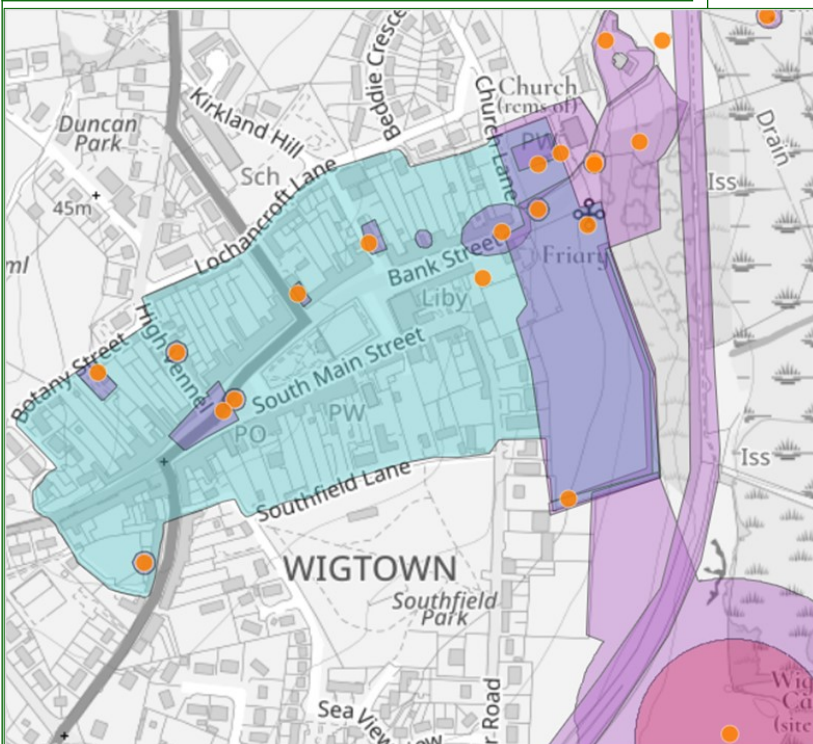
There is an area of archaeological importance where the former Wigtown Castle was and also at the general site of the former Dominican Friary near East Port where the extent is not fully known.

The Wigtown Harbour Core Path 389 follows part of the route of the former Wigtownshire Railway.

Flooding

The majority of Wigtown Conservation Area sits outside the any of the flood zones but occasionally the core path is very wet with surface water. Flooding is not generally of concern to the buildings and spaces within the conservation area but the former site of Wigtown Castle and the harbour, which are significant parts of the history of the place, are sometimes affected.

Archaeological Interest - There is very little prehistoric evidence of settlement close to Wigtown. Along the Bladnoch River valley, mainly south and west of Wigtown, there are neolithic remains, including a granite boulder in a wall in Bladnoch village which is recognised as a standing stone. A few stone artefacts (hammers and axe) are in the National Museum of Scotland noted as being found near Wigtown although very vague.



Screen shot from [Dumfries & Galloway Historic Environment Viewer in 2023](#)

Scheduled Monument



Archaeological record



Site of archaeological interest



Archaeological Sensitive Area



In Wigtown, most of the archaeological interest coincides with the rulers and religious of mediaeval times and later in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Historic Environment Record map viewer: [DGC - Archaeology \(dumgal.gov.uk\)](http://DGC-Archaeology.dumgal.gov.uk) discloses archaeological sites and spot finds.

History of Wigtown Conservation Area – Roman to Modern

There is no known Roman archaeology by way of building remains but trading may have taken place nearby as a coin from the time of Hadrian was found in a garden off South Main Street and there was a Roman presence further south at Whithorn (at Rasping) whether as traders or otherwise is unclear.

There is no definitive evidence of an early settlement, but a 10th century cross shaft in the old parish churchyard was referred to in a written account from the late 17th century. The earliest settlement had the name Epiack (or similar). It was in an area that would now be under the saltings (salt marshes) and sands of Wigtown Bay. However, an early settlement may have been at the church site. The remains of St Machute's Church date from 1730, built on the footings of an earlier church from the late 13th century but an even earlier church may have preceded those built remains.

A castle was established, or brought back into use, in the early 13th century probably to help King Alexander II to manage Galloway. Before the River Bladnoch altered to its current route, the castle lay beside it with a tidal ditch on the western side. Early 19th century excavation revealed the gate and drawbridge had been on the south-western side. Quarrying removed much of the remainder. The site is a Scheduled Monument, the remains form a small mound and the land is now grazed or part of a small wetland nature reserve.

Written records suggest that William Wallace

visited Galloway in 1297 and took Wigtown Castle, which was empty, appointing Adam Gordon as its keeper. Later it went to the King of Scotland, John de Balliol, and was in use as a Royal Residence for a short time.

An Order of 'Preaching Friars', Dominicans, was founded in 1267 on land given by Dervorguilla, wife of John de Balliol and one of the three heiress daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway. During this time, Alexander III is thought to have given high value gifts to the Friary. Two centuries later, between 1488 and 1513, James IV reputedly lodged at the Friary on his journey to St Ninian's Priory in Whithorn.

Despite the royal patronage, the exact site and extent of the Friary remains a mystery. Excavations indicated that some was on the field behind Croft-an-Righ, which was alongside the road to the former ford over the Cree and the first harbour. There is a stone carved with 13th century style crosses in the garden of Croft an Righ but may have been moved there. Records from 1818 note a remnant of mediaeval walling in part of the now removed harbour. A structure called a Bell Yett, probably at the Friary entrance, may have been sited close to Ball Green on the eastern side. Bell Yett persisted as the field name. The Bank House may also have had parts of the Friary in its grounds.

The Laird of Gairlies took the Friary assets. The land was given to Stewart of Garlies and in 1640 to the 'Burgh of Wigton' when all remaining buildings were removed.

There was a sheriffdom in the 1260s; a settlement mentioned in a 1292 indenture; and Wigtown became a Royal Borough in 1469. It is not clear which historical events or figures resulted in the sheriffdom and burgh but in 1265, Alexander Comyn (Earl of Buchan) was the sheriff. In 1288 it was his son John Comyn.

The castle and burgh were damaged extensively in a raid by Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, and the burgh may not have recover its population for some time. A series of incidents occurred from 1296 when King Edward I (of England) took Wigtown; the Scots retook it and then surrendered it in 1304; and Wigtown castle returned to Bruce's men during the campaigns of 1308 and 1312. It ceased to have much strategic purpose.

From 1333 the loyal Bruce supporting Flemings and successors held Wigtown. From 1372 it was acquired by Archibald Douglas, who became 3rd Earl, and his male successor until 1426 when Margaret Stewart, wife of the 4th Earl, was given Galloway for life by her brother King James I. The Douglas family sold the produce from their farms and administered both business and law in Wigtown. William, 8th Earl of Douglas, regained Galloway including Wigtown, by marrying his cousin Margaret Douglas who had inherited Galloway. William was assassinated in 1452.

Wigtown had its Royal Burgh status reinstated in 1457. Wigtown burgh was well defined but the extent of the area that should trade through it was less clear and resulted in

competition with Whithorn in later years.

In 1473, Wigtown became part of the marriage settlement between Margaret of Denmark and James III. Murdochson, McGarvie and MacCristen became leading, local families, holding office and tenancies of buildings and plots either side of the market space. The parish church was linked with powerful families and the grounds were a place to resolve money issues. A variety of businesses enabled Wigtown to become an important trading place. This is reflected in the long, feudal, burgess plots with frontage shops and accommodation which became the traditional layout of Wigtown's central streets: North Main Street, South Main Street, High Street and Bank Street. In this period a tight group of men ran the town, including Agnews of Lochnaw, Maclellans of Bombie and the MacCullochs of Torhouse.

Kirkcudbright and Wigtown harbours shared export trade from Galloway, mainly wool, hides and knitted woollen goods. This trade declined at the end of the 15th century.

In the early 16th century Whithorn's harbour at Isle of Whithorn was also in use and rivalry between the rights and privileges of the two burghs began. Early coastal charts record the existence of these and other harbours.

Extract from Nicolas de Nicolay, 1517-1583: "A true and exact hydrographical description of the sea-coast and Isles of Scotland" published by Nicolay D'aulphinois, Paris in 1583 & by John Adair, Edinburgh in 1688
<https://maps.nls.uk/coasts/chart/7770>

The highlighting has been added to pick out the three burgh ports of **Whithorn**, **Wigtown** and **Kirkcudbright**.





Some of the important sources of income to the people of Wigtown were the trading links between ports along the Irish Sea coast and the rights to use the natural resources such as local timber, peat and stone, which were privileges recorded in the 16th and 17th century.

Some privileges were renewed when Royal Burgh status was reaffirmed in 1662 by Charles II, following the political upheaval and changes in Britain. People paid a toll to the burgh for the right to trade in the market applying to both inhabitant burghers and visiting traders. Traders also paid for the weights and measures checks and adjustments that were needed and there were various levies on the sale of animals.

Local trades were a mainstay for many families. Plain woollen cloth, known as broadcloth, was manufactured at home with different parts of the process undertaken by women and men of the community. The weaving part of the process was most often done by men. Shoes and clothes were also made locally. Records show that Wigtown

was well run by advantaged families but was not prosperous. The trade from the harbour was mostly exchange of goods between Scottish ports on the west coast. However, in the early 17th century, Stranraer had begun to emerge as a rival port. The accounts of Wigtown harbour at this time suggest it was in a poor state of repair and the competition was increasing from Whithorn, resulting in Wigtown Harbour losing trade.

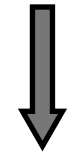
In the early 17th century there was a decline in the population. Some local families remained dominant but Wigtown had lost much of its regional importance by the late 17th century.

Up until the second half of the 18th century there were two town portals (ports or gates) seen on historic maps. They were largely demolished in 1761. West Port was sited between projecting buildings and some traces remained up until 1950. East Port is thought to have been on Bank Street close to the junction with Church Lane but little definitive evidence remains.



George Taylor Andrew Skinner, 1775: Title: The road from Edinburgh to Wigtoun and Whitehorn, Continued; The Road from Edinburgh Date: 1775.

Note that the north is to the bottom of the map.



North

It is thought that the apple now known as the Galloway Pippin was probably first grown in the field of Croft-an-Righ, developed by the Dominican Preaching Friars of Wigtown. The original apple may have been named after the field.

Between the early 18th century and the 19th century, change took place to the buildings but not to the general layout of the streets although there were more vennels referred to in early 18th century records. High Vennel and Low Vennel remain as street names. There may have been another vennel on the south side near where Harbour Road now meets South Main Street.

Description of Wigtown Conservation Area

There is much debate about the origins of place names and around Wigtown different languages were used and some prominent people may have influenced the names.

There are a number of proposed explanations for 'Wigtown' such as from the Old English *wic*, a village, and *ton*, a hill, or the Old Norse where *vic* is a bay and *ton* is a town.

The present town dates from the late 17th and 18th century although its appearance is dominated by changes that took place in the 19th century.

The central space is the focus of the conservation area with the 19th century red ashlar County Building at the north-east end facing the recreation space and mainly two storey buildings lining the long sides in a mix of grey stone types, some red sandstone, painted stone and renders. The space continues south west to High Street and the junction with Agnew Crescent going south. On the north-eastern side Harbour Road curves downhill to the east and to the north Bank Street leads downhill to Ball Green.

Buildings

Most buildings in Wigtown Conservation Area are stone. They are bare, painted or rendered/harled and painted. Contrasting margins around windows and doors are a common feature. The building stone comes from local and regional geology. Three different types are visible, used in combination or alone. Whinstone and granite appear as bare stone giving a grey tone to the buildings. Red sandstone often forms architectural dressings, and a few significant elevations.

Paint is used externally in a range of pale shades along with stronger coloured painted margins. Early 20th century brick is visible in a few places but not often in main elevations.

Buildings vary noticeably in height. The majority are two storey but a significant number of taller buildings and many single storey buildings are interspersed among them. The variation in the topography across the conservation area accentuates the building height changes.

Stone	Description	Use
Whinstone (local name for stone usually greywacke but also dolerite, or basalt.)	In Wigtown, whinstone is usually partly metamorphosed, hard, granular, sedimentary stone in shades of grey.	This is the most common building stone in the conservation area. Used as rubble stone for elevations and frequently painted leaving the rough texture visible; also squared rubble in elevations and garden walls.
Granite (silver-grey granite probably quarried quite locally, possibly across the Cree Estuary)	Hard, metamorphic, speckled grey, stone quarried in two places close to Creetown.	Square cut blocks for main elevations with snecking (pin stones). Also roughly hewn, or carefully shaped for lintels, sills, corners and other dressings. Some statues, crosses and memorials are cut and carved granite. Generally, left unpainted except as a modern alteration or in use as window and door margins.
Sandstone (red, pale red or cream shades from deposits across the region from the Permian period)	Sedimentary rock often with a colour range from strong red to cream but mostly brownish red or orange -red in Wigtown.	Usually cut into blocks; often polished ashlar and used in the main elevations of designed buildings. It is also used as bull faced cut blocks and may be found mixed in with other stone in rubble walls.



Left:- Coursed, rough faced, cut granite blocks in an elevation; Middle:- roughly hewn, granite lintels above paired doors; Right:- coursed, plain, granite blocks with mouse ladder whinstone snecking between and a granite string course and granite block footings.

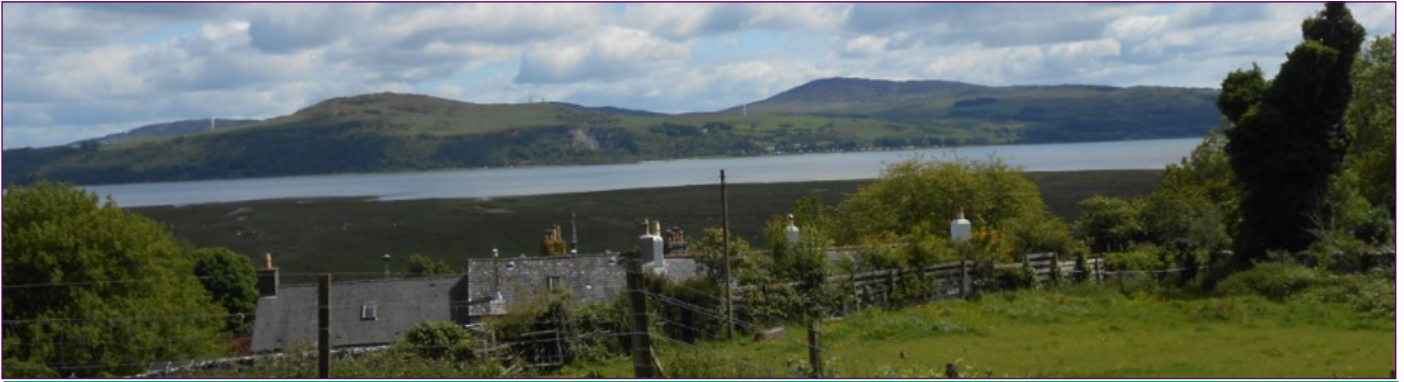
Whinstone is the most common stone, often with detail in another stone, or painted. There are rough faced, rubble whinstone walls some with a semblance of coursing. There is also more distinct coursing, some with formal or roughly cut sandstone dressings.

Sandstone is used to dress window and door margins and for string course details. As the main building material it may be polished ashlar or bull faced with slim, lime mortar joints.



Examples of whinstone and sandstone used alone or in combination. Most of the sandstone is orange/red and most likely from the north, in Ayrshire or east in Dumfriesshire. Pale sandstone is used to dress windows, corners and cornices on the County Building.

Whinstone probably came from local quarries.



Views to and from Wigtown.

Top: View across East Port area to the east towards Creetown and the Galloway Hills.

Middle: Views over the salt marshes on the shores of Wigtown Bay towards the former granite quarry in the side of Kirkmabreck Hill. The Liverpool Dock Trustees first opened the quarry in 1830 and employed more than 400 men at its peak. The stone went by sailing boat to Liverpool. Other granite quarries opened nearby, generating a ready supply of granite in the 19th century for local buildings as seen in Wigtown and further afield.

Bottom: Looking up the slope from the edge of the salt marshes towards Croft an Righ.



Setting, Topography, Landscape, Location, Viewpoints and Key Approaches

Wigtown sits on a raised area of land very close to the coast of Wigtown Bay in farming country where pasture is the dominant feature in the hilly landscape. Kirkmabreck granite quarry across the bay may have been one of the sources of granite used in Wigtown's buildings. The ground slopes down to the flat grazing wetland salt marsh at the edge of Wigtown Bay.

Wigtown Conservation Area is approached from the north on the road from Newton Stewart. It divides into New Road and High Vennel to reach the edge of the conservation area at the junctions with Lochancroft Lane.

On High Vennel, the buildings on the north-eastern side are 2 storey cottages. Some of these are traditional but most have been modernised so that it is hard to see their original features. The south-western side has a modern doctor's surgery with parking. There is a public toilet block and a cash dispenser on the southern side but on the

northern side is a row of traditional harled and painted two-storey buildings which project onto the view from High Vennel onto the open triangular market space with the New Mercat Cross surpasses the quality of High Vennel.

Along New Road, the view is channelled by garden walls and side walls of buildings on the south-western side. On the north-eastern side, simple, modern, two-storey dwellings have been built, set back from the road. An open garage area has a single storey vernacular styled building which accommodates a small business. This is not typical of the rest of the conservation area.

Where New Road joins North Main Street, two smooth-rendered, painted buildings form the street corners. 11 North Main Street is B-Listed, late-18th century with a pilastered entrance onto New Road. 12 North Main Street is C-listed, mid-19th century with simple painted elevations and enlarged lower windows which show it was formerly a shop.



From the north-east a narrow country lane runs along the side of Wigtown Bay in and turns south-west up Bank Street to pass Ball Green Cottages on the west and Croft-an-Righ on the east. There are views to the tower of the church. The road widens up the slope of Bank Street.



Ball Green leading uphill to the south past cottages to become Bank Street at the parish church

From the south Lightlands Terrace runs uphill to become Agnew Street past bungalows with open frontages on the west side and the leafy gardens of Elmwood at the corner of Station Road and Beechwood House also with many trees and a stone garden wall. The uphill slope curves gently to reveal the long whinstone elevations of Acre Place which is C-Listed, 2-storey from the mid-19th century. Both sides of Agnew Street have a marked variety of mainly C-Listed, 19th century traditional style terraces built up to the back of pavement and staggering up the rise with different heights and material finishes. One area is set back from the road frontage where a modern development was inserted which is out of character with the remainder of the street. Agnew Street meets High Street and North Main Street at the narrow end of the long, triangular open area.

From High Street the approach from the north-western end of Lightlands Terrace is along Fountainblue Terrace which is steeply uphill. The conservation area begins at the junction with Botany Street, and High Street begins.

On the south side is a distinctive, early 19th

century, C-Listed granite block cottage raised above the road. Beside it are two more C Listed cottages, raised on steps but different in outward appearance. No.30 is 2 storeys and harled and 28 is single storey painted whinstone and narrow. A distinctive, simple railing runs parallel to the frontage on the steps and platform. It is a unique and interesting group.

Below: The group of cottages raised up on High Street.



There are a few small bungalows set above and back from the street on the north side and on the south side a 2-storey terrace begins with variations in materials and details to where High Street meets Agnew Crescent. In the middle of the traditional terraces is a modern, grey rendered row of similar height which disrupts the traditional character of High Street.

At the junction with North Main Street there are open views of the buildings in the central area with the tall edifice of the red sandstone County Building and its tower stopping the long view.

The remaining approach is from the south up the slope of Harbour Road past modern detached bungalows and several fine historic

buildings of interest to the history of Wigtown, outside the conservation area. B-Listed, 19th century Old Prison House has dramatic chimney stacks; C-Listed, 19th century Dunure House which was built as a free school and the former Manse is B-Listed. Southfield Park on the west side has mature trees lining the rubblestone boundary wall which also marks the boundary of the conservation area.

Harbour Road continues up to a row of mainly single storey traditional cottages and outbuildings in a terrace on the south side with a mix of harled, rendered and painted elevations. It meets South Main Street, and turns west, in front of the elegant C-Listed, Applegarth and a little hipped roofed building.



Harbour Road
clockwise:
outbuilding,
cottages,
whinstone wall &
Applegarth.



South Main Street runs south-west, a row of single storey cottages and on its east side and on the west, the elegant, 2-storey, B-Listed villa abutting the side of County Buildings.



Fairholme, South Main Street was built early in the 19th century as a bank house originally facing south-west but when County Buildings were built, a new side entrance was made with a Classical Doric style door piece.

The south-west view is the central open space with mostly 2-storey terraced buildings either side but with occasional taller buildings.

Street Pattern and Form

The pattern of the roads and lanes is evident in the conservation area and much the same as in the mid-19th century. The area which is most distinctive is the central 'square' which is

in fact a slender triangle. North Main Street and South Main Street were formerly North and South High Street and High Street was called Town Head but the layout has changed little. The County Buildings form the base of the triangle and the two Main Streets form the sides, characterised by simple terraces of buildings made up of a mix of shops, cafés and dwellings. They each hug the back of the pavement. However, there are a few places where the building line is broken allowing access to a car park and into the gateway of the Gothic style Roman Catholic Church from the late 19th century and C-Listed.

Roads and Street Surfaces

Streets and footways are black top with some concrete paving slabs. The area around New Mercat Cross is granite paved public. Kerb stones are a mix of granite, whinstone and some more modern lengths of concrete. The simple surfaces do not detract from buildings.



1st edition Ordnance Survey from 1850 showing the pattern of streets

Open Spaces - Public and Private

There are a small number of open spaces in the conservation area, mostly with a specific function. However, Wigtown is set in open landscape with small roads and footpaths close to it which provide places for cycling, walking and enjoying other aspects of the outdoors.

Central space

Between North and South Main Street the central 'square' includes a bowling green and a small recreational garden, dedicated as McGuffie Memorial Garden. The garden has modest scale trees, planted borders and seating. It is also where the Old Mercat Cross was erected after it had been moved. Outside the gate and railings, to the south, is the recently enhanced stone market place with the New Mercat Cross which is used for weekly markets, a bus stop and occasionally for sitting on the steps.

Parish Churchyard

At the north end of Bank Street the parish church provides informal outdoor space as well as its primary use as a historic burial ground. It is an important backdrop to the church and much of it is B-Listed. It is not suitable for everyone to use.

County Show Field

Southfield Park lies outside but alongside the conservation area and part of it has planning permission to be developed. However there it continues to provide open space that connects with Southfield Lane and other small roads in use as walking routes.

Walking routes

Martyr's Walk on Ball Park Green, the walk up to the Martyr's Monument; and the walk to the wetlands area and bird hide along Harbour Road important local open space routes all lying outside the conservation area.



Left: the Parish Church and churchyard space. Above and below right: McGuffie Gardens and the bowling green in the central space.



Derelict, Vacant and Under-used Buildings and Land

There are very few vacant buildings. Wigtown & Bladnoch Community Initiative took on the former bank on North Main Street to give it a beneficial use including affordable housing.

Wigtown Hotel [Bank House] including the main building, plant nursery and the small buildings in the garden wall is in need of restoration but a new owner has taken it on.

There are a small number of larger buildings where it seems they are under-used where additional uses would be of benefit including the County Buildings which the community drew attention to during the consultation. The internal space could be put to beneficial use. In addition, the very significant Plough Hotel on South Main Street was closing for sale.

Southfield Park, Harbour Road is earmarked for some housing but it is just outside the conservation area with the potential to impact on character.

There is an under-used private area of land behind properties on Agnew Crescent alongside Kilquhirm Road which may have some future potential subject to agreement.

Windows and Doors

There is an interesting variety in the patterns of panes and panels of the doors and windows throughout the conservation area. Most windows are 2-over-2 or 1-over-1 pane timber, sash and case; some have been repaired and others replaced. There are also multipaned sash and case windows and an occasional building with tripartite or Venetian style windows or casements.

Doors are mainly painted timber with 6 or 4 panels raised and fielded panels where they are original. There are some with simple vertical planking; a significant number of two leaf storm doors and many interesting panel pattern variations. There are also modern

replacements which have lost traditional proportions. Where there is separate access to a dwelling above a shop, the doors are often simple designs.



A selection of frontages in the conservation area. There are a number of door and window combinations that are significant to individual buildings and streets and to the overall character of Wigtown Conservation Area.



Below: A pair of traditional format doors with the upper panels replaced with glazing. The lintels and dividing masonry are rough hewn granite.



A range of different window pane patterns and proportions found in Wigtown Conservation Area.

Above: 2 over 2 pane pattern windows in a stone wall. Right hand side top to bottom: 6 over 1 pane, also used in the half dormers; 1 over 1 pane windows; a tripartite or Venetian style window; and paired 1 over 1 windows in the same opening.





A selection of doors and door-pieces from several streets in the conservation area. Some have plain or decorative 'fanlights', and a few have 'classical' external door surrounds. Raised and fielded timber 4 and 6 panels formats are most common some adapted with glazing. There are many 2-leaf storm doors and plain vertical timber doors for rear accesses.



Roofscape, Townscapes and Building Facades and Architectural Embellishment

Many buildings have large chimneys and most have skew stones on the edges of slated roofs, traditional elements which feature strongly. Modern, or modernised roofscapes, where the details are absent, are evident. The general appearance is of streets with modest, vernacular buildings of varying sizes, heights and finishes and a small number of designed buildings which are often taller, may have decorative entrances and embellishments. Both churches, the County Buildings and two former bank houses are examples. North Main Street and South Main Street form the sides of the central space. They originate from the late 18th or early 19th century, simple Georgian in style and many are B and C-Listed.

North Main Street has mainly 2-storey, 3-bay bare stone elevations and a few smooth rendered, painted in soft tones. Contrasting margins are common. There are no long continuous roofs due to large chimneys and the variety of ridge heights. Architectural decorations are shaped quoins, ornate door-pieces, and occasional cornices and string courses.

South Main Street has a mix of 2 and 3-

storey dwellings and commercial premises. The ground slopes down at the north-east end so changes in building heights is accentuated in this part of the street. Many properties are 2 bays wide and others are 3. The frontage is largely continuous, broken by the little Gothic church behind its ornate railing topped wall at the north-eastern end. There are more larger scale, taller buildings than on North Main Street. Among the building features are a pedimented gable, some paired gabled, half dormers, and a pair of flat roofed dormers, added some time ago. The elevations with painted and painted render use a wide variety of colours. However, one grey rendered, modern terrace lacks much of the detail of the traditional buildings despite having an acceptable general form. There are some well restored buildings but also some modern alterations to windows and roofs. Large chimneys and height variations create interest in the roofscape.



Sandstone verge dressing and ball finial embellishment.





Above and below: sections of North Main Street where there is much height variation, despite being mainly 2-storey. The large chimneys and simple architecture are evident. The 3-bay wide elevations have with windows lined through in the Classical manner. The few dormers are not of traditional design. Many ground floors were once shops.



Part of **Lochancroft Lane** is within the conservation area and has good examples of a smaller street which retains strong character. It is made up of several different short terraced rows of vernacular buildings with large chimneys and many surviving skew stones. There is a mix of single storey and 2-storey dwellings, some with whinstone and granite frontages and some that are rendered and painted; some two bays wide and others 3-bay. There are a few with dormer windows which are modern in shape and use modern materials. Some of the roofs are no longer tiled in natural slate.



Above: Northern part of South Main Street with a mix of bare stone, smooth rendered and painted, 2-storey, 3-bay buildings and a modern grey rendered terrace.



Above: Traditional dwellings on Lochancroft Lane of mixed designs. The large chimneys are significant in the roofscape and the majority of the elevations are whinstone and granite, some painted. The dormers are later additions and do not have traditional shapes or material finishes. Doors and windows are a mix of modern and traditional formats.

Bank Street and Agnew Crescent both slope downhill from the central streets. The west side of **Bank Street** has a terrace of four elegant 3-bay Georgian dwellings with large shared chimneys. They have a variety of finishes and slight variations in the window and door layout but read strongly as a group. Further down on the west side the dwellings are single storey or 1½ storey with modern dormers or traditional half dormers and other variations. However, there is much traditional detail retained including unpainted whinstone with granite quoins and window margin details. The east side has more single and 1½ storey houses with haphazard changes in height up the hill to meet the County Buildings.



Different sections of the west side of Bank Street and the east side below.



The west side of **Agnew Crescent** is made up of terraced 2-storey dwellings, separated by linked single storey cottages. The majority are C-listed. The texture of rubble stone wall is perceptible under paint and traditional harling. There is one modernist 20th century block which has a significantly different form and is set back from the street.

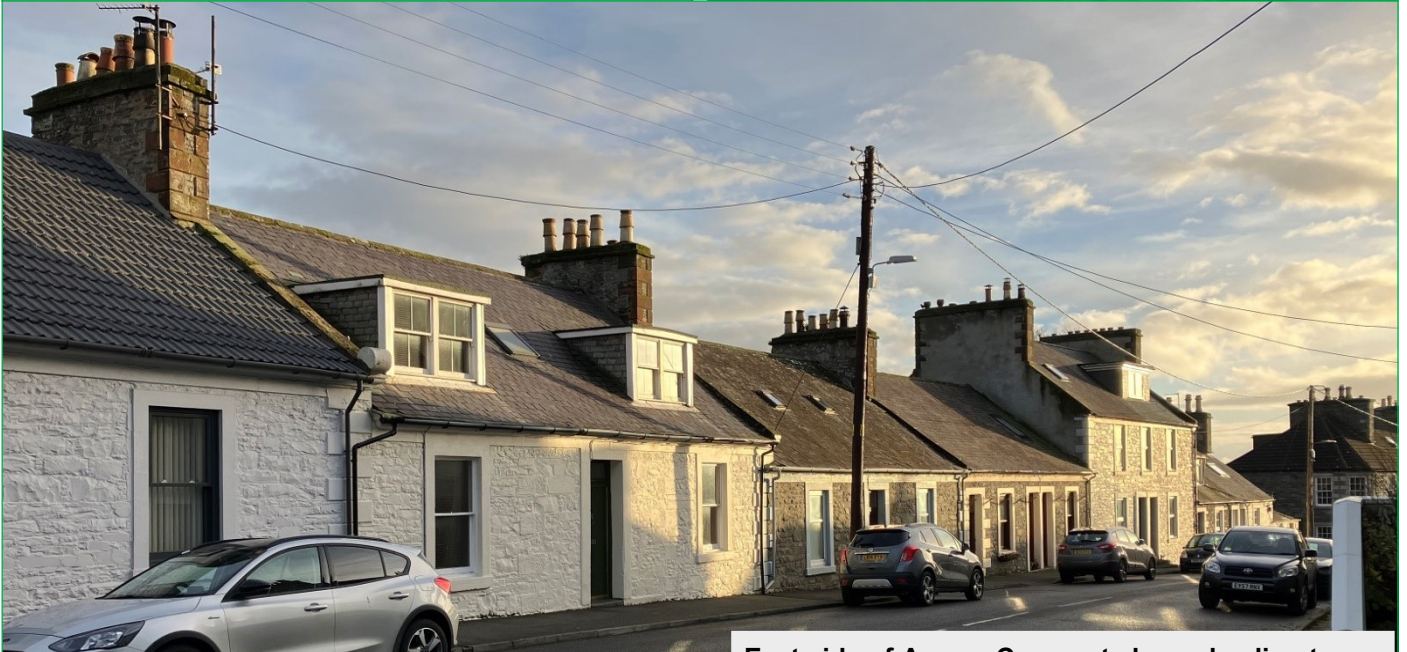
The east side has a few different groups of buildings, mainly in terraced from the late 18th or early 19th century with simple, vernacular designs. Acre Place is a C-listed whinstone and granite dressed Georgian terrace. There are 3 detached villas in private gardens where the gardens contribute to the setting.



West side of Agnew Crescent at High Street junction



Modern flats



East side of Agnew Crescent above, leading to the interesting terrace called Acre Place, below.



High Street leads from the south-western end of the central space where it meets Agnew Crescent. The buildings on the north side have a few shop windows of varying designs some no longer in commercial use. There is a mix of bare stone, harled or smooth rendered and painted. There are not many chimneys remaining but it is clear there were more in the past. Many doors have been replaced and there is a mix of window materials and opening mechanisms.

The south side is predominantly residential with traditional and modernised 2-storey buildings. There is a modern terrace set back from the road with a design a little at odds with the vernacular buildings. High Street finishes with a few more traditional buildings, some with modern alterations.



The south-eastern side of High Street



Other streets in the conservation area are High Vennel, New Road and Low Vennel joining North Main Street from the north-western side each with a mix of traditional, vernacular buildings and modern additions.

High Vennel has a doctor's surgery, parking area, public toilets and a cash machine on the south-west side. The dwellings opposite are mainly traditional, single storey and 2-storey terraces some with modern interventions and one new. It is noticeable that the chimneys are not as large as on other streets. Some roofs have been replaced in concrete tiles.

New Road has modern properties on the north-eastern side leading to a single storey building and a polite, classical side elevation. The garden wall of a dwelling runs along the south-western side.

Low Vennel has terraces of bare stone and 1½ storey dwellings with half dormers, a design that occurs in a few other places. The former smithy is now a dwelling. The south-western side of Low Vennel is more modernised.



Above: Low Vennel converted smithy
Left: B-listed late 18th century house, New Road

Church Lane is much further north-east, adjoining Lochancroft Lane beside the churchyard. It has a short terrace of single storey stone dwellings with modern dormers and other changes. **Southfield Lane** runs behind South Main Street with an occasional new dwelling and broken views through. The showground stone wall is significant. **South Back Street** runs up to Agnew Crescent.



Boundary Treatments, Trees, Soft landscaping and Hedges

There are some very significant rubble stone walls and a number of lengths of railings and gates which have interesting designs and distinctive signs of age.

There are ornate railings on top of the coursed rubble wall of the Sacred Heart Church on South Main Street, included in the C Listing.

There is a hedge around part of the central recreation space, with some smallish trees included around the perimeter with limited planting in the space itself. The bowling green in the adjacent space has a smooth green lawn.

The conservation area is mostly a built area except the few large houses on Lightlands Terrace with significant scale trees that are visible from other parts of the conservation area. Those and the avenue of large mature trees alongside Southfield Lane just outside boundary at the wall of County showgrounds contribute positively to the character.

A selection of historic railings and gates from around the conservation area





Top: Looking north up Kilquhirm Road at the whinstone boundary walls;

Left centre: Looking north along Southfield Lane at the boundary with the Southfield Park former County Showground where the trees, along the conservation area boundary, contribute to character.

Right centre: Sandstone coped wall at the bottom of Bank Street

Bottom left: the interesting iron railings and decorative lantern of the central recreation space which enclose the boundary shrubs and planting beds.

Bottom right: iron gates at Bank House



Unique architectural details

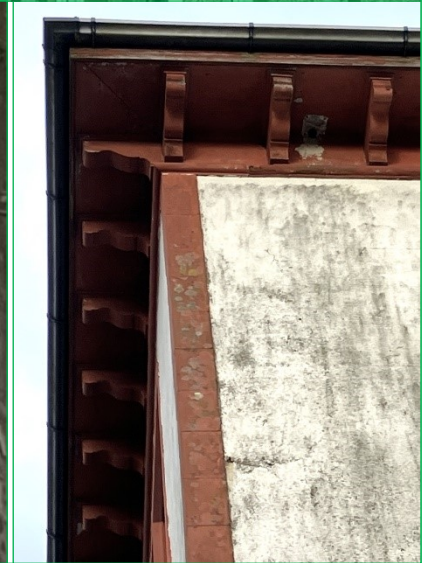
There are a range of details to be seen mainly at eaves height. The large civic buildings such as the churches and the County Buildings have a lot of detail and others have porticoes that stand out as being designed when the building is otherwise quite plain. String courses and corbelling and little parapets are the simplest embellishments. There is also ornate dentil corncing and and details including brattishing are found on a number of buildings. Some are not in great condition but still of aesthetic interest.

There are also a small number of moulded verge boards on some of the gable dormers.

The embellished door surrounds have been considered already but the two below, both on Agnew Crescent demonstrates the contrast between the plain elevation and the ornate door piece.



Although some of details have condition issues they are a valuable element of the character of Wigtown Conservation Area.



Top:- simple string course and ornate dentil course in next door buildings; corbelled cornice; decorative eaves; simple corbelling with parapet.
Below:- ornate brattishing on a parapet roof edge.



Buildings: A selection of building types in Wigtown Conservation Area

The following buildings are samples of those which contribute positively to character. Simple, single storey cottages in terraced groups are the smallest type of building, found in a number of streets. There are a number of 1½ storey cottages with half dormer windows. Many buildings are simple, vernacular 2 and 3-bay stone terraces some painted or painted render. They are found in all streets of the conservation area. Some terraces were always dwellings and others were dwellings above a shop or former shop. They are a significant portion of buildings in the conservation area.



There are two notable corner buildings. One faces High Street at the top of Agnew Crescent and the other is Acre Place further south on Agnew Crescent.



Left column:- Simple, single storey cottages on South Main Street, Bank Street and South Back Street; a 1½ storey dwelling with half dormers on Bank Street. Above:- 3-bay terrace on North Main Street with a simple shop; 2-bay bare stone terrace pair on High Street and a pair of dwellings in Bank Street.

Corner of Agnew Crescent and High Street



Among the vernacular terraces and traditional frontages there are also a number of more formal buildings. Some of these have a clear design that contrasts with other buildings in

are found on North Main Street, South Main Street and Bank Street. They include the New Parish Church, Bank House and the County Buildings and former coaching inns and bank houses each of which is built in a manner that reflects the important commercial status of the people that built it.

The buildings included in the selection above are a sample of the range of types found in the conservation area which contribute positively to its architectural and historic character.

Wigtown County Building



Former coaching inn on South Main Street



Old Bank House, South Main Street

the conservation area and others are variations of the generally simple, Classical style buildings. They include commercial and civic buildings, of which some have now changed use. They make a statement of their importance through scale, architectural details and embellishments. Buildings of this type

Shopfronts

Many of the shopfronts are simply enlarged windows and very simple. Where these are plate glass, they include a transom to reduce the size of the panes. Others have traditional shop front frames with pilasters and fascia and decorative consoles and a plate glass shop display window and transom windows above.



Top down: Simple large shop windows; a Victorian style shopfront and below a former shop in residential use.

The variety of shop front designs is part of the character; no two are the same. They have retained particular features such as simplicity or Victorian or Edwardian designs in many cases and places. Where conversions have taken place, shop windows have been incorporated into the new use in a sensitive way so the commercial origins are legible.



Sculptures and Works of Art/Statuary

There are two Mercat Crosses. The Old Market Cross is in the recreation area having moved around a number of times over two centuries. It is B-Listed and probably 18th century, in origin although repaired later. It is made from hewn granite and has some interesting hieroglyph or numeral carvings of interest. New Market Cross is in the square where improvement to the public realm has taken place. It is hewn from granite, is B-Listed and dates from 1816, probably originally a memorial to the battle of Waterloo.



The War Memorial, above, is sited in a wide area of Bank Street opposite the churchyard. It commemorates both World Wars. It appears to be a mix of two stones, those being granite and marble.



Above left: Old Mercat Cross
Above right: New Mercat Cross

Left: old Mercat cross and the carved detail of one of the four sides.



In the churchyard there are interesting headstones, several centuries old; some have sculptured symbolism which is no longer used.



The central gardens have an archway entrance sculpture in memory of a young local soldier, Louis McGuffie VC, whose family came from Wigtown and who died in the First World War.

PART TWO: Managing the Character of Wigtown Conservation Area

General Management Points

The historic character of Wigtown has been recognised through its designation as a conservation area. The small town also forms part of the wider historic environment of Dumfries and Galloway region. As a result of its setting, architectural character and historic associations and being Scotland's Book Town, established over 25 years ago, Wigtown has important tourism appeal. The reading themed shops are generally of historic design or repurposed 19th century commercial spaces inside buildings of historic interest. The annual town events also use the historic spaces and buildings. Together this has contributed to the economic regeneration of Wigtown and its many cafés, craft, antique and art shops which are also occupying many of the traditional buildings. Tourism helps support the income of the everyday shops needed by the all-year resident community. Therefore, it is important to support initiatives which consolidate and encourage development which maintains the character of the conservation area.

Economic and community regeneration for new and existing businesses, for housing or for other amenities and services should be collaborative so they work well with each other in all respects.

Climate change adaptation measures to reduce energy use in dwellings and businesses are important and should be supported. They must be based on the most up-to-date technical knowledge, which includes methods and materials which protect against long-term damage to the integrity of traditional building fabric, which is not often the same as measures for more modern construction. The long term good condition of the fabric of buildings is important for sustainability and the character of the conservation area.

New development should be designed so as not to dilute character and alterations should not remove or obscure detail; which would be detrimental to the special historic appeal of Wigtown.

Some vertically aligned windows and windows with doors in Wigtown Conservation Area.





Above: A former shop attached to a dwelling with a simple wide window now in residential use.

Right: Simple shop windows with central door and separate door either to the rear or to dwelling above.



Managing development

To preserve and enhance the special character of Wigtown Conservation Area, the existing built character and mix of generally simple designs should be retained and reinforced in terms of the massing, materials and design of new buildings and extensions to existing.

New development within the conservation area, including extensions or alterations, should respect the mix of heights and widths. The 2 and 3-bay mix of terraces which are also a mix of two storey, single and 1½ storey buildings along with less frequent taller, wider buildings is the established pattern with some variation in different streets. Designs for infill development should follow this pattern in the existing streets, so that it preserves and enhances the established character.

Shop fronts in the conservation area may be in commercial use with a dwelling above, or the whole building may now be residential. As part of preserving the existing character, and the legible history of the conservation area, the existing shop front openings and surroundings should be retained, even when conversion is proposed. The shape and size of some of the simpler shop windows and openings can be retained relatively easily, with little alteration. Internal adaptations can be made for privacy and in the future it might easily be used as a shop again.

Window alignment

The vertical alignment of windows is in the Georgian manner and this arrangement should continue in the design of new development, extensions or alterations. Examples of this alignment are on the previous page.

Door positions

The appraisal notes that many shops have central doors but there are also many with an additional off-centre door for access to the upper floors. This feature should be retained in the event of alterations or new development.

Window and door formats

The interesting, wide variety of traditionally proportioned timber doors and masonry entrance features are described in the appraisal. For the most part, they should be retained, repaired or

restored and painted as necessary as this is the most sustainable way of preserving character.

Timber is a carbon neutral product and can be repaired and carefully shaped to fit slightly distorted openings in stone buildings. New development should use timber doors of similar panel layouts and proportions to those already present. The variety of traditional timber windows and their pane numbers, some of which were restored or replaced in a past conservation grant scheme, should also be retained and repaired as a key part of historic character, as far as possible. Climate change adaptations to improve energy efficiency should first look at thorough maintenance and restoration of traditional windows and whether incorporating secondary glazing would be as good as or better than replacement.

Existing and proposed elevation finishes

The appraisal identifies a mix of exposed stone and painted or rendered stone building elevations in the conservation area. Alterations or new development should demonstrate how they maintain that balance of finishes and colours, to preserve the character. Preserving the architectural features and details of individually designed buildings is also important. However, part painting elevations should be avoided. The long term impact of any proposed changes to fabric and architectural features, including the materials to be used, should be considered carefully, whether for maintenance or alterations.



Three examples of 20th century housing development in Wigtown Conservation Area; some mimics the general form of existing buildings without the architectural details and one contrasts completely.

Fabric changes and alterations

That includes features such as large chimneys which may be considered to have no function but can be used for ventilation or flues particularly in domestic properties. Stone ridge capping where it remains and skew stones on roof edges are traditional and continue to have a role in preventing wind lift of slates in the exposed town. The pattern of slating from a traditional Scottish roof, is very large slates graded in diminishing courses going up the roof, with big

areas of overlap, which has worked well keeping the driven rain out for many decades or longer. There are also finer grained, smaller slated roofs throughout Wigtown. The new roofing fashion now is for much smaller slates with a big overlap, which creates a change in texture. This should be avoided on the main roof slopes facing the street, if possible, unless it is already the established pattern of that roof or the one beside it.

Existing Less Sympathetic Development

There has been development in the late 20th century which is not based on the established character. While the buildings may provide good living conditions they could contribute better to the streetscape. The newer buildings could be enhanced by the introduction of some traditional themes or colour schemes which would work better with the wider character. An opportunity may arise when other improvements are being carried out, such as energy efficiency measures. There have been a number of unsympathetic alterations to the exterior of some buildings in a small number of places with the loss of traditional details and materials, which might have been avoided if they had been given more consideration, however careful intervention to some building facades and roofs has the potential to recover the character.

Roofscape features

Chimneys and dormers have been noted in the appraisal, to make a positive contribution to some buildings in the conservation area. There are few taller roof features except on the church and County Building but there are occasional gabled half-dormers and forward facing gables. There may be places where conversion of the attic space would require the introduction of a dormer for headroom but ideally these should not be on the front slope of the building. In each case the proposed design should be proportionate to the host building, positioned appropriately on the roof, align with windows in the elevation and closely resemble the shape of traditional dormers in the conservation area. Chimneys should be retained and may always be used for ventilation purposes.

Building materials

New development and extensions should take their cue from existing street frontage materials referred to in the appraisal; including slate roofs, stone or rendered and painted elevations with whinstone, granite and red sandstone details.

Preserving established historic views.

There are a number of established historic views identified in the appraisal which exist as a result of the street form, layout and topography. The view along the High Street axis towards County Building along the North and South Main Street is particularly important. The view down the slope of Bank Street towards the war memorial and parish church is also significant. If new development and extensions take proper account of these in their massing and design they will not disrupt or diminish these views. Other views should be identified in development proposals to ensure that character is deserved.

Land-use, landscape and townscape improvements

Restoration and use should be found for the vacant building/s on Bank Street;
Sensitive enhancement of some of the modern housing schemes should be considered;
Succession tree planting should be considered along Southfield Lane where some of the trees are already mature and may be at risk of loss during storms. Some limited tree surgery may be necessary to preserve their longevity if an arboriculturist considers it to be appropriate.

Vernacular and Architectural details.

As well as taking care not to dilute the existing haphazard nature of the roofscape with changing heights and large chimneys, the details of the original roofs and their pattern of slating are important elements of the character. Natural slate has been replaced by modern tiles in some places and modern imported slating in regular sizes has replaced the vernacular and traditional pattern of diminishing slate sizes going up the roof. Sandstone skew stones were often used to weigh down the slate at the edge of gables. Simple sandstone roof ridges have also been replaced with galvanised steel or terracotta. The surviving stone ridges and skew stones should be retained or reinstated as they perform a useful function by limiting wind lift and they contribute positively to character.

String courses, dentil courses and corncicing at eaves level and parapet details such as brattishing as seen in the appraisal, contribute unique character to a building and add interest to the conservation area. Each element may be significant to the individual building and should be repaired and restored for its aesthetic contribution.

In order to achieve this it may be appropriate to pursue further grant schemes in the town through whatever local funding may be available.

Advertising

Quirky visual advertising attractions such as freestanding sculptures or artefacts outside shops are used to encourage customers in to local businesses and gives some of the shops unique appeal. The variety has become part of the interest of the town although it is likely these will change over time unlike the main features of character.

Encouraging the use of traditional materials and skills

It would be beneficial for residents and business owners of Wigtown to have a refresher in the best way to maintain and upgrade traditional buildings to preserve and enhance the fabric and detail of individual buildings and the character of the conservation area as a whole. A programme of hands on skills education for the repair and restoration of traditional stone and lime buildings would benefit both owners, trades and decision makers. A few day courses have been provided locally in the last year which could be a model for Wigtown. The wider the audience that understands how to maintain the properties in the most traditional manner possible, the better the outcome.

Going forward, modern cementitious and hard renders which do not allow moisture to move through the wall should not be permitted. Ideally those buildings that have cement render on stone buildings should be replaced with lime harling alternatives. It is not necessary to use lime harling on concrete blockwork or brick, although it is a more sustainable product than cement based render. Simple smooth textured render or harling painted with subtle colours may be appropriate.

On street frontages, existing traditional dormers should be retained and where it is acceptable to add a dormer it should be based on the few existing, successful designs, be proportionate to the existing roof, follow the alignment of existing elevation windows and use materials that are in keeping with those already used on the building.

Empty and under-used buildings and gap sites

At the time of writing a new owner had taken on the former Wigtown Hotel. The garden buildings in its wall are on the Buildings at Risk Register and finding an economic use which would lead to their restoration would be very worthwhile.

There is an unused area of land between private property on High Street and Agnew Crescent that runs along Kilquhirn Road. There may be an opportunity to develop that land in the future in a manner that continues and preserves the street layout and character of the existing streets.

Sensitive enhancement of some of the modern housing schemes in the centre of the conservation area should be considered.

During the consultation residents raised their interest the County Buildings which may have the potential for the under-used space to be used more.

Climate Change Adaptations

There are a number of ways of improving energy efficiency and generation renewable energy in all properties. Before deciding which options are the best, all the up to date knowledge should be explored with historic character in mind. This should include the possible type and siting of the technologies. It is always possible to minimise the visible impact on character and ensure there is no detrimental physical impact on the fabric of the building into the future.

Road and Pavement Surfaces

There is already a mix of surfaces across the conservation area. The use of whinstone and granite kerb stones is significant in some streets and should be preserved. They should also be the material and shapes used as for any new kerbs.

Demolition of buildings in a conservation area

needs to be justified on the basis that what is being removed does not make a positive contribution to character and making changes to it would not achieve that. In exceptional circumstances an argument may be made based on the following as set out in Policy 7 of NPF4.

f) Demolition of buildings in a conservation area which make a positive contribution to its character will only be supported where it has been demonstrated that:

- i) reasonable efforts have been made to retain, repair and reuse the building;
- ii) the building is of little townscape value;
- iii) the structural condition of the building prevents its retention at a reasonable cost; or
- iv) the form or location of the building makes its reuse extremely difficult.

Maintenance

There is not always an opportunity to encourage individual owners and occupants to care for their buildings other than by example. At present, there are no historic building and places grants available locally at but there may be potential to apply. However, maintenance should be part of every owner's annual budget.

In order that buildings survive and provide a comfortable living space and so that they have the best energy efficiency without intervention, there are some basic matters that should be dealt with.

Keeping rain and ground water out

Water should be kept out, starting with the roof by promptly repairing slipped slates. Lime mortar fillets, haunches and lead flashings around chimneys and skew stones and ridges should be checked every year. Water ingress can damage roof timbers and plasterwork. A damp building also loses heat much more easily than a dry building. Rainwater goods should be kept in good working order, not blocked and taking the rain water from the roof away from the building elevations.

Elevation pointing should be checked and repaired or renewed in the best material for the building - lime mortar for stone and cement for modern brick or blockwork.

At the foot of the walls, hard surfaces and built up soil should be avoided as far as possible as neither splashing nor damp material against the wall is helpful.

Rain water goods with the capacity for higher volumes of rain may be required but cast iron rainwater goods are strong and resilient as long as they are repainted and their fixings and joints are checked they are serviceable for many decades.

Appropriate materials

Using 'new' products for 'quick fix' solutions may turn out be irreversible or make it difficult for a proper long-term repair in the future.

Cement pointing can permanently damage a stone building and cause damp and mould in the interior.

Damp in stone and lime buildings

Injected damp proof courses are ineffective in solid stone walls because there are no through joints and the chemicals interfere with the natural moisture movement through stone which is essential for the walls to dry naturally as intended. For a short period of time, electrolytic techniques may be effective to deter damp but the wires used gradually corrode and stop working.

It is much more effective to remove the source of the damp as set out already.

Vegetation on buildings should be carefully and quickly removed to prevent roots causing gaps in the masonry or lifting lead flashings – buddleia and ivy are common

Windows, doors and timber shopfronts

Timber elements including windows and doors should be painted regularly with traditional

weather resistant paint; natural plant oil based paints are good for nourishing new bare wood as well as being protective. Small areas of cracked or broken putty and damaged timber can be cleaned away and filled or repaired easily or by splicing in good timber.

Sliding sash and case window pulleys and cords can be tightened, and draft strips added.

Alterations that affect the exterior of buildings

Internal alterations needing pipes and vents to exit through external walls should be planned carefully to ensure that entry points are as discreet as possible, ideally on less prominent elevations. The same applies to alarms and telecoms equipment. It is good practice to remove old equipment and wires and make good gaps and holes with appropriate materials.

Links to Further Information

Historic Environment Scotland's publication series: Managing Change

[Maintaining Your Home](#)

[External Walls](#)

[Roofs](#)

[Shopfronts and Signs](#)

[Windows](#)

[Doorways](#)

There is also a series of HES Inform Guides relating to specific subjects found [here](#)

The Engine Shed and its [website](#) is the dedicated building conservation centre for Historic Environment Scotland and a learning resource where there is a lot more information available.