



## Aberdeen City Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan

# Old Aberdeen

To be read in conjunction with Section 1: Strategic Overview and Section 2: Management Plan

10 December 2015

**Planning and Sustainable Development**

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Produced by Aberdeen City Council (Planning & Sustainable Development) who gratefully acknowledge help from Old Aberdeen Heritage Society, Old Aberdeen Community Council and University of Aberdeen in the preparation of this document.

# Old Aberdeen

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Profile

Designation Date	<b>Old Aberdeen</b> : 1 July 1968 (105.7 hectares) - Aberdeen Town Council <b>Balgownie Road</b> : 26 July 1968 (4.8 hectares ) - Aberdeen County Council
Extended	16 April 1973 (4.1 hectares added) - Aberdeen Town Council 28 June 1976 (10 hectares added) - City of Aberdeen District Council 23 April 2015 (5 areas, total 28 hectares added) - Aberdeen City Council
Previous character appraisals	1993
Article 4 Direction	Yes - 29 February 1972
Size (hectares)	124
Number of character areas	5
Number of listed buildings / structures	Total 184 Cat A 12 Cat B 152 Cat C 20
Buildings at Risk	2 - St Margaret's Convent, Spital Wallace Tower (Benholm's Lodgings), Tillydrone Road
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	3 - Mote Hill palisaded settlement St Machar's Cathedral and churchyard Mercat Cross
Adjoining Conservation Areas	None
Sites and Monuments Record	17

### 1.2

#### Summary of significance

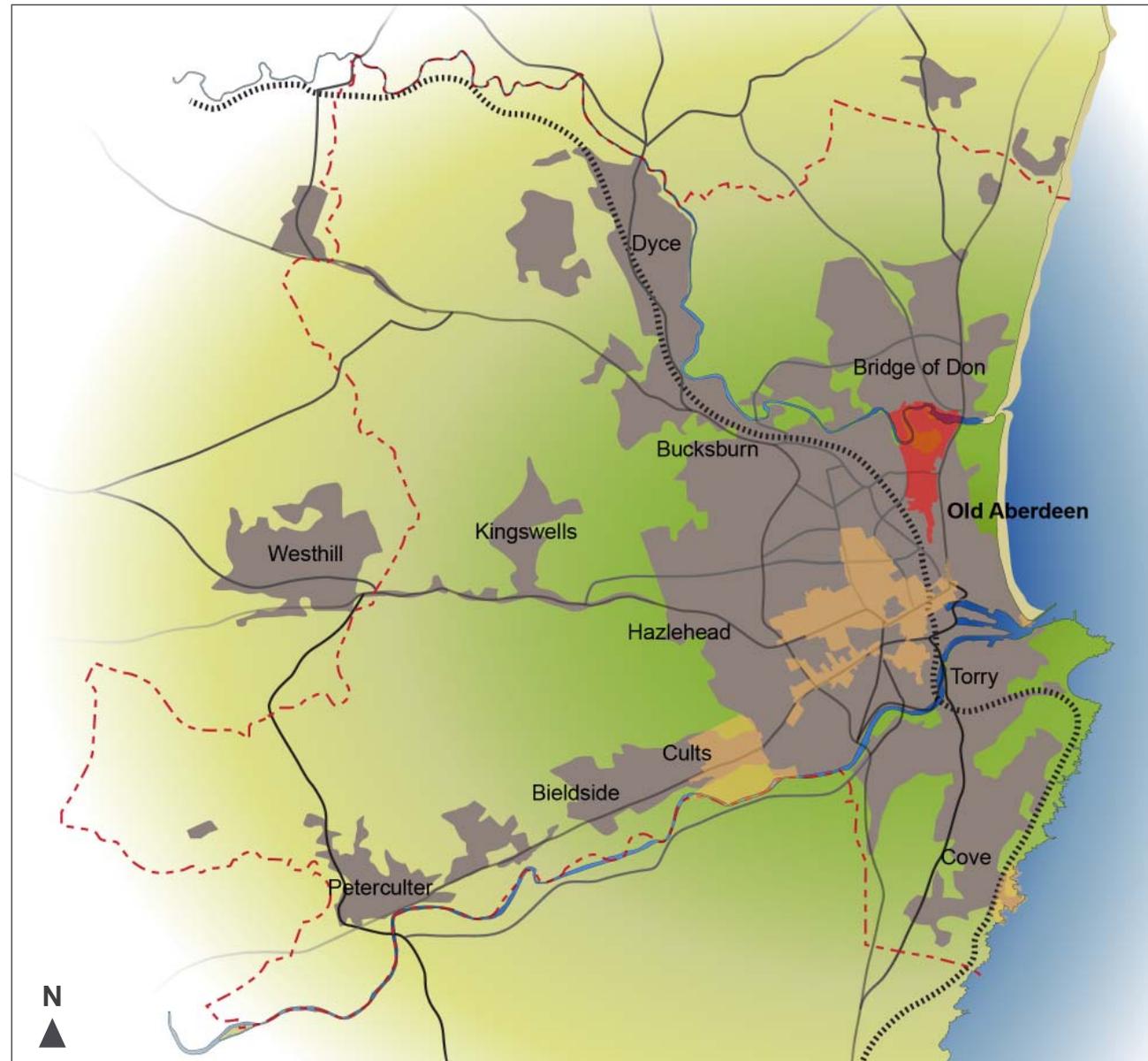
Old Aberdeen is an extremely important conservation area because it encompasses a complete town centred on the medieval route from Aberdeen north to the Brig o' Balgownie, the first inland crossing of the River Don. Quite separate from Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen had its own burgh status from the late 14th to 19th centuries. It has been an important religious and educational centre as evidenced by some of its most impressive buildings, most notably St Machar's Cathedral and King's College. The spinal route continues to be the dominant feature and there is a wide range of historic buildings of architectural merit along its length. As with other historic routes in the vicinity, there is still a clear development pattern centred on medieval burgh plots.

Old Aberdeen was a thriving, independent town until it was effectively by-passed by the development of the new turnpike road north, King Street, and the new Bridge of Don river crossing in 1830. It retained its separate burgh status until 1891 when it merged with Aberdeen. The settlement was not re-developed in the 19th century as happened in many other places, which has left its historic core largely intact. The University of Aberdeen has undergone considerable enlargement and change in the last 50 years exemplifying the national post war expansion in tertiary education.



Top: King's College  
Bottom: New King's College

Location of the conservation areas within the City of Aberdeen



## 2 Location, history and development

### 2.1 Location

The Conservation Area is bounded by Balgownie Road in the north and stretches down to King's Crescent in the south. King Street forms the eastern boundary and Tillydrone Avenue, Firhill Road and Bedford Road in the west. Old Aberdeen is a very large conservation area, with much of its northern area covered by Seaton Park and the Don riverside.

### 2.2 Development history

Although a significant proportion of the Conservation Area's historic buildings, setted streets and narrow lanes owe much to developments in the 18th and 19th centuries, Old Aberdeen is the result of two thousand years of organic growth and evolution.

For the vast majority of its history, Old Aberdeen's simple street pattern remained virtually unchanged from its medieval layout. For centuries the 'Spine' of the Conservation Area was the principal route from New to Old Aberdeen and beyond to the crossing at the medieval Brig o' Balgownie over the river Don,

until the construction of King Street and the Turnpike Bridge of Don in the early 19th century effectively bypassed the Old Town or 'Aulton' as it is known locally. To walk along the Spine today leads you through the heart of the Conservation Area and past many of its architectural and historical gems. Old Aberdeen's organically linear form owes much to incremental development along this well used route. The Parson Gordon's Plan of 1661 is one of the earliest maps we have of the town and the point at which we can most accurately begin to trace the development of the Conservation Area as we know it today. In Gordon's time, the High Street was lined by small cottages with long burgage plots or lang-rigs.



Clark's Lane



81 High Street



108-110 High Street

Only fragments of the built fabric from before this time remain although vestiges of the distant past can still be seen in the road layout and general land use pattern. The original boundaries of some of the medieval burgage plots can still be seen behind College Bounds.



Parson James Gordon's map c1661  
© National Library of Scotland

### Early history timeline

- 2nd century- Evidence of Tillydrone Mote, an early wooden defensive structure, set in a barren, boggy landscape covered in gorse and natural scrubland.
- 6th century- According to popular folklore, St Machar establishes his church on the banks of the Don, having been instructed in a vision to find a site where a river bends like a shepherd's crook. Although most historians think that the evidence does not support the existence of St Machar, this legend nevertheless has cultural significance because it is so widely believed.
- 12th century- A Cathedral is established on the site where St Machar's stands today. The Chanonry is laid out as a walled, ecclesiastical enclave, with St Peter's Hospital and Kirk forming an outpost on the 'Spital' lands. The Spine appears as the main route connecting New and Old Aberdeen and beyond.
- Early 14th century - Brig o' Balgownie is completed, a short distance upstream of the previous ford. A small settlement develops around the turnpike river crossing, which spans the Black Neuk, a rich salmon pool.
- Late 15th century – Bishop Elphinstone establishes King's College, making the University of Aberdeen Scotland's third and the UK's fifth oldest university. Construction begins on King's College and College Bounds is laid out shortly after as an academic enclave. Old Aberdeen is granted Burgh of Barony status in 1489 with the right to hold two annual fairs and a weekly market. The 'Middle Toun' develops up around the High Street as a market town.
- 16th century – Protestant Reformation slowly begins to make its presence felt in Old Aberdeen more gently than many other parts of the country, with the Roman Catholic churches and canons' manses gradually falling into disrepair and some buildings being converted to secular residential use.

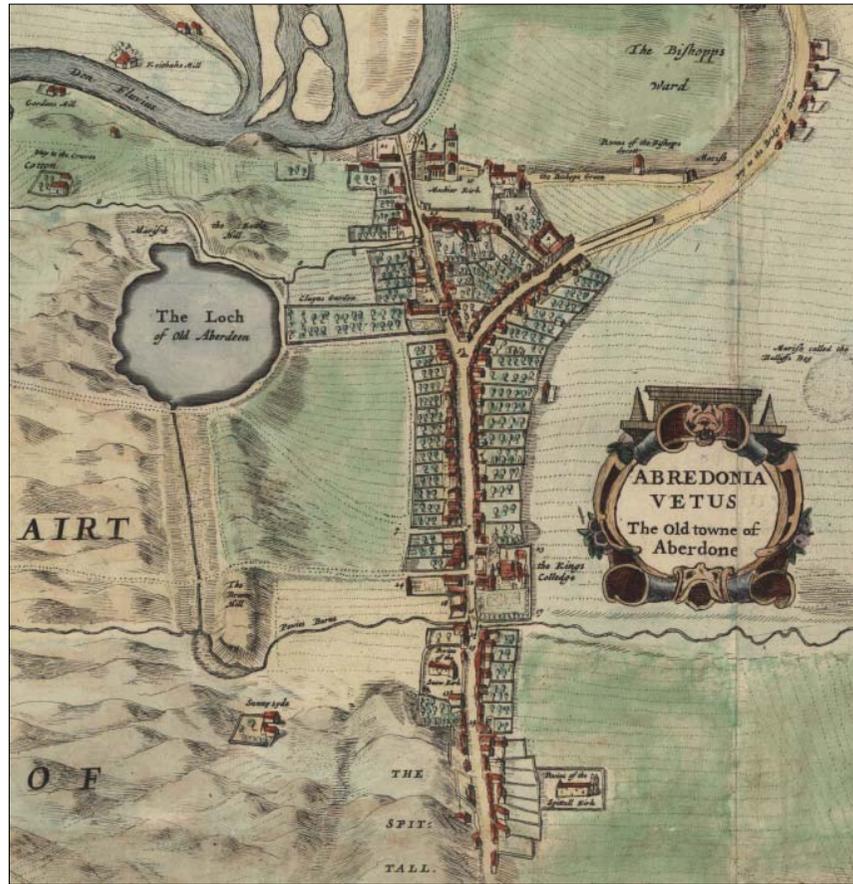
▲  
2nd century- Evidence of Tillydrone Mote, an early wooden defensive structure

▲  
6th century- According to the popular folklore, St Machar establishes his church on the banks of the Don

▲  
12th century-The Spine appears as the main route connecting New and Old Aberdeen and beyond

By the time of Gordon's plan in 1661, the Chanonry, Middle Toun, College and Spital were all very much in evidence, although the town was still distinct from New Aberdeen. It consisted of just a few streets, but would have been a bustling market town where traders, clergymen, students and academics mixed together. Thatched cottages, packed tightly, lined the road, with nothing but open fields beyond their lang rig gardens. The map shows Snow Kirk and Spital Kirk already in ruins, evidence that the Protestant Reformation had made its physical mark on Old Aberdeen.

The growth of industry, including brick production, granite yards and stocking making, brought prosperity to the Aulton, leading to the construction of a number of buildings combining both granite and Seaton brickwork. By 1821 the combined population of St Nicholas' and St Machar's parishes stood at 44,796 with 41% living in St Machar's parish, which gives some idea of the relative importance of Old Aberdeen. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, older buildings were gradually demolished, rebuilt, remodelled and improved and the elegant granite



Parson James Gordon's map c1661 (Extract) Old Aberdeen area showing the main street of cottages and the lang rig gardens behind. © National Library of Scotland

- ▲  
14th century- Brig o' Balgownie is completed
- ▲  
Late 15th century- Old Aberdeen is granted Burgh of Barony, construction begins on King's College
- ▲  
16th century- Protestant Reformation, manses gradually being converted to secular residential use
- ▲  
Late 16th century- A busy market town emerges, where traders, clergy and students mix
- ▲  
17th century - growth of industrial buildings and yards along with an increase of population
- ▲  
18th and 19th century - gradual rebuilding and improvement of the granite townscape forming the closes, courtyards and large walled villas
- ▲  
20th century - New Aberdeen expands rapidly northwards along with a massive growth of the University of Aberdeen
- ▲  
2012 opening of Sir Duncan Rice Library opened by Queen Elizabeth II

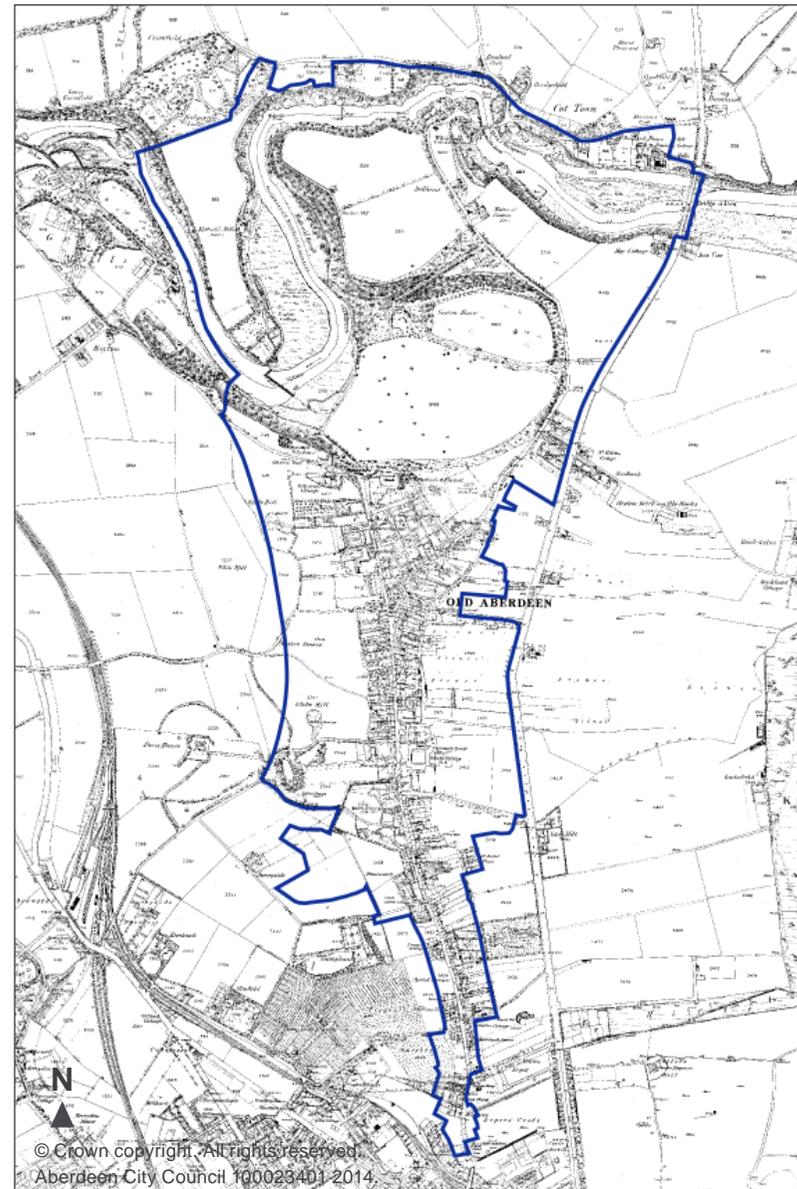
townscape of today began to take shape. However, many retained the medieval burgage plots with additional buildings to the rear of the plot being constructed. The manses of the Chanonry were progressively replaced by handsome mansions for the wealthy, and large estates began to appear on the lands around the town, including Powis, Sunnybank and Seaton, each with their own stately villa.

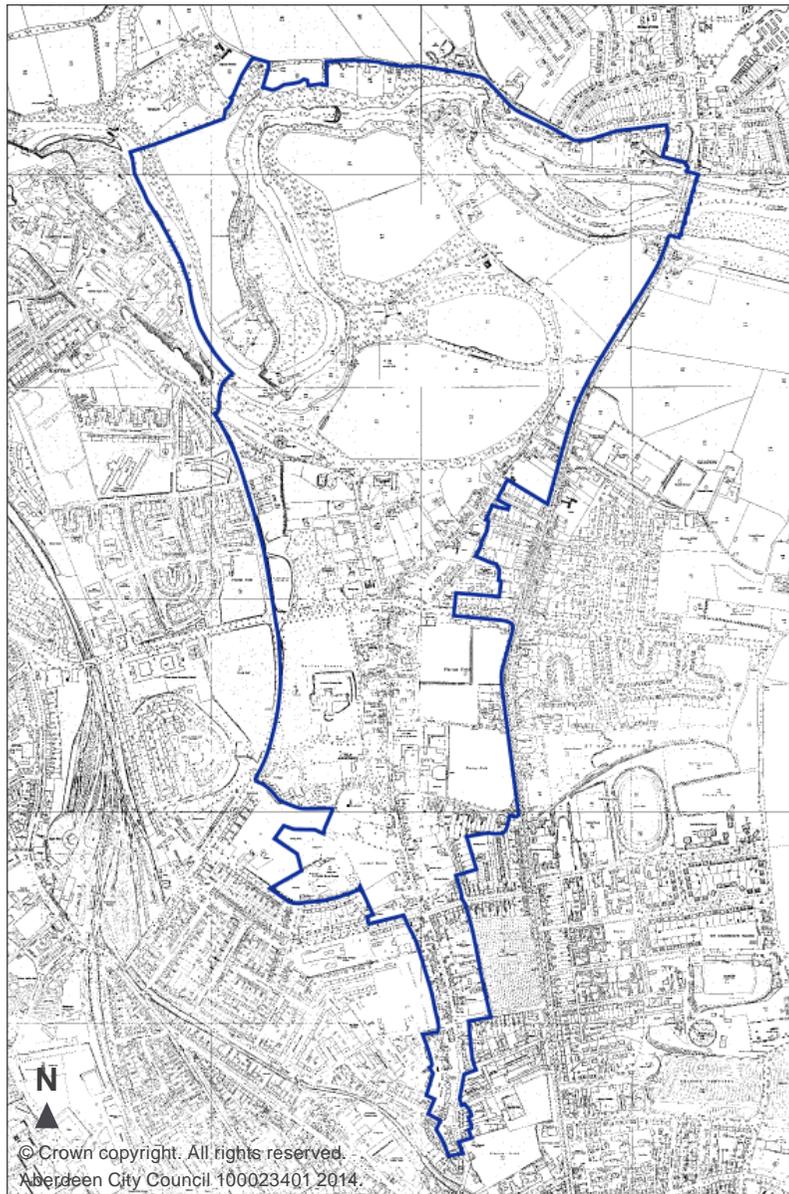
The maps produced in the mid-19th century show a network of closes and courtyards which are now central to the character of the Conservation Area. The town was at last beginning to expand laterally, away from its principal street. The construction of King Street and the new Bridge of Don (1827-30) effectively bypassed Old Aberdeen and Brig o' Balgownie, leaving it untouched. This lack of development pressure has resulted in the retention of many 18th and early 19th century buildings that otherwise may have been lost in the rapid urban expansion of the late 19th and 20th centuries. The mid-19th century also saw the northwards expansion of New Aberdeen to envelop Old Aberdeen, and a series of new east-west roads provided connections with these new neighbours. Old Aberdeen was incorporated into the City of Aberdeen in 1891.

The massive national expansion of tertiary education in the 1960s is very much reflected in the growth and development of University of Aberdeen, which continues to the present day. Lying to the east and west of the High Street are two large university areas, comprising modern teaching, administrative and student accommodation buildings. One of Old Aberdeen's most recent and striking buildings is the Sir Duncan Rice Library, opened in 2012 by Queen Elizabeth II.

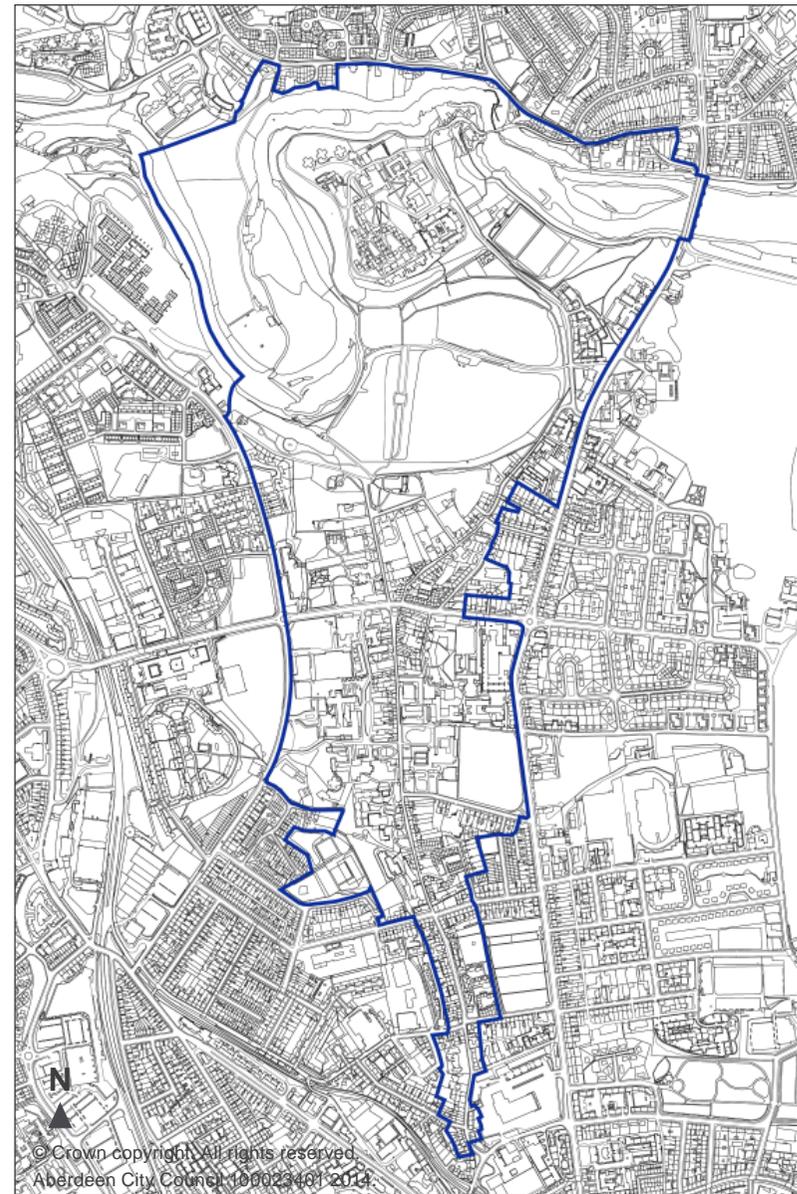
Historical development maps for the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area

**Circa 1880  
[1866-99]**



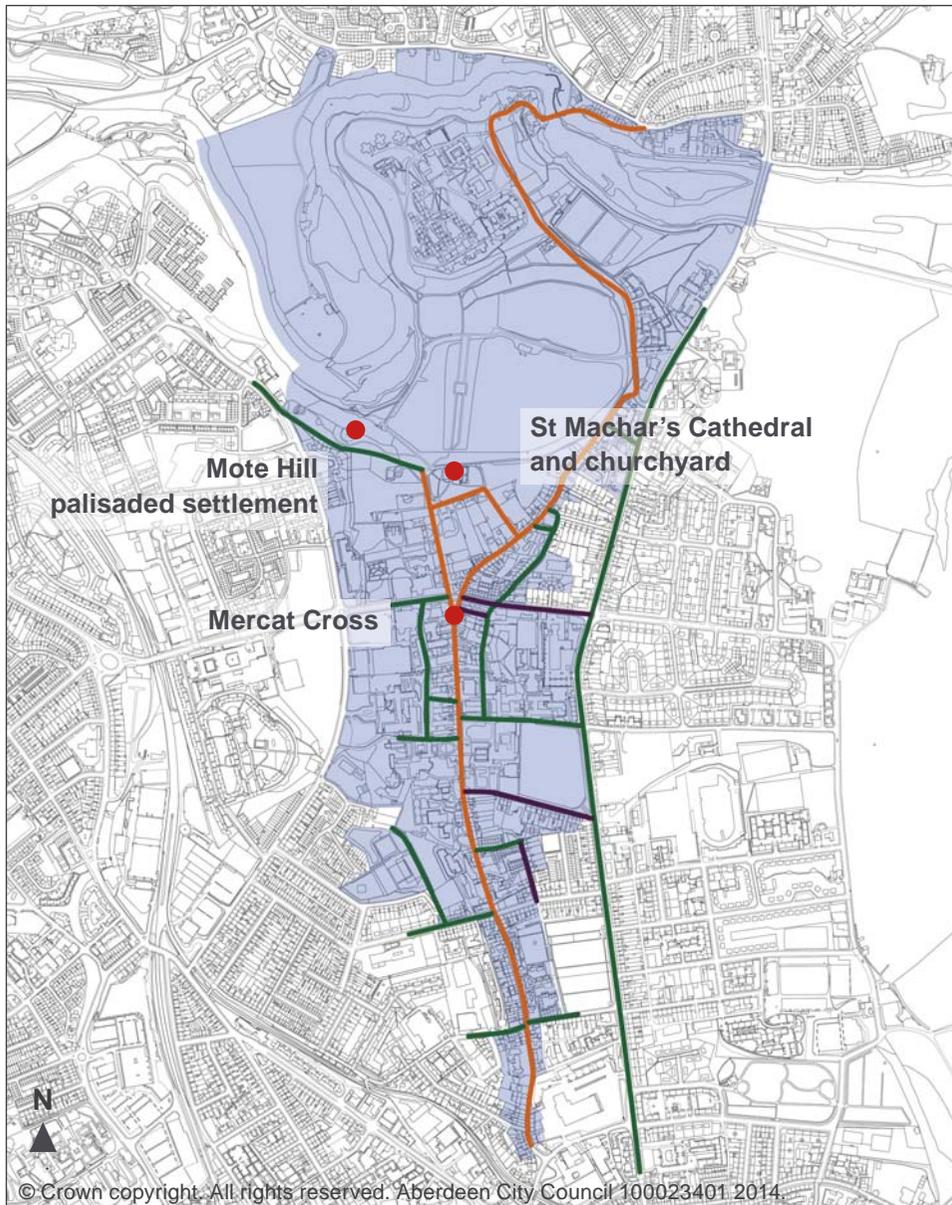


1954-68



2014

Plan of Old Aberdeen Conservation Area : historic routes (Indicative only)



Key

- historic roads, 1661 James Gordon
- historic roads, 1828 John Wood
- historic roads, 1867 1st OS
- Scheduled Monument



Benholm's Lodgings



St Machar's Cathedral

Many buildings in Old Aberdeen were listed in 1967 before the Conservation Area was designated.

**Key**

- Listed Building Group category A
- Listed Building Group category B

The term 'group listing' refers to buildings that together are of historic or architectural significance.

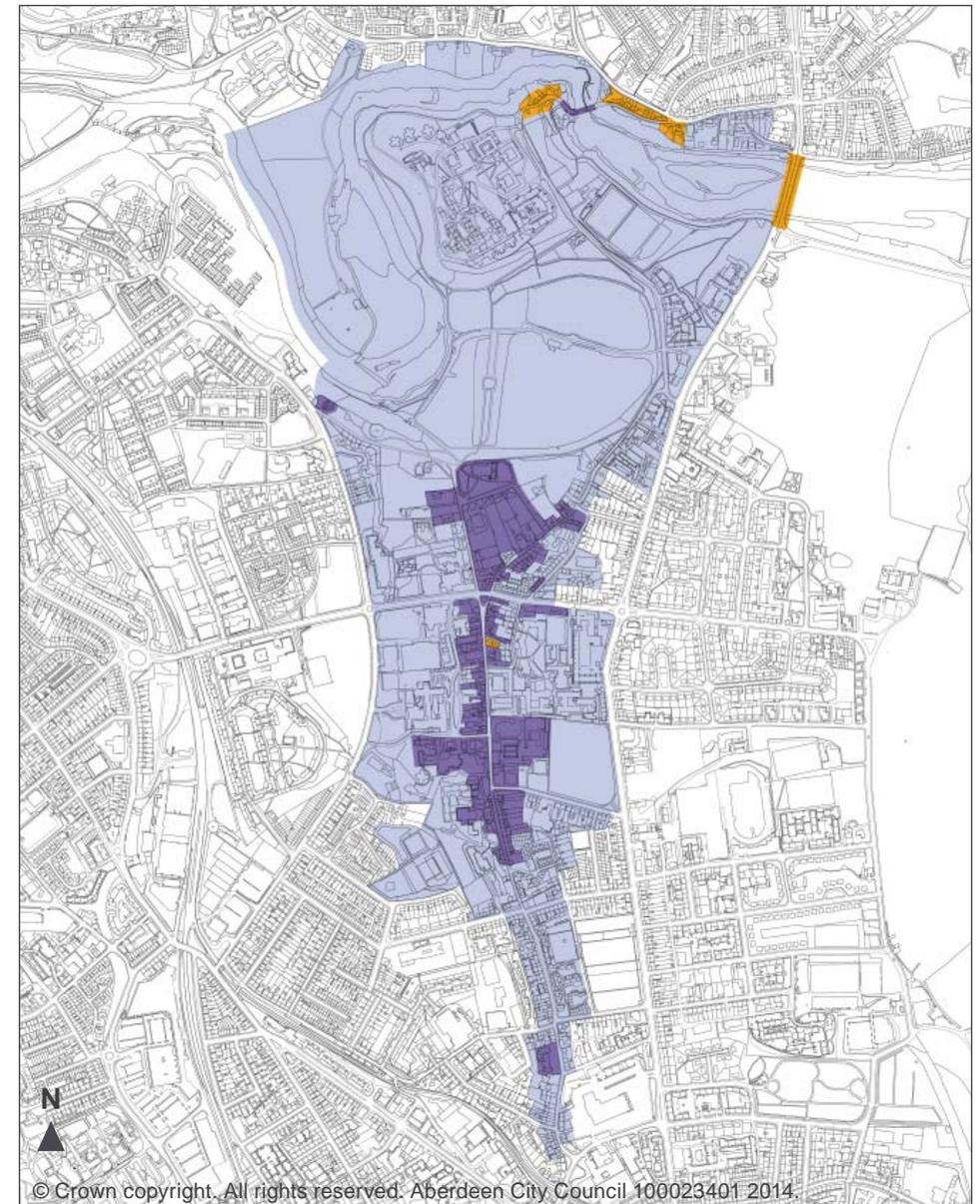


New King's College



King's College Chapel

**Plan of Old Aberdeen Conservation Area : Listed Building Groups**



### 3 Character

Old Aberdeen Conservation Area is large and diverse. From south to north it can be divided into the following five very broad character areas:

#### A Spital

King's Crescent and Spital

#### B Old Aberdeen Heart

Spital (north); College Bounds; High Street; St Machar Drive; Chanonry; Tillydrone Road; Don Street and Dunbar Street (north)

#### C Modern University Campus

area bounded by Dunbar Street (south); Regent Walk; King Street and St Machar Drive and area bounded by Tillydrone Avenue; Bedford Road; Elphinstone Road and College Bounds

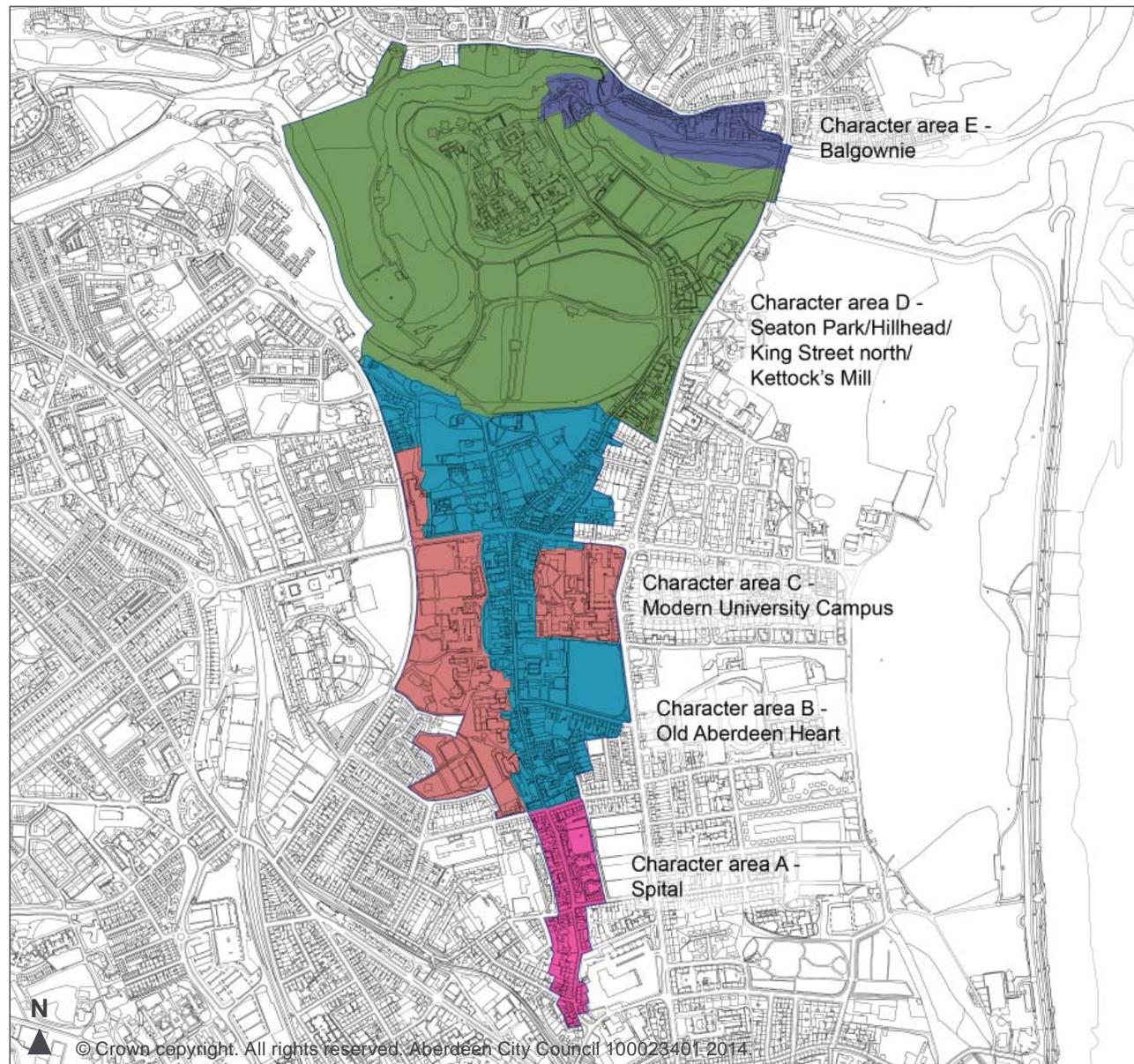
#### D Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill

Seaton Park; Hillhead; Don Street (north) King Street (north) and Kettock's Mill

#### E Balgownie

Balgownie village; Brig o' Balgownie; Cottown of Balgownie; Balgownie Road; River Don and Bridge of Don

Old Aberdeen Conservation Area character areas



## Character A : Spital

### A 3.1 Setting

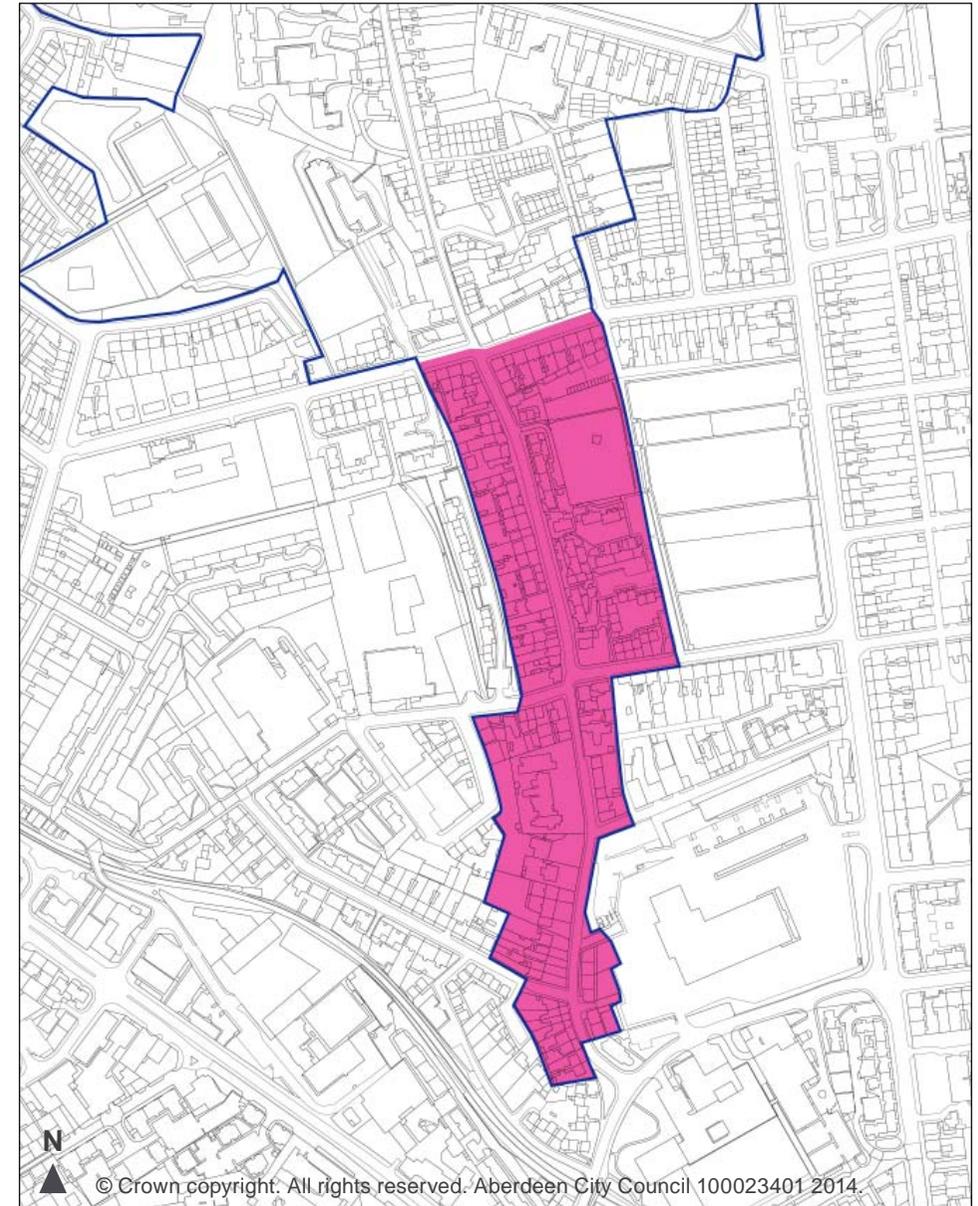
The Spital character area is the southernmost part of the Conservation Area. It forms a narrow corridor of development which begins a short distance from Mounthooly and continues north until it reaches College Bounds.

After following the road north from Mounthooly, King's Crescent is noticeably quieter and greener, sheltered by tall mature trees. Although the character area is within walking distance of the city centre and is surrounded by modern development and light industrial uses, the feeling of being in a distinctive place is immediately apparent. The road rises gently up Spital Hill, with the ground to the west rising sharply away from the road, before descending again towards College Bounds and the Powis Burn.



King's Crescent

## Character Area A : Spital



### A 3.2 Built environment

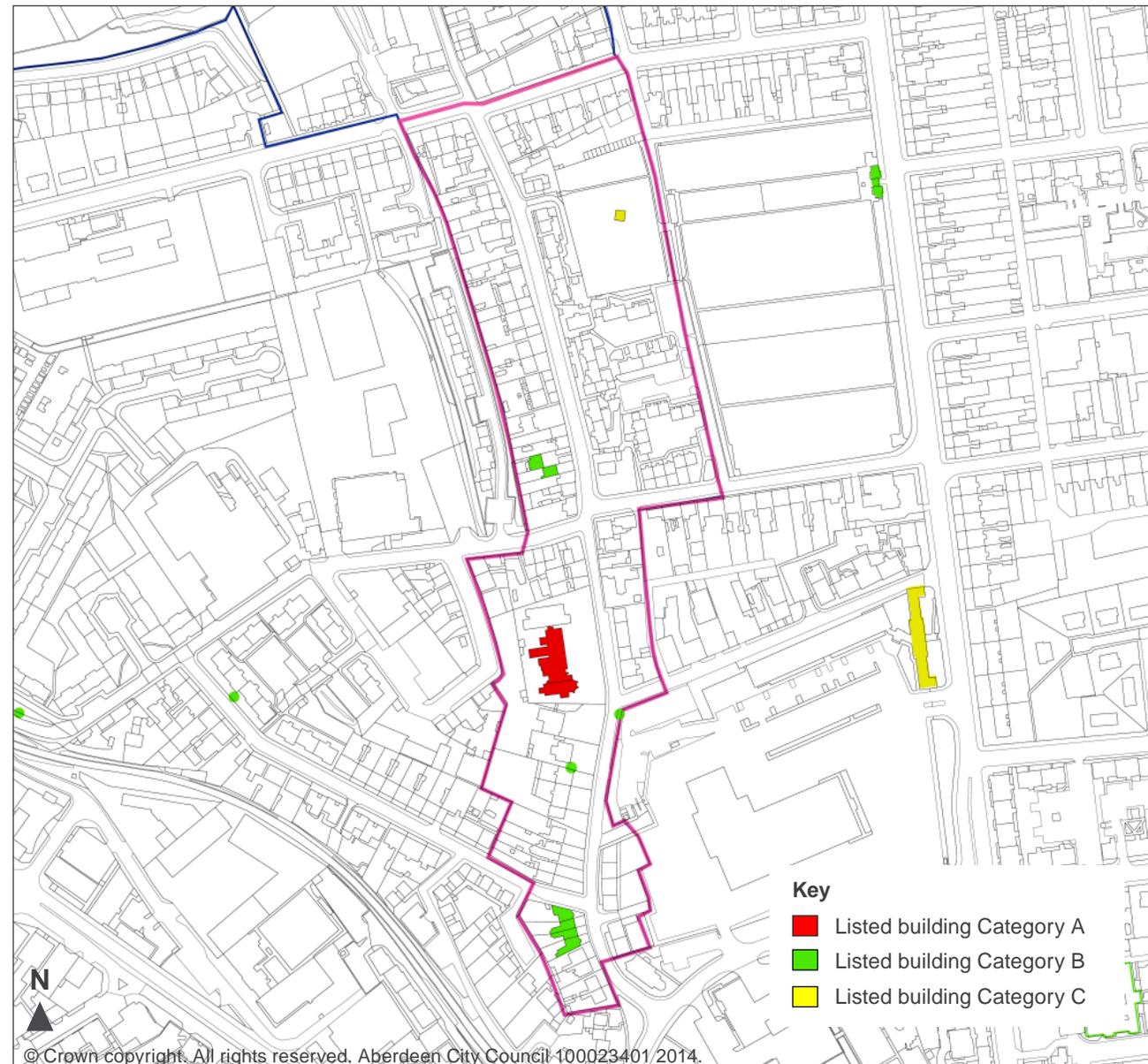
#### 3.2.1 Typical building forms and features

There is great variety in building forms and features, which reflects the organic and incremental development of the area over centuries. Most notable are St Margaret's Convent and Chapel (category A listed). On King's Crescent, the buildings are mainly houses or tenements of various shapes and sizes set back within narrow plots. The 19th century Viewton Place once stood alone surrounded by generous grounds, but is now flanked by two recent houses attached to its gable ends.

Strong, high boundary walls, mostly of granite rubble construction, sit to the front and side of plot boundaries directly against the pavement, hiding the front gardens and obscuring views of the buildings themselves. These walls help to create a sense of seclusion and privacy for these homes. Many stretches of wall have distinctive pointed coping stones. The bus depot's granite wall on the east side of King's Crescent is a strong linear feature that shows evidence of former buildings belonging to a prominent granite merchant.

A low-rise 20th century housing complex fronts the eastern side of the Spital, whilst the western side is dominated by 3 and 4-storey houses and tenements, which sit on raised ground. Front and side boundary walls are a strong feature of this side of the Spital. There are many examples of Aberdeen bonding and attractive granite quoins on dominant corners. There are also

Listed buildings in Character Area A : Spital





Top: Former St Martha's Children's Home  
Bottom: 26 Spital



Top: Low-rise 20th century housing complex, Spital  
Bottom: Voluntary Housing Trust, rear of building

many striking examples of Seaton brick used as a decorative feature on window surrounds and chimneys. With some notable exceptions, such as St Margaret's Convent, most buildings are simple with little in the way of decoration or ornament. Another important local feature is the rear of the Voluntary Housing Trust building, which is a fine and unusual example of Bauhaus- style modernist architecture.

### 3.2.2 Materials

The predominant material for buildings and boundary walls is granite, both grey and pink, although some older buildings and boundary walls are constructed of random rubble. The buildings range from ashlar to rubble construction. In most cases the stone is exposed although a number are harled. The terrace of Category B listed houses at the southern end of King's Crescent dates from 1875 and is an early and important example of concrete being used as the main construction material. The original concrete boundary walls are also intact.

Boundary walls are generally granite rubble construction, and some lower walls are also topped with cast iron railings. However, in many cases, these railings have been lost or significantly damaged. The main roofing material is grey slate. Windows and doors are a combination of stained/painted timber and uPVC replacements.

### 3.2.3 Orientation/building lines/heights

Almost all of the buildings address the 'Spine', which was the primary route between New and Old Aberdeen before the construction of King Street. Roads lying perpendicular to the Spine have since been built to connect Old Aberdeen with the city that came to surround it.

Some of the buildings on the western side of Spital are set back with generous garden ground to the front and rear; these are juxtaposed with buildings which sit hard against the pavement or road. This means there is no pattern, consistency or rhythm to the building line. The heights of the buildings relative to one another also vary dramatically, both in terms of actual height and relative height due to the changes in level to the north and east. St Margaret's Convent and its Chapel occupy the most prominent and imposing position high above the street level.

### 3.2.4 Uses

The Spital area today is zoned as Mixed Use in the Local Development Plan. It is predominantly residential and includes substantial flatted accommodation on the eastern side of Spital. There are a number of small retail units clustered at the junction of Spital and Orchard Street including a public house, bookshop, general store and fast-food takeaways. Several more historic retail units have been converted to housing. The Local Development Plan identifies the derelict, former St Peter's Nursery site as an opportunity for sensitive residential redevelopment (OP119).

Urban form for Character Area A : Spital



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Following the loss of historic industries in the area (granite working, jute and stocking making), there are no significant employment uses remaining. Applebank House, now a private residence, was formerly a college for Divinity Students and is now a building of significant historic interest. There are no specific night time uses.

### 3.2.5 Negative factors

- Loss of original doors and windows with uPVC replacements, sometimes in a different style.
- Substantial extensions to buildings both by extending gable ends and raising roofs to create dormers.
- Boundary walls are generally in a poor state of repair, with many missing iron railings. Some older walls are also suffering from tree damage and bulging.
- Instances of neglect and poor building maintenance.
- Housing complex on the Spital is a very large and prominent part of the character area, which is of no special historical or architectural merit.
- Poor condition of St Margaret's Chapel and adjoining building (category A listed), which is on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.



Top: Applebank House  
Bottom: Opportunity site, former St Peter's Nursery



Top: Small retail units in Spital  
Bottom: 117 Spital

### A 3.3 Public realm

#### 3.3.1 Views/vistas/glimpses

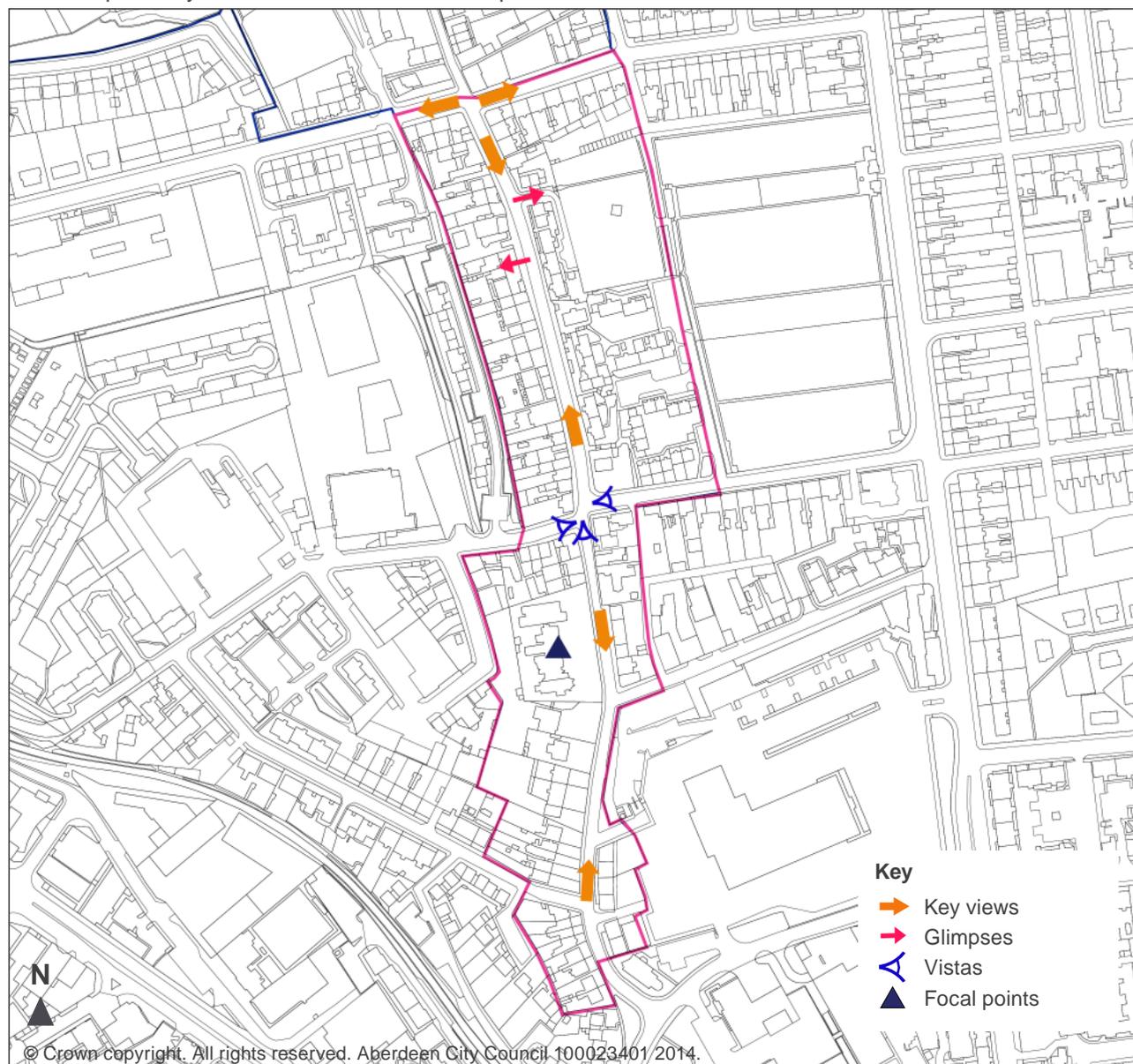
In the winter, the gentle climb up King's Crescent affords views of Marischal College to the south. From the crest of Spital Hill, city-wide vistas open up to the west along Froghall Terrace, whilst the stands of Pittodrie football stadium and the North Sea beyond can be seen to the east along Merkland Road. Even Torry and the Girdle Ness headland can be seen through a narrow opening in the houses on Merkland Road. Rounding the crest of the Spital Hill, the Meston Building, the Sir Duncan Rice Library and distant wooded hills can be glimpsed. For the most part, views are deflected as you travel along the Spine, revealing new views of key buildings and groups as the road gently curves.

#### 3.3.2 Roads

King's Crescent and the Spital are relatively quiet, although still well used roads, which were effectively bypassed when King Street was built. Traffic is two way, and parking is restricted for the most part, with some parallel parking bays set back from the road. Where on-street parking is allowed, the road is often lined with cars. The Number 20 bus traverses the route and runs regularly on university term-time weekdays. The National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 runs along the Spital.

Traditional granite setts have now been covered with modern road surfacing on King's Crescent

Townscape analysis for Character Area A : Spital



and the Spital, although setted gutters and slips are still exposed in some locations. Pink granite setts that remain exposed on nearby Jute Street are in excellent condition. The modern road surfacing is in reasonably good condition, although road markings are worn. The road markings in front of St Peter's Nursery are very dominant and are now redundant.

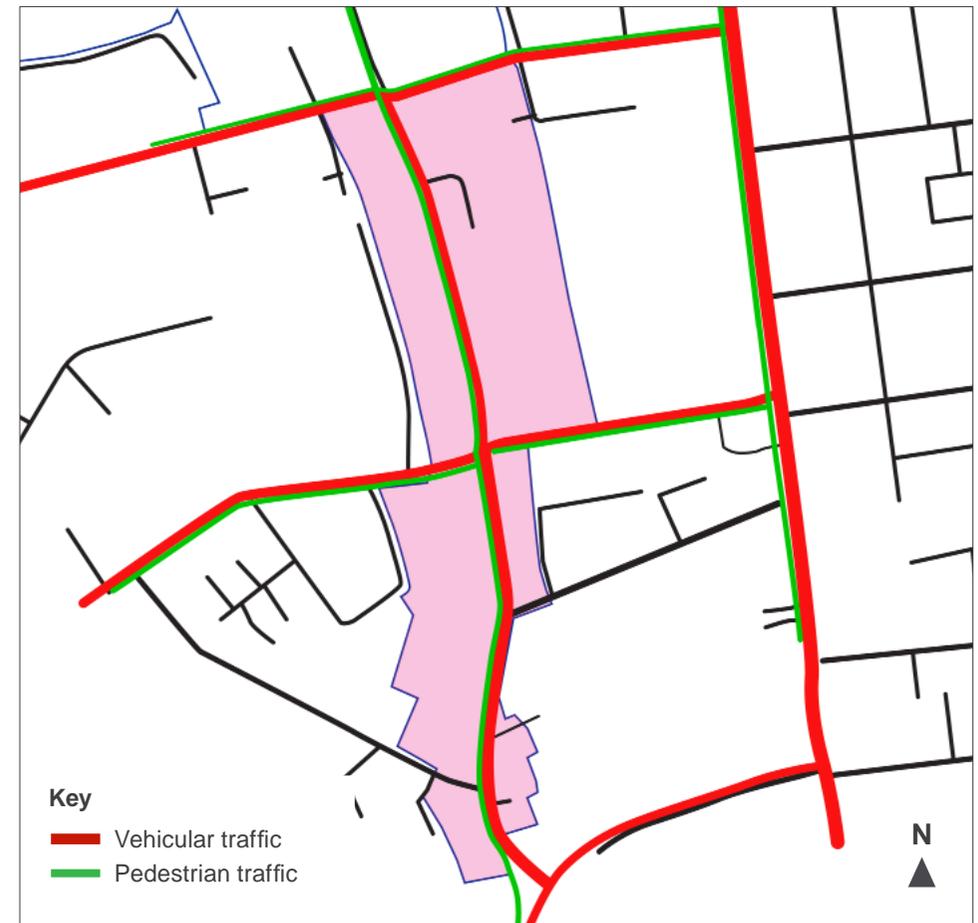
### 3.3.3 Pavements

Although the public realm is car-dominated, it is a well-used pedestrian route for students walking between the University of Aberdeen campus and the city centre. The Spital forms part of Core Path 21. The pavements are narrow in parts, and in some cases see pedestrians channelled between high boundary walls and the road. This can cause users to feel vulnerable, particularly when buses pass by at speed. Pavements are laid with cement/composite paving slabs with narrow granite edge setts. They are generally in good condition but some slabs are cracked and uneven, bearing scars from previous works. The pavements along the Spital are also studded with black cast-iron bollards to prevent inappropriate parking, in addition to double-yellow lines.

### 3.3.4 Street trees

There are no publicly planted street trees on the Spital. Mature trees in front gardens often overhang high boundary walls and screen some houses along King's Crescent from public view, although glimpses can be seen through arches or gateways. This includes the Category A-listed St Margaret's Convent with its Chapel and adjoining terraced houses. However, the trees make a significant contribution to the green setting of the Conservation Area and also help to screen the bus depot on the eastern side of King's Crescent. The upper part of the Spital is almost completely devoid of street trees or greenery, which leads to the streetscape appearing austere and uninviting, particularly on the eastern side in front of the housing complex.

Activity and movement through Character Area A : Spital



### 3.3.5 Signage

Road signage is not excessive or obtrusive in this part of the Conservation Area, although there is a proliferation of small signs and poles presenting opportunities for consolidation. Most of the signage relates to parking restrictions and is generally in good condition. Traditional Aberdeen-style black and white tiled street names exist throughout the area. Retail signage is generally modern and varies in quality and appropriateness.

### 3.3.6 Street furniture

The street furniture is mostly modern and utilitarian. The large communal refuse bins on the road in front of the Voluntary Housing Trust building constrain accessibility for cars and detract from the setting of the buildings and the general amenity of the area. Street lighting is modern and in fair condition. There is little in the way of public amenity furniture, with only a few bins and no public benches. The bus stops are signage only, with no shelters.

### 3.3.7 Negative factors

- Public realm is largely car-dominated and narrow pavements can cause pedestrians to feel vulnerable, especially given the frequency of buses travelling at speed.
- Some instances of inappropriate or insensitive retail signage.
- Communal refuse bins on the street constrain access and detract from visual amenity.
- Redundant road markings in front of the former St Peter's Nursery.



Street parking and restriction signage



Insensitive signage and street furniture



Bins detracting from the visual amenity

Natural heritage map for Character Area A : Spital



### A 3.4 Natural environment

#### 3.4.1 Open spaces

There are very few open spaces within this character area. St Peter's Cemetery is the only open space of note and is zoned as Urban Green Space and Green Space Network in the Local Development Plan. It is not suitable, however, for use as general public open space. The Spital is in close walking distance of Sunnybank Park; a large public open space with opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation. A small children's play area also exists on Orchard Street.

#### 3.4.2 Trees and parks

There are many mature trees in private front gardens that provide a green setting to the area and a sense of privacy or seclusion for the homes that are shaded by them. There are no parks in the area.

#### 3.4.3 Negative factors

- Poor tree management in some front gardens.
- Limited public open space, only small patches of amenity ground.

### A 3.5 Key characteristics

The following key features characterise Character Area A : Spital of the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area:

#### General

- Granite boundary walls are a strong feature
- Steep rise in ground to the west lending buildings a monumental feel
- Variety in building forms and features, including some standout buildings of particular merit or interest
- Dense collection of interesting, important and eclectic buildings in their own right
- Spital itself as a linear route
- Streetscape setts
- Mature trees within enclosures

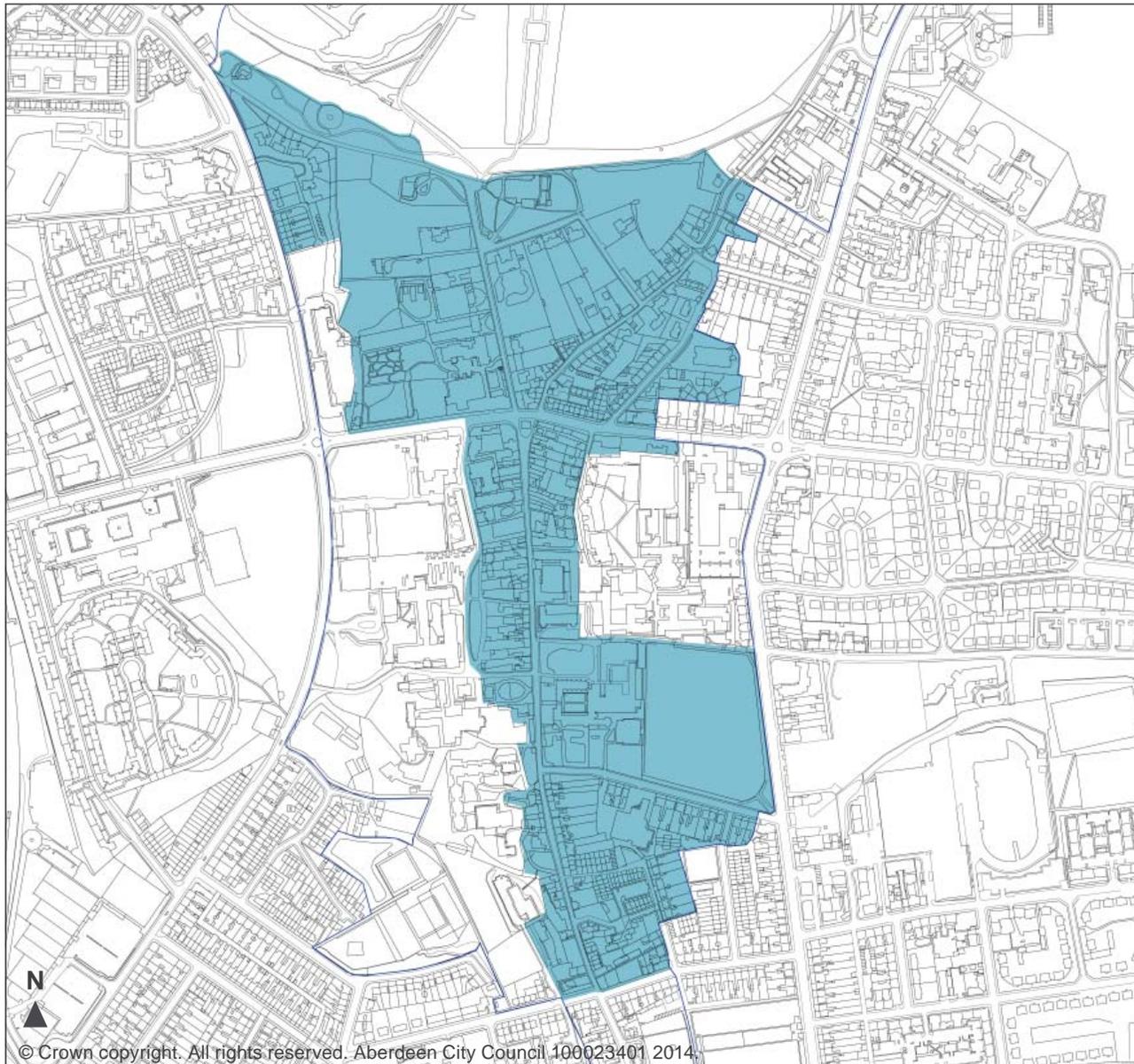


Top : St Margaret's Convent  
Bottom : King's Crescent



Top : Applebank House  
Bottom : Hillhead Terrace

## Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart



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## Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart -

### B 3.1 Setting

This is the historic heart of the Conservation Area and it retains the medieval layout of the old burgh with the street pattern of James Gordon's map of 1661 clearly still visible. This Y shape linear road pattern is a dominant feature with College Bounds and High Street running south/north culminating in the pivotal location of the Old Town House. From here the Chanonry and Tillydrone Road extend northwest and Don Street extends northeast towards the Brig o' Balgownie the first inland crossing of the River Don. The creation of St Machar Drive in the 1920s interrupted this pattern and creates a significant physical barrier.

From its junction with Orchard Street, the Spital narrows and leads into College Bounds and slopes downhill before levelling out on the High Street. A slight curvature means that the central area around King's College is hidden when coming down College Bounds, which creates a heightened sense of arrival. Crossing the busy St Machar Drive leads directly north to The Chanonry, an imposing street consisting of large manses set well back within extensive gardens enclosed by high boundary walls of an unusual profile. Similar walls bound the Cruickshank Botanic Garden. The Chanonry culminates in the medieval St Machar's Cathedral and the topography drops northwards down into Seaton Park. Although Don Street leads ultimately to the river crossing at the Brig o' Balgownie, its

remaining historic buildings peter out after its junction with Seaton Place.

Unsurprisingly given its history this character area has a significant number of listed buildings, many of which are group listings. In addition, it contains all three Scheduled Monuments that lie within the Conservation Area – St Machar’s Cathedral; Mercat Cross and Tillydrone Motte. It also has some 20th century development; mostly back land off College Bounds and on street on St Machar Drive, Don Street and Dunbar Street.

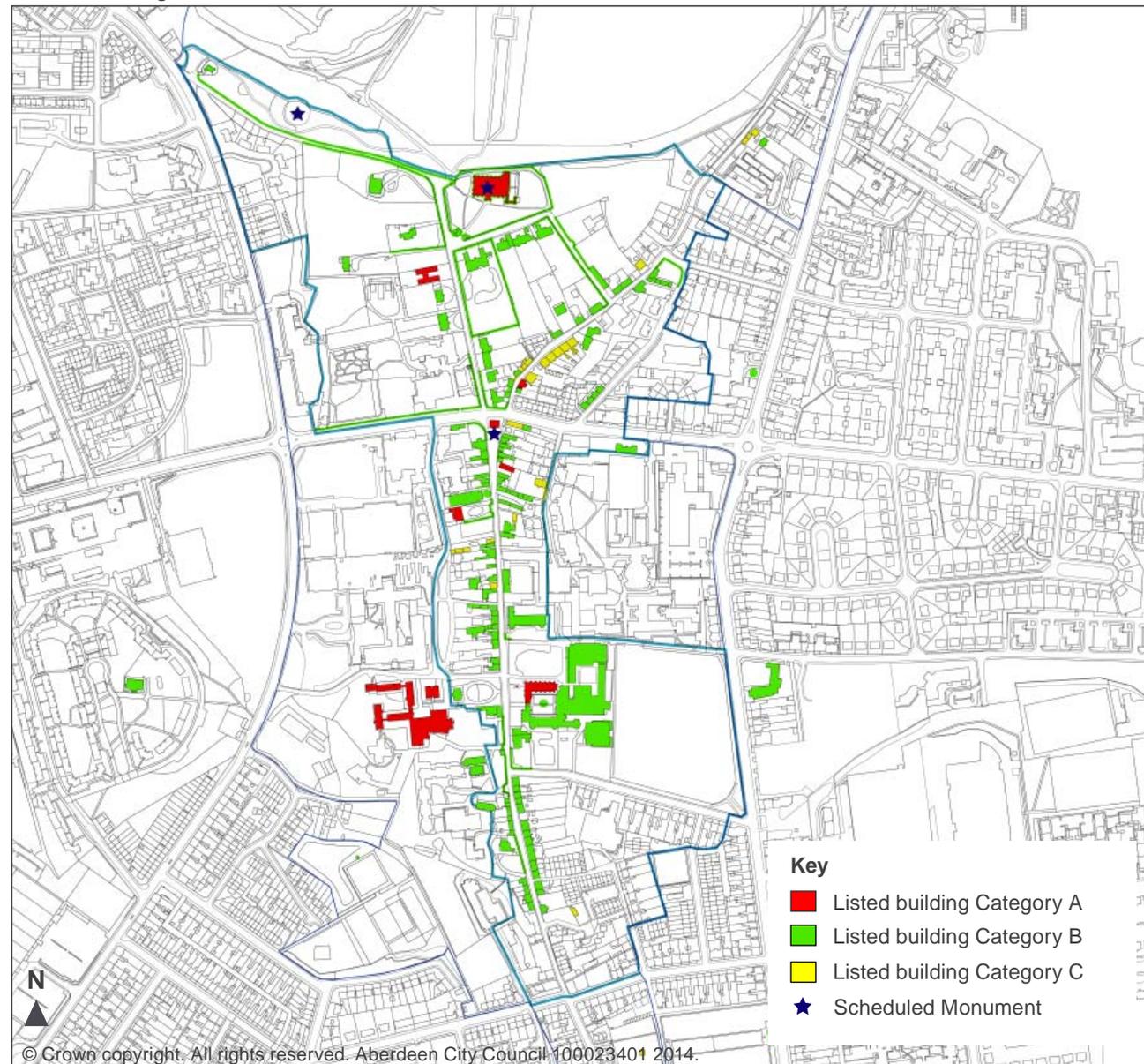
### B 3.2 Built environment

The quality of the built environment is outstanding with the medieval burgh development pattern still very much in evidence. Although some of the lanes running along the burgage plots have been lost, many still remain, such as Douglas Lane.

#### 3.2.1 Typical building forms and features

The wide range of architecture illustrates the diverse complexity of this character area and there is no one overriding typical building form. The architecture of the Aulton reflects varying uses and different levels of social status – highly dignified civic, university and ecclesiastical buildings; elegant Georgian town houses and manses; and humble vernacular cottages. This rich diversity is set within a strong framework of distinguished gateways (gate piers, arched gateways, gate lodges), high boundary walls, cast ironwork (railings, gates) and granite sett streets.

Listed buildings in Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart





Top: Stone detail in boundary wall, College Bounds  
 Bottom: Greenlaw Court



Top: Powis Lodge, 1834 south facing extension  
 Bottom: College Bounds, blocked doorways forming new window openings

This character area comprises a series of micro character areas and individual buildings need to be assessed in context.

### College Bounds

Terraces of vernacular two storey and attic 18th and early 19th century buildings line sections of College Bounds creating a well-defined entrance from the south downwards to the Aulton. The number of individual properties has declined over time and the blocked doorways are evidence of buildings having been knocked through internally to create larger units.

Behind the manse walls of 29 College Bounds lies the churchyard of the medieval St Mary ad Nives, or Snow Kirk, that was Old Aberdeen's parish church before it fell into decay after the Reformation. Powis Lodge dates from 1697 and was enlarged by Alex Fraser in 1834. It is a two storey building with a large south facing bay curiously attached to an 18th century cottage facing east, directly on College Bounds. The impressive oriental inspired Powis Gates were also designed by Fraser in 1834 as the grand entrance to Powis House.

### King's College

King's College Chapel and surrounding King's College quadrangle group is one of the two centrepieces of Old Aberdeen Conservation Area. This collection of iconic buildings has come to symbolise the long educational tradition of the University of Aberdeen, the UK's fifth oldest university.

Started in 1500 the Category A listed chapel is famous for its tower topped by a closed crown that dominates the surrounding area. With the exception of the Chapel, little remains of Bishop Elphinstone's original university buildings on site, which were grouped together as a quadrangle. With the exception of the 1525 Round Tower and the 1658 Cromwell Tower, many of the earlier buildings in the quad were replaced in the 19th century. John Smith designed the west frontage and was responsible for the reconstruction

of Cromwell Tower in 1825-6. New King's, completed in 1913, complements the style of the older buildings. There are several early 20th century buildings in this group - Elphinstone Hall (A. Marshall Mackenzie and Son 1927-9) and King's Pavilion (A.G.R. Mackenzie 1939-41).

King's College is set back from College Bounds, giving space to appreciate the complex. Opposite, on the western side of College Bounds and also set well back from the road, is the impressive Georgian detached villa at 53 College Bounds. The break in the building lines on either side of College Bounds at this point, together with the landscaped setting and gardens, creates a focal sense of space inviting appreciation.

### High Street

Further north more 18th and 19th century vernacular buildings line High Street. Many of these would have been in commercial use as the High Street was prime retail frontage when Old Aberdeen was a small town in its own right and some shops still remain. Humble buildings like the 18th century St Machar Bar (97 High Street), with its gable end fronting the street, contrast with the grandeur of the 1780 townhouse of the McLeans of Coll (81 High Street) set behind a gate and walls.

The classical Georgian elegance and proportions of 18th century Category A listed Town House is the focal point of Old Aberdeen's original town centre and was designed by George Jaffrey in 1788. It lies at the northern end of High Street as it widens out, with The Chanonry forking to the west and Don Street starting to the east.



King's College Chapel



53 College Bounds



High Street forking towards the west

Fragments of the 16th century Mercat Cross, which is a Scheduled Monument, now stand in front of the Town House. Although facing St Machar Drive, 60 Cluny's Port dates from c1770 and forms part of the Georgian cluster of buildings in the vicinity of the Town House.

### The Chanonry

Originally, both The Chanonry and Don Street would have connected to Old Aberdeen without a break, but they are now separated by St Machar Drive. This triangular layout of streets is characteristic of ecclesiastical quarters in Scotland. Cluny's Port was the gatehouse to Cluny's Garden, now the Cruickshank Botanic Garden, which is bounded by substantial walls with distinctive sloped coping that is a feature of The Chanonry. In pre-reformation times, The Chanonry was lined with the manses of St

Machar Cathedral's senior canons and is now characterised by large, mainly detached Georgian and some 19th century, residential properties set in large gardens and bounded by impressive walls. Although the styles of architecture vary, the buildings are formal; designed to impress and reflect status. The single storey 1801 Mitchell Hospital (9 The Chanonry), is an attractive open court of alms houses laid out to be clearly visible from the street, unlike the manses.

St Machar's Cathedral is the focal point of The Chanonry : its splendour and enclosed churchyard setting become more apparent as one approaches it. The current Cathedral building dates from 1370 and is the other centrepiece of Old Aberdeen Conservation Area. It is bounded by walls and a late 18th century lodge. The Cathedral has undergone various alterations over the centuries with its visually dominant twin towers

and spires added in the 16th century by Bishop Dunbar. Falling into serious disrepair during the Reformation, it was restored in the 19th century by John Smith amongst others, who built the gatehouse in 1832. Architects involved in further 20th century restoration work include A. Marshall Mackenzie in the 1920's and A.G.R. Mackenzie who installed the three east lights in 1947.

To the east of the Cathedral lies the site of the former Bishop's Palace, which was later developed as the Dunbar Halls of Residence. These buildings have now been demolished and the site is now identified in the Aberdeen Local Plan as Opportunity Site 82. On the eastern return of The Chanonry is the 17th century Chaplain's Court (20 The Chanonry) that includes remnants of original 16th century buildings.



Mitchell Hospital, 9 The Chanonry



13 The Chanonry



Chaplain's Court, 20 The Chanonry

### Don Street

The character of the houses on Don Street is similar to that on the High Street and most properties on the St Machar Drive to Cheyne Road section date from the 18th and 19th centuries. The significant three storey Bede House (20-22 Don Street), however, is dated 1676. Constructed of rubble, it sits hard against the road and has an arched close leading to the back and a circular staircase. To the north of Cheyne Road are predominantly 20th century buildings whose character is suburban.

### St Machar Place

These inter-war semi-detached cottage style houses are laid out in a semi-circle. They are typical examples of suburban development associated with the building of the new inner ring road of St Machar Drive in the 1920's.

### Dunbar Street

The southern part of Dunbar Street contains a mixture of largely 19th and very early 20th century houses and community buildings ranging from the single storied group of humble cottages (11-14 Dunbar Street) to the imposing Old Aberdeen House, an austere 20th century building, originally a school.

### Tillydrone Avenue

As part of its post war expansion the University built a small residential development on Tillydrone Avenue to house its staff. The terrace was built in 1947 and the cul-de-sac in 1953. These semi-detached and terraced granite buildings are of a traditional design with an Arts and Crafts influence. Most of the two storey dwellings were built with pink and grey granite. The harled houses however date from 1924 and were built by Major Hay of Seaton Estate.

At the junction of Tillydrone Avenue and Tillydrone Road is Benholm's Lodgings or Wallace Tower. Originally an early 15th century tower house located in the city centre, it was moved to its current site in 1964.



83 Don Street



13 Dunbar Street



Tillydrone Avenue

### University Road

The late 19th and early 20th century houses on University Road have much in common with those on King Street and Aberdeen's West End. Many of these terraced and semi-detached properties were designed as flats. The double front doors, two storey bay windows and decorative string courses are typically characteristic.

### 3.2.2 Materials

In common with the rest of Aberdeen, granite is the building material of choice. It comes in a variety of forms from dressed block to random rubble with harled exterior. As in Balgownie Character Area there are several buildings pointed with cherry caulking that creates a lively effect.

Traditionally chimneys in the area are built of Seaton bricks from the long defunct nearby brickworks. Local bricks were also used in window surrounds and when buildings have been raised in height as well as in parts of walling. The use of small amounts of brick together with the more vernacular use of granite enhances the diversity of the built environment with no one dominant style.

Roofs are generally of local slate. Many properties use clay pantiles although it is unclear why they were used so extensively in Old Aberdeen and only partially in New Aberdeen. In many cases, the bottom two courses of the roof are in slate with pantiles above. The strong presence of natural clay pantiles may have an early association with the Seaton brick and tile making industry. There are suggestions that the presence of pantiles originates from their use as ships' ballast on return voyages from the Low Countries or that they originate from Bishop Elphinstone's visits to that area. There is no evidence to support either theory. Pantiles are nevertheless a very distinctive feature and were used extensively in the 1960's restoration work in Old Aberdeen, reflecting a desire to reinforce the Scottish vernacular.



Don Street, Seaton brick chimneys and window edging



88 High Street - harled with pantiled roof



Cherry caulking

Windows are usually timber sash and case with a variety of fenestration patterns ranging from the traditional 18th century six over six arrangements to a late 19th century one over one. Doors are also timber, usually solid six panels with a small fanlight above.

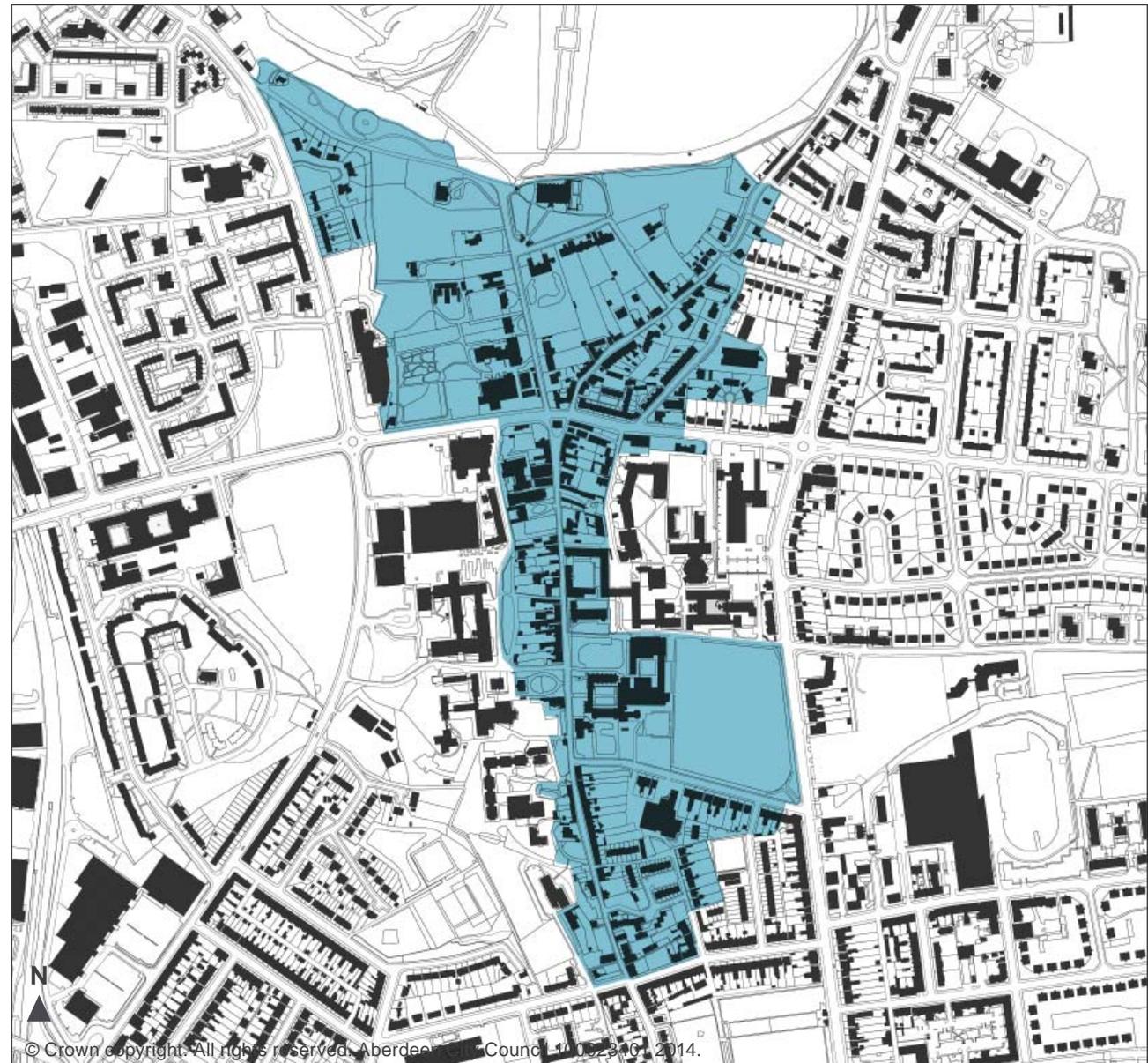
Boundary walls are normally constructed of granite although Seaton brick has also been used, particularly where there have been alterations.

### 3.2.3 Orientation/ building lines/ heights

The incremental development of the area has led to a variety of building lines, often juxtaposed in an organic manner with a terrace of buildings built at back of pavement next to a large detached manse set well back from the street in its own grounds. Several buildings on the High Street are built gable end onto the road revealing their medieval origins. Prestigious residences from the 18th century onwards tend to face the street albeit set back in extensive grounds. Some however, such as 41 College Bounds, are orientated away from the road with high walls separating the occupants from the main thoroughfare outside. Vernacular buildings in this section are usually built at back of pavement having a lively interface with the primary road through Old Aberdeen. The strong and ubiquitous use of granite boundary walls at the pavement edge provides cohesion across this character area in terms of delineating public and private ownerships.

The Chanonry exhibits a uniformity of pattern and commonly used building line. Large detached mansions, mostly 18th and early 19th centuries,

Urban form for Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart





Top: Wrights' and Coopers' Place  
Bottom: Orchard Place



Top: The Chanonry boundary wall with sloped coping  
Bottom: 34-40 College Bounds

are set back in spacious grounds with frontages that address the street. This sense of cohesion is increased by the high granite walls with sloping copes that were built in the 17th and 18th centuries around the manses in Cathedral Close. Another fine example can be found at 81 High Street.

20th century development in the character area has followed both traditional building lines and, in places such as The Orchard, introduced suburban layouts. There is often a sharp contrast between the density and regular, fine grain of College Bounds, the High Street and the surrounding mid to late 20th century campus. Within the campus, building orientations and layouts are highly individual creating no cohesive sense of place.

Building heights vary; however, two storeyed buildings with dormers creating a third floor dominate. This does not necessarily result in uniform building heights as much depends on the age and style of property. For example, the mid 19th century building, 34-36 College Bounds, has the same number of floors as its 18th century neighbours; however, it has much higher floor to ceiling heights resulting in a significantly taller building mid terrace.

### 3.2.4 Uses

The area has a mixture of residential, some retail and university uses. The expansion of the University of Aberdeen over the last 50 years has resulted in more buildings used for teaching, administrative and student accommodation

purposes. This is particularly so in the College Bounds to St Machar Drive section, which has heightened the seasonal nature of activity in this character area with periods of intensive activity during term time and a rather deserted quality during vacations. This has inevitably changed the character of the Conservation Area.

Place names are evidence of past uses eg Wrights' and Coopers' Place and Brewery Lane. Today the area is zoned for health, education and other community facilities (Policy CTF1) in the Local Development Plan. Although the retail uses are less prevalent than they once were, local shops are protected by Policy RT4.

### 3.2.5 Negative factors

- Incremental loss of traditional building features eg door furniture
- Inappropriate retail signage
- Empty and/or neglected properties on High Street
- Vacant site on Don Street

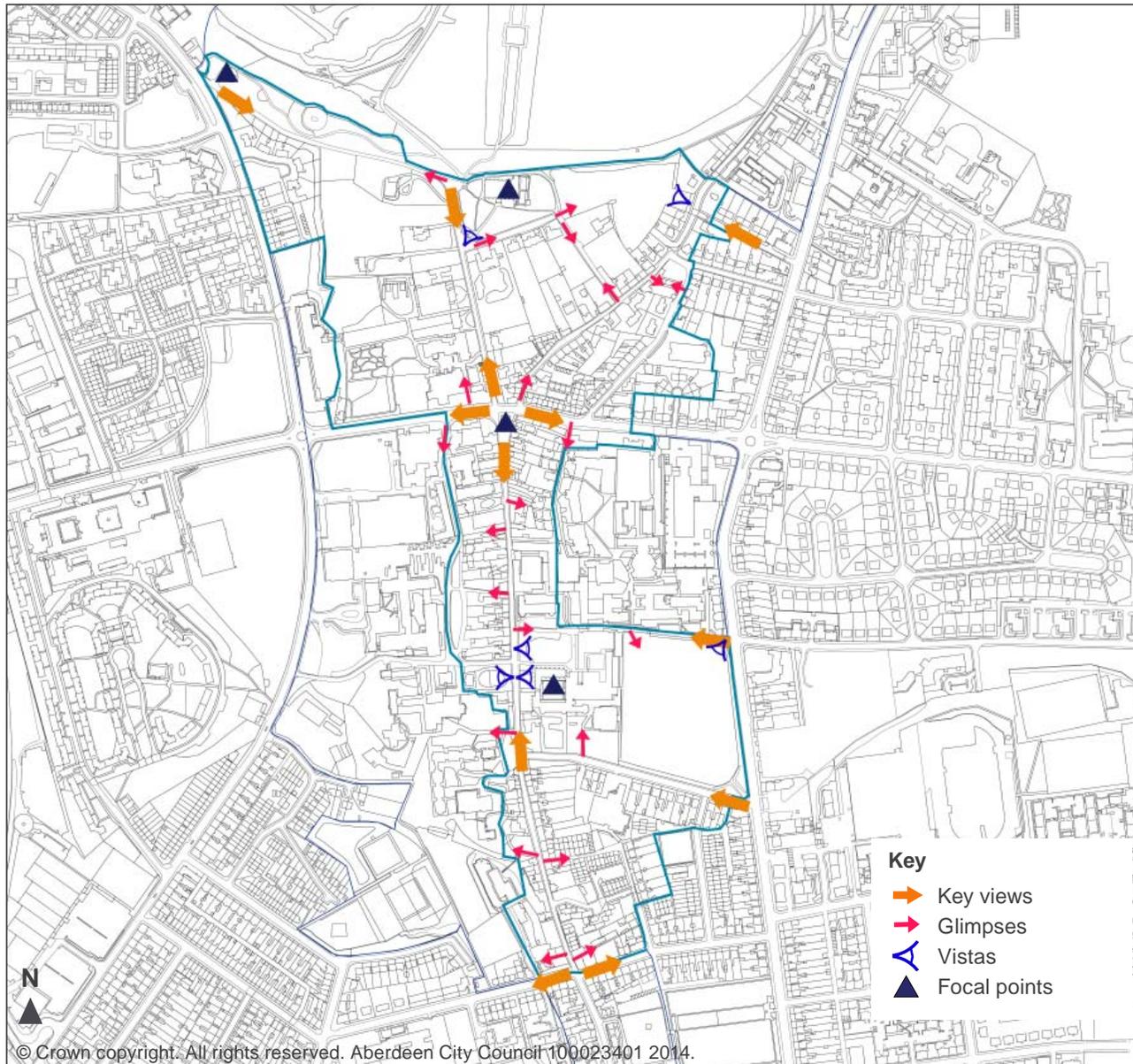


Top: King's College Sports Pavillion  
Bottom: Powis Gate



Top: Public convenience and shelter, High Street  
Bottom: 24 High Street

Townscape analysis for Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart



**B 3.3 Public realm**

3.3.1 Views/vistas/glimpses

There are significant linear views up and down the length of College Bounds, High Street and The Chanonry. The Town House terminates the view north up the High Street, creating a focal point, and the roads either side of it hint at more of the area to be explored. The mature trees of Seaton Park and St Machar’s Cathedral are the focus of the northwards view up The Chanonry.

There are also long distance views outwith the Conservation Area looking in, such as the wider unexpected views of St Machar’s Cathedral spires looking up Cheyne Road from King Street.

The winding nature of Tillydrone Road reveals short enticing views, while the boundary walls on this road strengthen the sense of exploration .

The King’s College, Pavilion and Round Tower can be seen across the playing fields from King Street and at various points on University Road. There is a fine view of the King’s Crown from Elphinstone Road looking obliquely through gaps between the High Street houses. St Machar Drive provides long views along its length and the ancient Chanonry boundary walls are particularly noticeable.

In contrast to the well-established views are the many glimpses off College Bounds and the High Street down closes and paths. Some of these add considerable interest to the character area.

### 3.3.2 Roads

The road layout of Old Aberdeen's Heart is based on medieval routes. The role in the road hierarchy of some like College Bounds; High Street; The Chanonry; Don Street; Dunbar Street (formerly the East Back Gate) and Elphinstone Road (formerly the West Back Gate) has remained constant whilst others such as Regent Walk (formerly College Wynd) have lower status and others like St Machar Drive (formerly Cluny's Wynd) have a much more important role to play.

National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 runs along the High Street and The Chanonry before continuing along Tillydrone Road. Although Don Street is closed to through traffic at Cheyne Road, cyclists and pedestrians are still able to get through. The area is well used by cyclists, both for specific journeys and for general leisure purposes.

A number of primary routes through this area are paved in granite setts with granite kerbstones and some granite flagstone pavements. The section of College Bounds between University Road and Meston Walk is a two-way bus gate, allowing only pedestrians, cyclists and buses through, and then one-way northbound to all traffic thereafter. Despite advisory signage, many drivers continue through the bus gate. The traffic lights, to the south of Powis Lodge, create a visual intrusion into this sensitive historic environment. Traffic calming measures (chicanes) projecting out into the road adversely affect the character of the historic road pattern. There is always a balance to



Top: Dunbar Street  
Bottom: The Chanonry

Top: Botanic Garden wall on St Machar Drive  
Bottom: Tillydrone Road

be struck however between preserving the historic character of an area and road safety. The area, including the university campus, would benefit from a comprehensive traffic management review to better conserve the historic environment and improve pedestrian movement.

The granite setted road surfaces of College Bounds northwards to St Machar's Cathedral help give the area cohesion and are a strong feature. Their condition however is generally poor, making them hard to use for those with mobility requirements. Some roads and the many lanes and closes, are largely in private ownership. This makes comprehensive treatment and maintenance more problematic.

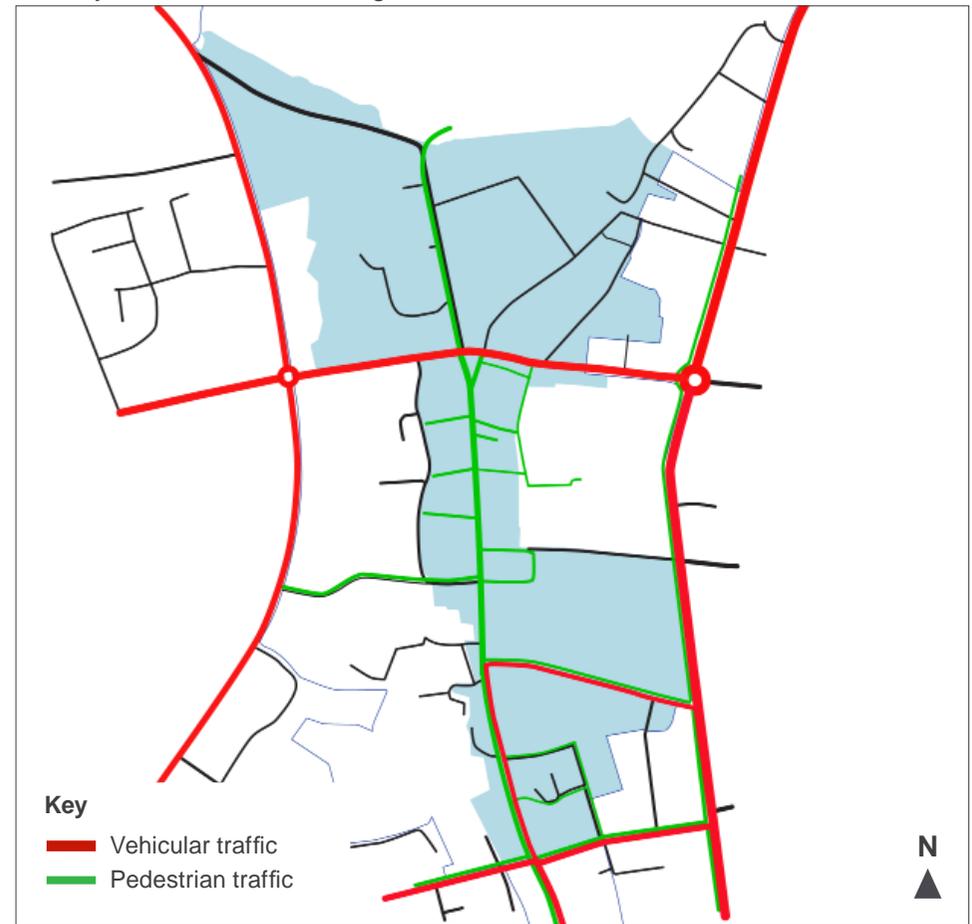
Despite the dominance of the primary north south spine road, there are other historic routes such as Regent Walk, Dunbar Street and Tillydrone Road. The narrow pedestrian lanes and closes are of significant historic importance. They are of intrinsic value as evidence of Old Aberdeen's medieval history. They also have a role to play in improving way finding on east west routes across the University campus area.

There are a few 20th century road layouts such as the 1920's cul de sac development at St Machar Place and the late 20th century residential development at The Orchard. They do not however have an adverse impact on the wider Conservation Area's character, as they are small in scale, highly localised and clearly of their time.

### 3.3.3 Pavements

Pavements are of variable quality and usually reflect the surrounding historic environment although Don Street's modern paving is a notable exception. Granite kerbs are a dominant feature and are largely characterised by being laid flat with a shallow upstand. Core Path 21 runs along the High Street and The Chanonry, meeting Core Path 6 at Tillydrone Road. Core Path 20 runs along Regent Walk and continues along this line to meet the High Street.

Activity and movement through Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart



### 3.3.4 Street trees

There are no street trees in this character area due to its comparatively narrow medieval road and pavement widths. Trees in private gardens make a significant visual and wildlife contribution alongside roads.

### 3.3.5 Signage

Attempts have been made to reduce the amount of street signage however there is still room for rationalisation.

Historic roads are largely signed using traditional black and white Aberdeen street tiles usually located just below first floor level on buildings. As elsewhere in the city they enhance the historic environment. Elsewhere the road signage comprises modern blue and white street signs at low level, often freestanding in the pavement.

### 3.3.6 Street furniture

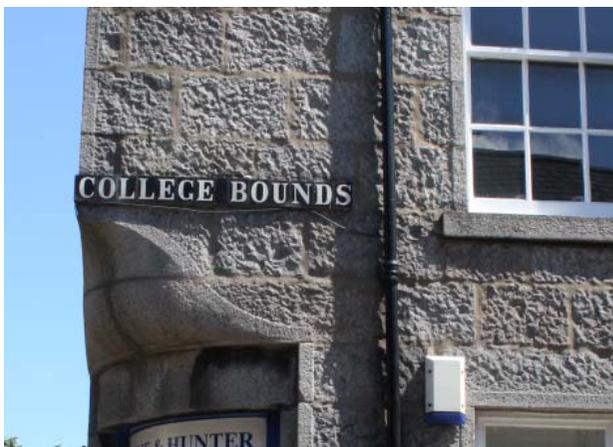
A mixture of approaches has been taken across this character area. Standard utilitarian street furniture is found in locations of the highest historic significance, which detracts from their townscape quality.

### 3.3.7 Negative factors

- Road traffic management features on the High Street and College Bounds
- Inappropriate street furniture, including lighting, in sensitive historic locations
- Inappropriate modern paving in Don Street
- Poor condition of some of the granite setted roads.



Core Path 21, follows the College Bounds

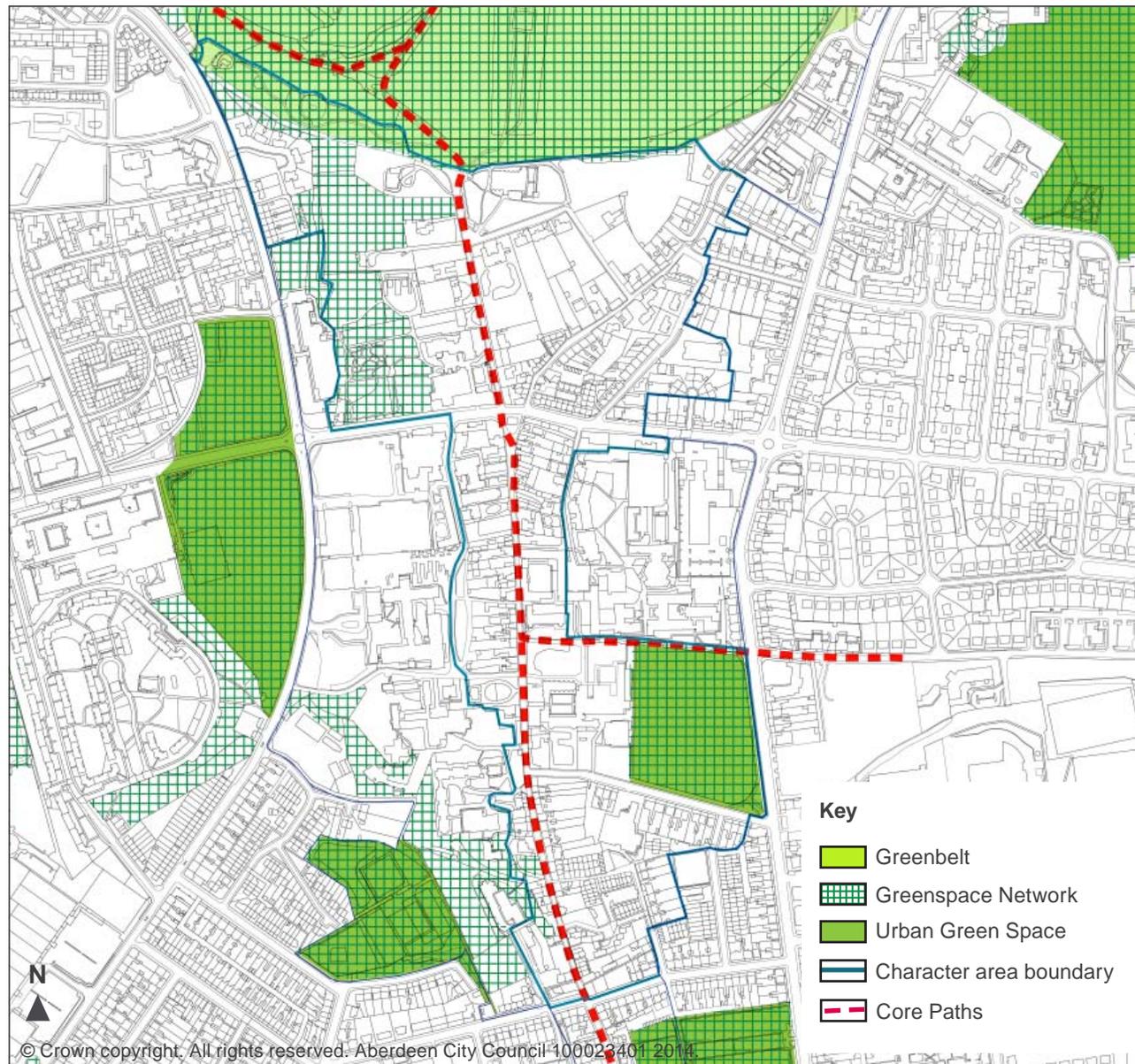


Traditional Aberdeen tiles used for street names



Poor condition of the granite setted roads

Natural heritage map for Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart



### B 3.4 Natural environment

#### 3.4.1 Open spaces

There are few truly public open spaces on College Bounds. The King's College campus grassed open setting is formal, as befits the buildings, and opens up High Street at that point. The Cruickshank Botanic Garden on the corner of St Machar Drive and The Chanonry is an extremely rich ecological site however it is not particularly well visited by the public given its importance. It is a secluded area open to the public throughout the year. St Machar's Cathedral graveyard and the Snow Kirk's churchyard also provide tranquil open space. Along Tillydrone Avenue there is a significant piece of grassed open space in the form of a central green belonging to the surrounding houses. Sunnybank Park lies to the west of Firhill Road, a path that is clearly marked on 1828 map by John Wood, as is Firhill Well.

#### 3.4.2 Trees and parks

Despite the lack of street trees, there are nevertheless a large number of trees in private gardens and in the University's grounds. They make a major contribution to the area's character and wildlife value especially in The Chanonry. The Cruickshank Botanic Garden has an arboretum as part of its extensive grounds. The planting of trees close to boundary walls has led to substantial damage to walls by unchecked root growth of mature trees, which is a problem across this character area.

### 3.4.5 Negative factors

- Damage to walls by tree roots
- Weak views down some closes leading off the High Street

### B 3.5 Key characteristics

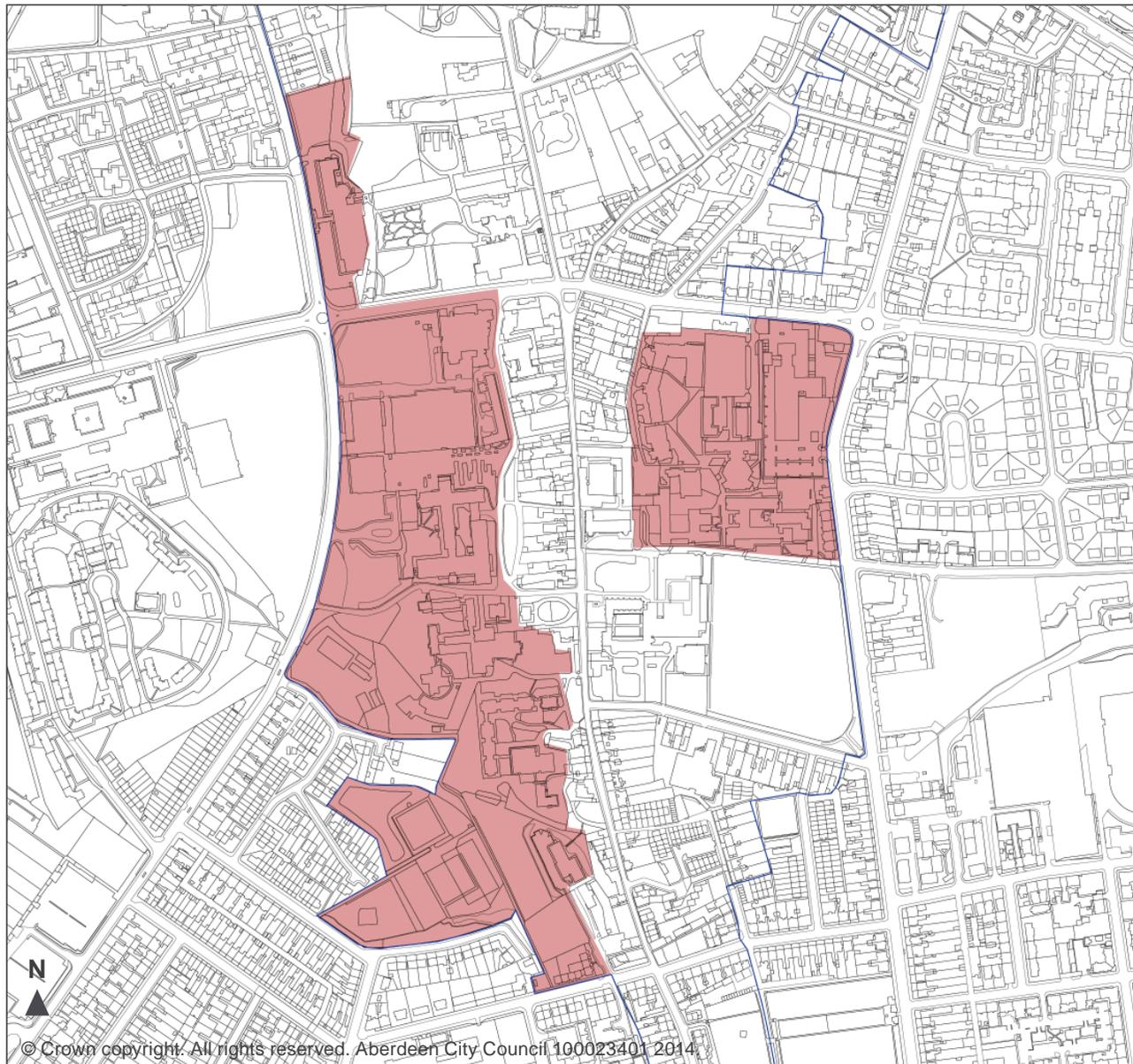
The following key features characterise character area B, Old Aberdeen Heart, of the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area:

General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medieval layout with burgage plot development pattern still evident</li><li>• Complete town and Burgh of Barony</li><li>• St Machar's Cathedral and its setting</li><li>• The Chanonry development – residential properties set in spacious walled grounds</li><li>• King's College quadrangle and setting</li><li>• Town House, the main focus of the High Street</li><li>• Snow Kirk</li><li>• Wallace Tower (Benholm's Lodging) and Tillydrone Motte on the medieval Tillydrone Road</li><li>• Vernacular 18th century buildings</li><li>• A wealth of historic buildings; a high percentage of which are listed</li><li>• Historic street layout and street surfaces</li><li>• Closes and wynds</li><li>• Gable end on buildings</li><li>• Chimneys, some window surround detailing and alterations built in Seaton brick</li><li>• Wide variety of building types and forms</li><li>• Significant tree cover in private grounds</li><li>• Historic boundary walls, many of them with distinctive copings</li><li>• Chamfered corner entrance doors at ground floor level</li><li>• Distinguished gateways</li><li>• Granite setted roads</li></ul>



St Machar's Cathedral

## Plan of Character Area C : Modern University Campus



## Character Area C : Modern University

### C 3.1 Setting

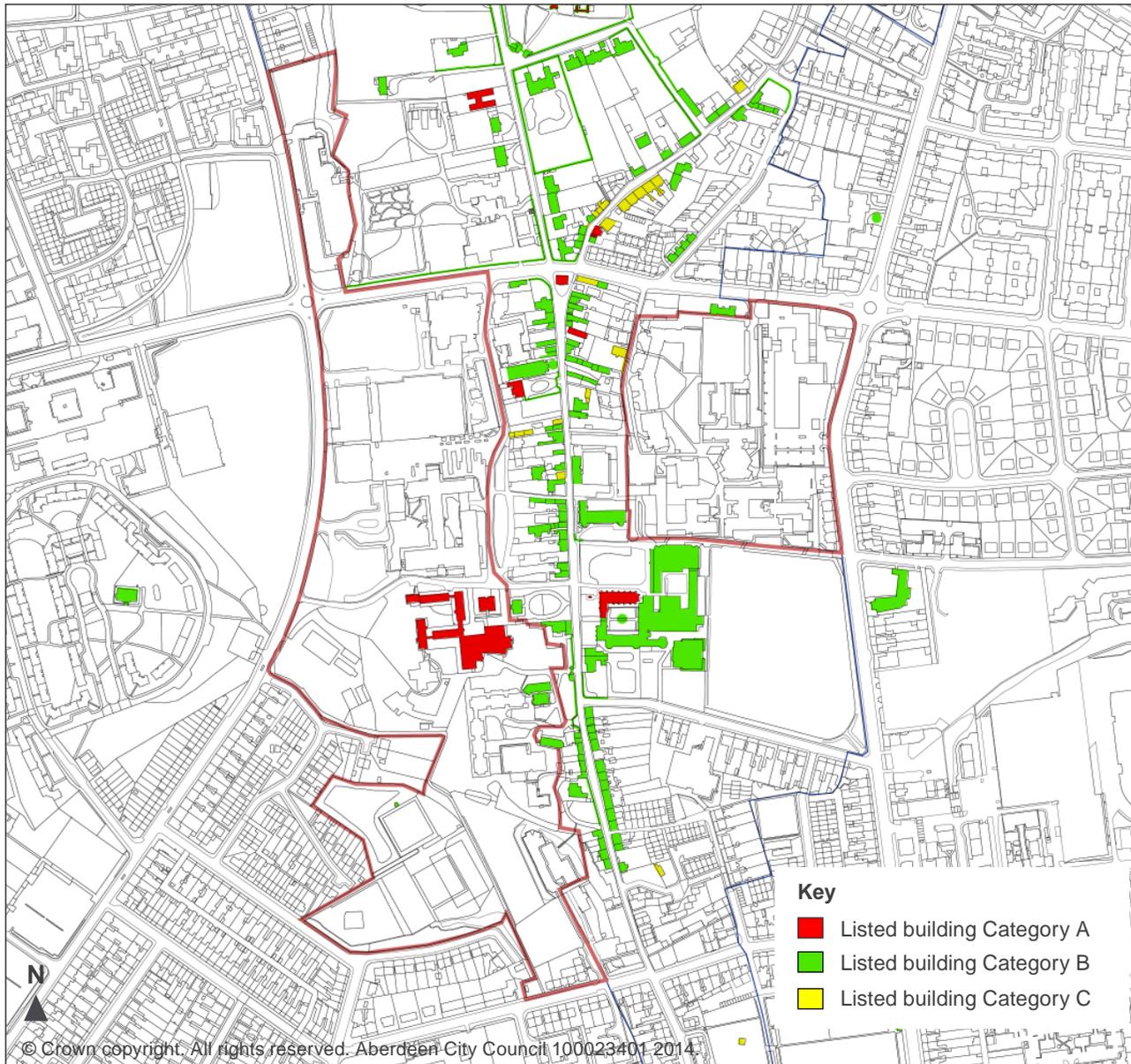
The character area incorporates a range of mid 20th century and modern academic, administrative and student accommodation to the west and east of the historic spine of Old Aberdeen. It also includes the Zoology Building on Tillydrone Avenue.

Since the 1950s, new academic buildings have been developed on the area of the former Market Lands of the Burgh of Old Aberdeen to the west and on the former playing fields to the east. Much of this development was very rapid in response to the 1963 Robbins Report on higher education. The key buildings are Sir Duncan Rice Library; Crombie Hall; Fraser Noble Building; Meston Building; MacRobert Building; Zoology Building; Taylor Building; Edward Wright Building and Arts Lecture Theatre / Psychology Building.

The modern campus area is relatively flat; however, there are some slight level changes throughout the area. There are therefore limited views of wider Aberdeen from within the Conservation Area.

There is some amenity open space in between the academic and student accommodation buildings to the east of the historic spine. There is more significant amenity open space surrounding both Crombie and Johnston Halls, adding to the residential feel of the area. The Sir Duncan Rice Library, Fraser Noble and Meston Buildings surround the most significant piece of open

Listed buildings in Character Area C : Modern University Campus



space. This designed hard landscaping serves to pull these three architecturally disparate buildings together creating a sense of place.

The University of Aberdeen developed a new Estates Strategy in 2013, which outlines envisaged changes on the University's campus. The King's Campus Framework Plan includes Framework Area Design Guidelines containing design objectives to create direct links from the historic core into and across the campus and influence the character of the campus edges.

### C 3.2 Built environment

#### 3.2.1 Typical building forms and features

The buildings within this area show the evolution of architecture from circa 1950 to the present day. All buildings show a diverse range in design and materials, including granite, glass, concrete and timber. Due to this diversity there are no decorative or artistic elements that are repeated throughout the development. Each building has its own character: for example, Fraser Noble Building has a dome shaped roof; Meston Building has pink granite detail and a weather vane on its roof whilst Crombie has timber cladding detail.

### 3.2.1.1 Student accommodation

#### **Crombie Hall**

The A-listed Crombie Hall, south of Meston Walk and set off of College Bounds, was opened in 1960 and was the first university hall of residence in Britain for both men and women. The building, named after Dr James Edward Crombie (former Principal of the University), has halls and ancillary uses such as a café, which are set within landscaped and wooded grounds. Designed by Sir Robert Matthew, Crombie Hall has a Scandinavian feel to the building. There is a mixture of levels within this building, between one and five storeys. The accommodation block is harled and has a pitched, pantiled roof. The social area stands forward and has a large glazed east wall under a long sloping roof.



Crombie Hall

#### **King's Hall**

Planning permission was granted in 1992 for the development of King's Hall. It is a three and a half storey modern addition to Crombie Hall set in the same grounds. The building is predominantly concrete with a harled finish and modern cladding detail.



King's Hall

#### **Johnston Hall**

Johnston Hall was named after the Secretary of State for Scotland and university chancellor Tom Johnston and opened in 1966. It was also designed by Sir Robert Matthew and is set in its own landscaped grounds off College Bounds. The building is predominantly concrete with corrugated metal cladding detail. The halls are four storeys high with a sloped roof and the social area has a flat roof.



Johnston Hall

### **Elphinstone Road Flats**

Granted planning permission in 1991 these two / three storey buildings front onto Elphinstone Road. The Elphinstone Road flats have a harled finish and have stone and timber details.

### **Hunter Court and Coopers Court**

Hunter and Coopers Courts are both student accommodation blocks located to the east of the campus in close proximity to academic buildings. Originally built as an Arts block built in 1966, Coopers Court was converted many years later whilst Hunter Court was purpose built. Both buildings are three storeys high and both have a harled finish. Hunter Court has stonework string courses and Coopers Court has timber detailing.



Elphinstone Road flats



Hunter Court



Coopers Court

### 3.2.1.2 Academic buildings

#### Sir Duncan Rice Library

During the University's post war expansion, King's Library was no longer able to accommodate all the resources and students. A new library was developed situated in the Science Complex to the west of the High Street. The library was built in 1964 and was further extended in 1978 and 1981, latterly known as the Queen Mother Library.

The Sir Duncan Rice Library which is adjacent to the former Queen Mother Library site was completed in 2011. The seven storey building was designed by Danish architects, Schmidt Hammer Lassen, and has a glazed finish; a bold intervention in the Conservation Area. It is a distinctive feature on the Old Aberdeen skyline and can be seen from the city centre and surrounding areas



Sir Duncan Rice Library

#### Regent Building and University Office

Located north of Regent Walk, the Regent Building dates from the 1970s. Across from it is the University Office whose architecture is similar to the Regent Building as both two storey buildings are constructed of concrete.

#### Taylor Building

Taylor Building, named after Sir Thomas M. Taylor, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University between 1948 and 1962, was completed in 1964. The building consists of three blocks, one which is five storeys high and the others three, linked by a single storey arcaded bridge over Dunbar Street.



Regent Building

#### William Guild Building / Arts Lecture Theatre

The William Guild Building which is four storeys high, once known as the Psychology Building, and the adjoining Arts Lecture Theatre were developed in 1970. The William Guild Building commemorates William Guild, Principal of Kings College 1639-1651, who was also the Benefactor and First Patron of the Aberdeen Incorporated Trades. The Arts Lecture Theatre is the largest on campus with a capacity of 600 people. Both the façade of the William Guild Building and the sloping wings of the Arts Lecture Theatre are constructed of concrete.



Taylor Building

### MacRobert Building

Previously the North of Scotland College of Agriculture, the MacRobert Building is located on the edge of the campus. This building was named to honour the MacRobert Trust. When it was opened in 1967, the building was not originally part of University of Aberdeen campus hence its entrance facing onto King Street and its orientation away from the main university campus. The concrete building is nine storeys high and is now the base for the School of Education since it moved from the Hilton Campus in 2005.



### Edward Wright Building and Annexe

Edward Wright Building, named after Sir Edward Wright, Principal and Vice-Chancellor between 1962 and 1976, was completed in 1975. The building with turrets at each end extends northwards along Dunbar Street. The Annexe is a temporary building to the north east of the original. In 2016 it is due to be removed and replaced by landscaping.



Top: MacRobert Building  
Bottom: Meston Building

### The Hub

In 1969 the Central Refectory and Staff Club were built, located on the corner of Elphinstone Road and St Machar Drive. Now known as the Hub, it is a modern dining, leisure and social facility. The Hub is three storeys and built of concrete with a harling finish.



Top: Zoology Building, Tillydrone Avenue  
Bottom: Fraser Noble Building

### St Mary's Building (modern extension)

The Geography Department located within St Mary's was extended in 1969 and again in 1980.

The concrete with harling finish extension is three storeys with a further annex to the north at one storey high.

### Zoology Building

The Zoology Building is a tall concrete structure built in 1970 and located on Tillydrone Avenue.

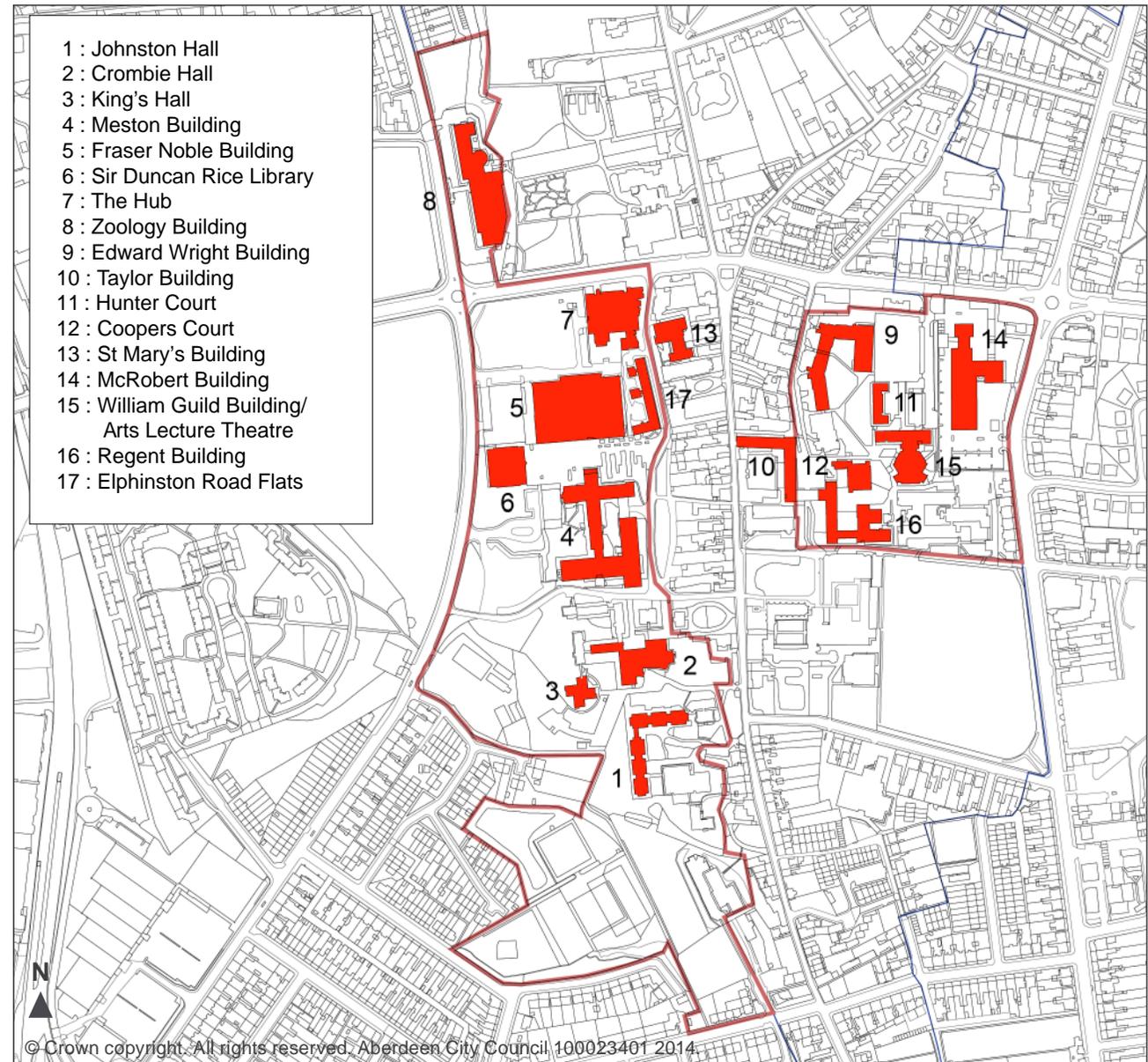
### Fraser Noble Building

Fraser Noble Building, once known as the Natural Philosophy Building, was completed in 1963. The building was named in recognition of Sir Fraser Noble, the Principal and Vice Chancellor between 1976 and 1981. The central part of the building is one storey with a concrete and glazed dome on its roof with two glazed walkways to its east and west wings, which are four storeys high.

### Meston Building

The Meston Building is one of the largest on the campus. Built as the Chemistry Building in 1952, it was further extended in 1968. The original pink granite building is four and a half storeys high with a low pitched, sloping slate roof and a distinctive weathervane. The rear extension is three storeys high and constructed of concrete with stonework detail and a harling finish.

Location map for University Buildings



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### 3.2.2 Materials

Concrete is used predominantly in this character area. However, many different materials have been used in the expansion of the university such as glass, granite, and timber.

### 3.2.3 Orientation/ building lines/ heights

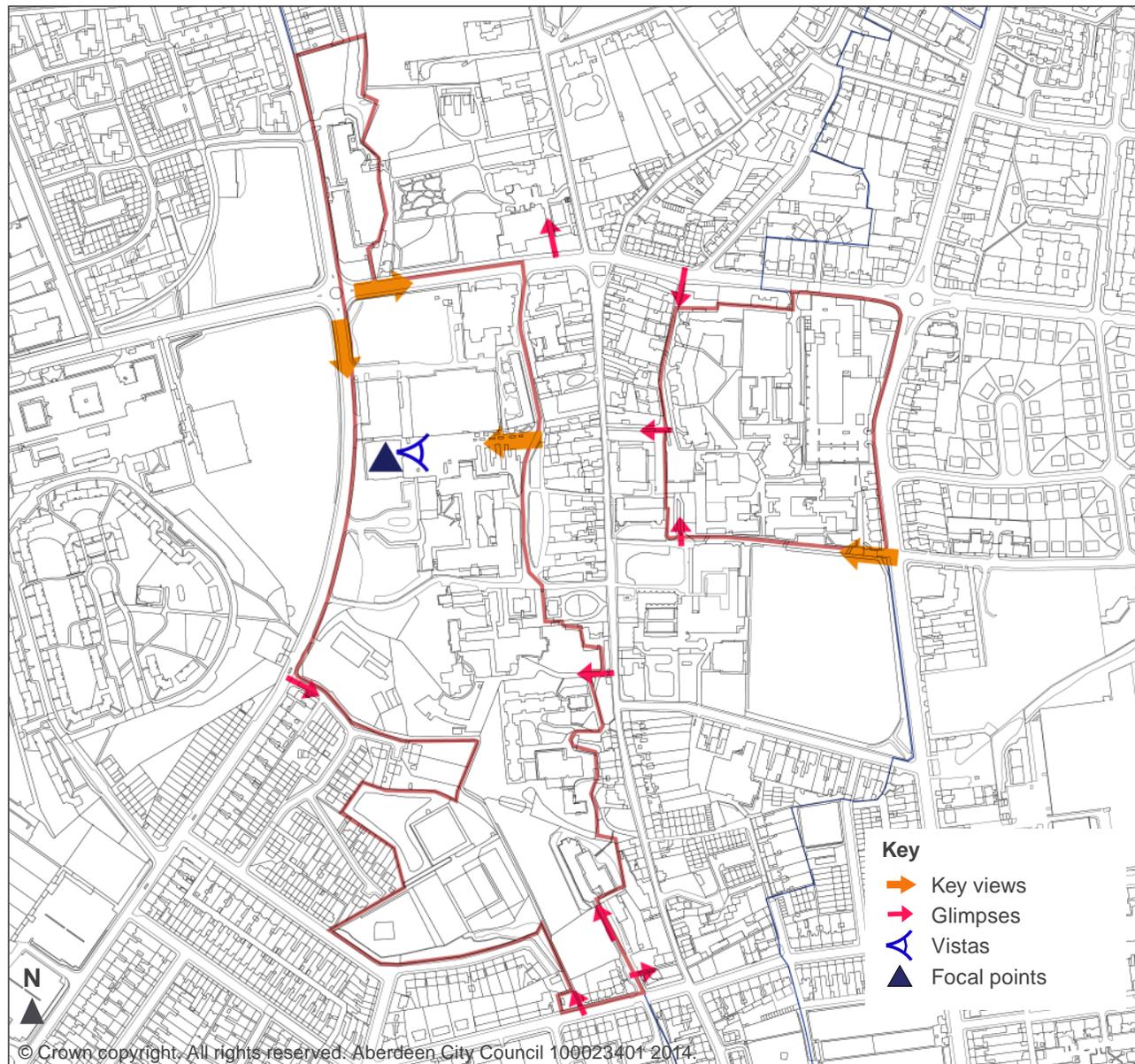
The main road separating the old burgh from the western section of the university expansion is Elphinstone Road that leads to the east west Meston Walk. There is no consistent build line along either side of this street. There is a mixture of orientation with some buildings fronting onto the streets, gable ends addressing the streets and backs of the historic Heart looking onto the main thoroughfares. The new landscaping scheme in front of the Sir Duncan Rice Library serves as a focal point for Meston and Fraser Noble Buildings as well, drawing these somewhat architecturally disparate buildings together creating a coherent sense of place in this character area.

The diverse orientation and building lines can be seen in the development of student halls of residence set in grounds to the west of College Bounds. Some of the earlier modern campus buildings such as Crombie Hall and Johnston Hall were set out within informal woodland. Subsequent developments have eroded these original settings, resulting in an overall incoherence that makes legibility and way finding difficult. To the east of the High Street, there is a similar road layout as in the west, with Dunbar Street running through the site and turning into

Urban form for Character Area C : Modern University Campus



## Townscape analysis for Character Area C : Modern University Campus



Regent Walk. These roads are medieval in origin forming the eastern and western boundaries of the ancient burgh. Again, there is no consistent build line and a mixture of building orientation.

There are also a variety of building heights throughout the campus as some are very tall, notably the Sir Duncan Rice Library, Zoology Building and MacRobert Building and others are not. This creates a diversity and hierarchy of building form. One characteristic that they all have is that they are all large and bulky buildings with no uniformity to size or scale.

Large, tall or bulky buildings are generally restricted to the outer edges of the Conservation Area, reducing the impact on the historic core of the High Street.

### 3.2.4 Uses

Within this character area there are many different academic and residential buildings. Most of these buildings have been in the same use since they were originally built on greenfield land during the University of Aberdeen's post war expansion.

### 3.2.5 Negative factors

- The orientation of the MacRobert Building. By addressing King Street, it feels quite separate and isolated from the other buildings on the campus;
- Some buildings are looking tired in the main campus area eg Johnston Hall

### C 3.3 Public realm

#### 3.3.1 Views/vistas/glimpses

The large buildings within the character area do not allow for many views outside of it. The view to the north of the Sir Duncan Rice Library towards the Zoology Building is important as it helps with orientation and navigation. It is unfortunate that there is no view of this particular building anywhere else in the campus to aid direction. This makes the building feel quite remote and isolated.

Views within the character area are significant. The most important view is to the east of the new square as this gives a clear indication of where three important academic buildings (Meston Building, Sir Duncan Rice Library and Fraser Noble Building) are situated.

There are narrow glimpses to and from the High Street down the medieval closes. Some enhance the area, inviting exploration such as the view of the library down Thom's Place, whilst others terminate in an uninspiring view such as the Geography Department down Church Walk.

#### 3.3.2 Roads

There are two main distributor roads. To the west is Elphinstone Road, starting from St. Machar Drive, running into Meston Walk and exiting onto Bedford Road. To the east is Dunbar Street, also starting from St. Machar Drive, running into Regent Walk and terminating at King Street. Both these roads are historically important as Elphinstone Road (historically called the “West

Back Gate”) and Dunbar Street (historically the “East Back Gate”) formed the west and east boundaries of the medieval burgh. The roads once enclosed the backs of the burgh plots where inhabitants each had their own crofts and land.

Vehicular movement is permitted on the following roads within the character area

- Elphinstone Road (one way)
- Meston Walk (one way westbound between Elphinstone Road and Bedford Road and one way eastbound between Meston Walk and High Street)
- St Machar Drive
- Dunbar Street
- Regent Walk
- Tillydrone Avenue

There are a number of car parks within the character area. To the east these are located beside the Edward Wright Annexe, the MacRobert Building and adjacent to the Taylor Building on Dunbar Street. To the west there is car parking available adjacent to the Sir Duncan Rice Library with access from Bedford Road.

The Number 20 bus uses Elphinstone Road and Meston Walk. The expansive, formal hard landscaping in front of the library serves as an important local transport interchange. It has car and bus access at its edges and is the intersection of a number of key pedestrian routes accessing university buildings and contains cycle parking.



Top: Signage within the University Campus  
Bottom: Modern cycle shelters

### 3.3.3 Pavements

Modern paving has been used in the new open space outside the Sir Duncan Rice Library. Pavements on Elphinstone Road and Dunbar Street can be quite narrow, some with slabs that can make access quite difficult. Disabled access across the campus is also impeded by the use of steps on paths in between university buildings, notably to the east of the campus.

### 3.3.4 Street trees

To the west, Elphinstone Road has many street trees adjacent to Meston Building. Trees have also been planted on the new landscaped space outside the Sir Duncan Rice Library. To the east, there are a few trees adjacent to the Taylor Building on Dunbar Street and some adjacent to the University Office on Regent Walk.

### 3.3.5 Signage

There is signage around the character area in the form of finger posts to help guide the way around campus. There are also examples of old and new signage of variable quality in the character area. There is an abundance of institutional signage to identify buildings located in the campus.

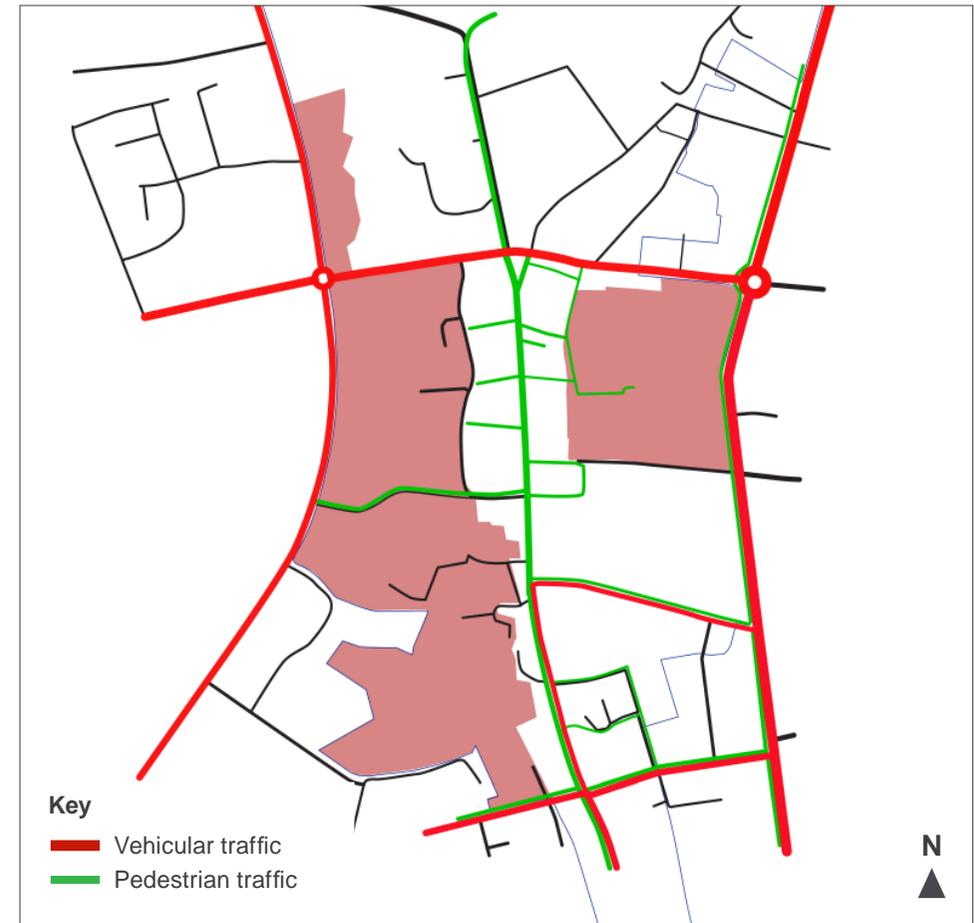
### 3.3.6 Street furniture

There are different forms of street furniture around the campus. The new square to the west of the campus has seats outside. There are also benches to the east of the campus within the institutional grounds that surround the Edward Wright Building. Modern bike shelters have recently been located in numerous locations across the campus. Lighting is of variable quality and design.

### 3.3.7 Negative factors

- Wayfinding and navigation from one building to another is poor, especially to the east of the historic spine.
- Accessibility across the campus lacks coherence. Physical access is hindered in places by the choice of materials used for paths and pavements as well as the use of steps.

Activity and movement through Character Area C :  
Modern University Campus



### C 3.4 Natural environment

#### 3.4.1 Open spaces

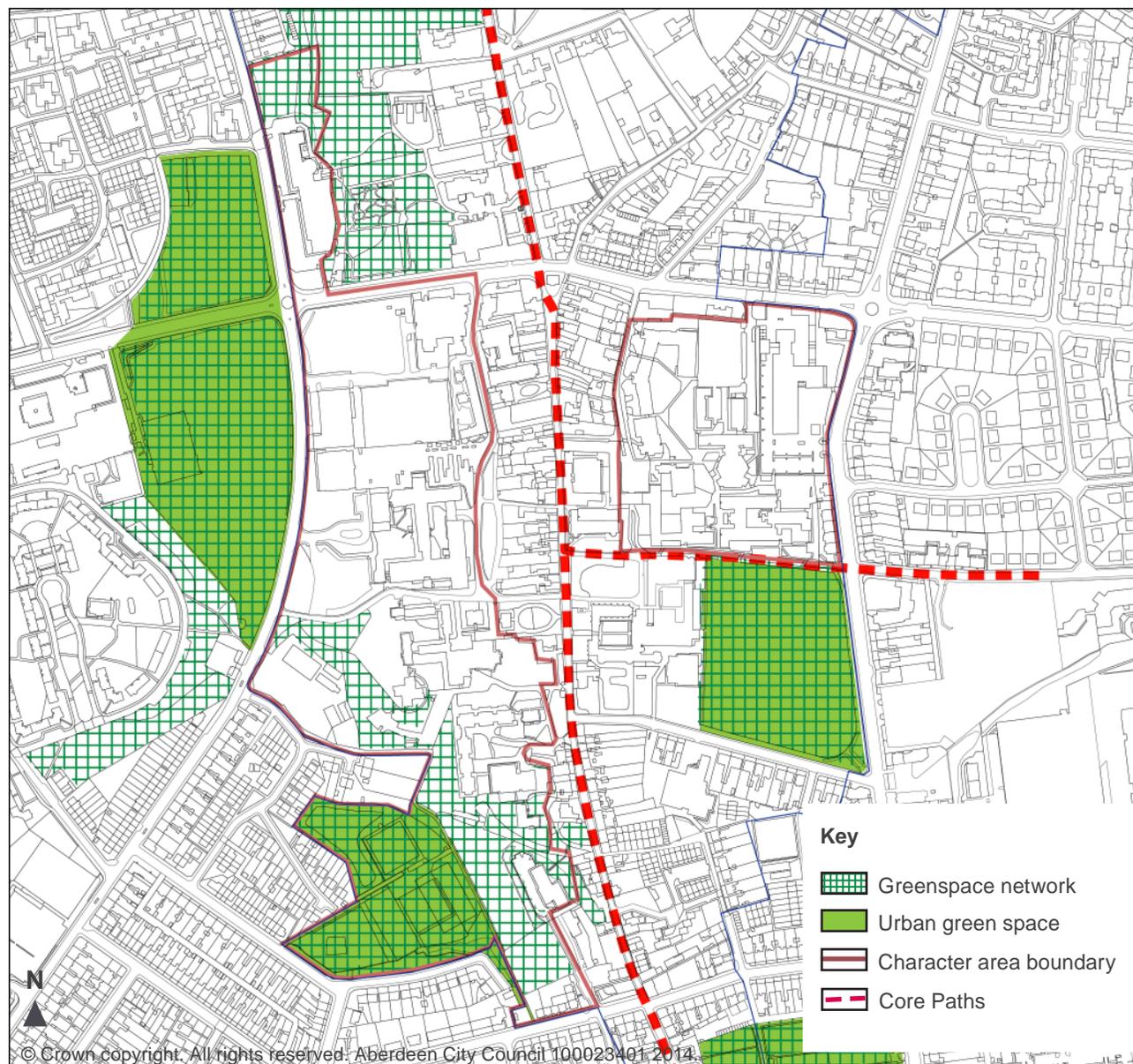
To the west of campus there are many pockets of open space – predominantly residential amenity or institutional grounds. To the east there are fewer pockets of open space, which are predominantly institutional grounds such as the playing fields in front of the sports pavilion.

#### 3.4.2 Trees and parks

There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in this character area, however there are many mature trees. The mature trees surrounding Crombie and Johnston Halls help to maintain a residential feel. The other trees and amenity planting throughout the character area help soften the harsh concrete buildings located within the campus. Conservation area designation gives protection to all trees whether covered by a TPO or not.

Sunnybank Park, to the west of Firhill Road has a path that is clearly marked on 1828 map by John Wood, as is Firhill Well. The Park adds much to the contemporary character of the Conservation Area, providing valuable public open space, as well as being of historic importance in its own right.

Natural heritage map for Character Area C : Modern University Campus



### 3.4.3 Negative factors

Currently there is a lack of usable open space to the east, which is seen as a negative factor. This is likely to improve once the Edward Wright Annexe is removed and the landscaping restored. There are many wooden benches that circle round mature trees in the amenity open space to the east of the campus, however these do not seem to be regularly used.

### C 3.5 Key Characteristics

The following key features characterise Character Area C: Modern University Campus, of the Conservation Area:

General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong presence of mid 20th century to 21st century University buildings</li><li>• Big and/or bulky buildings</li><li>• Mature trees</li><li>• Amenity planting adjacent to buildings</li><li>• University signage</li></ul>



Firhill Well, Sunnybank Park



The Ronald Scott-Brown Quadrangle



Amenity space, east side

Plan of Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill

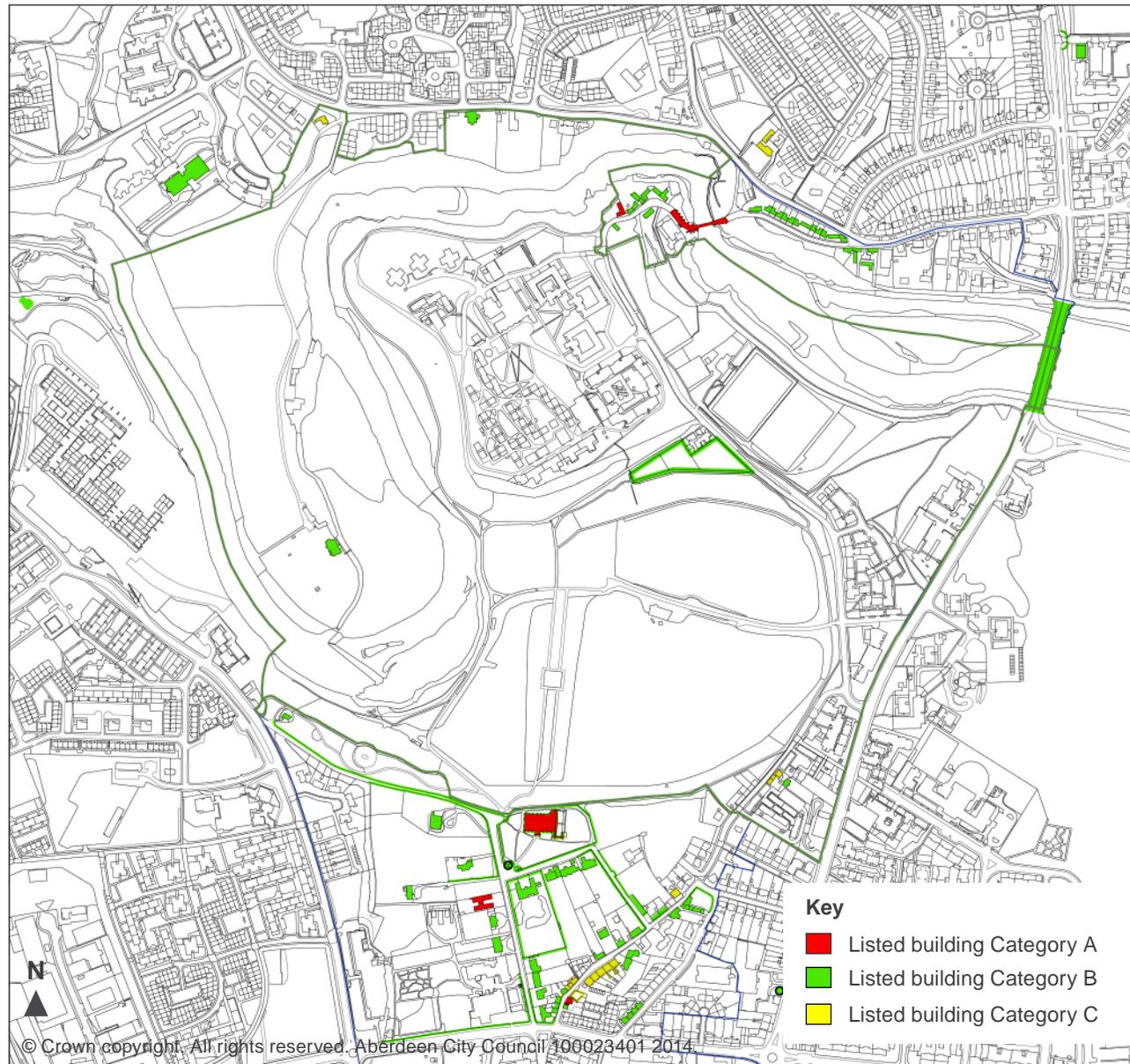


### Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/ Kettock's Mill

#### D 3.1 Setting

Owing to the river setting of this character area there are some sudden changes in topography. To the north from The Chanonry there is a steep decline into Seaton Park. Seaton Park is relatively flat with a steep incline to Hillhead Halls of Residence, which is on a plateau. The topography takes a steep drop northwards towards the river bank. Views are very important from this character area, especially within Seaton Park and looking into Seaton Park from Don Street. Seaton Park acts as a significant thoroughfare from the University of Aberdeen campus to Hillhead Halls of Residence that students regularly use.

Listed buildings in Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill



### D 3.2 Built environment

#### 3.2.1 Typical building forms and features

The majority of development within this character area dates from the 1960s onwards, much of it related to student accommodation. There is a diversity of architectural design and materials with no characteristic decorative or artistic elements.

By far the largest development is the University owned Hillhead Halls of Residence complex that has nine different residential halls and ancillary facilities. It is located in a woodland setting north of Seaton Park, a 20 minute walk from the University of Aberdeen campus. The various halls date from the 1960s onwards with Adam Smith House, Wavell House and Fyfe House being the oldest halls and New Carnegie Court the newest residential addition to Hillhead. This complex is significant in that it was developed in response to the massive post war expansion of University of Aberdeen. Hillhead residences have been refurbished and upgraded.

Several of the buildings in Kettocks Mill date from the 18th or early 19th century and are rural in character. Kettocks Mill itself was a barley and later a corn mill on the River Don.

The tennis courts and other sports facilities on Don Street, across from Hillhead, are still in use, but there are plans to up grade the facilities in the coming years.

There have been a number of private residential developments in the late 20th century that range from the small, discrete 1984 complex beside the walled garden in Seaton Park to the larger developments of 100 flats and cottages at Lord Hay's Grove and Lord Hay's Road (1995) and 33 flats and 8 town houses at Sir William Wallace Wynd (2002).

Several residential complexes on Don Street were constructed in the 1990s. The layout of the Sir William Wallace Wynd development addresses a central car parking area rather than Don Street, which is a lost opportunity to create a living street frontage.

There are three storey residential buildings fronting onto King Street that display mixed residential formats. 681 King Street is a traditional detached granite property with a large, private front garden with mature trees and a granite boundary wall.



Top: Fyfe House  
Bottom: Burnett House

Top: Hector Boece Court  
Bottom: New Carnegie Court



Top: 8-9 Seaton Stables  
Bottom: Lord Hay's Grove



Top: 55-61 Lord Hay's Grove [frontage]  
Bottom: Sir William Wallace Wynd

Four modern townhouses, harled with a cladding finish, are located on Seaton Place together with a traditional tenement constructed of granite with a slate roof.

There are a number of non-residential buildings within the character area including the University of Aberdeen Sports Centre, the Territorial Army Building, a supermarket, pub and petrol station. These are all modern buildings and situated along King Street and Don Street.

### 3.2.2 Materials

In Hillhead most buildings are concrete block work, however the modern halls, and those that have been recently renovated, are rendered. Many late 20th and early 21st century developments are harled and boundary walls are usually of granite, which gives the overall area a greater coherence, as does the use of slate and pantile roofs. Several King Street and Seaton Place properties are of traditional granite construction whilst some are granite clad.

### 3.2.3 Orientation/ building lines/ heights

In Hillhead, all buildings are oriented to face inwards to a central focal area that enhances a sense of community. There is more consistency here regarding orientation, building heights and scales. Elsewhere in the character area, there is a mixture of orientation as Don Street has some dwellings that front onto the street and others with their back to the street. A number of developments along Don Street face away from the road and into a central residents car park in the centre, which creates a separation. There are no tall buildings within the character area.

### 3.2.4 Uses

Within this character area buildings are mostly used as residential, specifically student accommodation. There are some exceptions however such as the Sports Centre and Territorial Army building on Don Street and the pub and supermarket that face onto King Street.

### 3.2.5 Negative factors

- Piecemeal development resulting in little relationship between groups of buildings. This is exacerbated by individual car parks for each development.
- Individual developments turn their back on other developments and often do not address the street.

Urban form for Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill





Top: St Machar Cathedral from Seaton Park  
 Bottom: Park views to Tillydrone



Top: Seaton Park formal gardens  
 Bottom: Seaton Park view to east

### D 3.3 Public realm

#### 3.3.1 Views/vistas/glimpses

Seaton Park and the riverside boast a number of spectacular views across to St Machar's Cathedral. The most impressive views of the Cathedral can be seen from the park, looking south through the formal gardens and looking west from Don Street through the park.

There are also a number of important views out of the character area such as the view of the tower blocks on King Street from Don Street, views across to Tillydrone and north of the River Don from Seaton Park.

#### 3.3.2 Roads

Don Street is the primary historic road in the character area and is evident on James Gordon's 17th century map as the major route to the River Don. The line of King Street is clearly evident on Wood's 1828 map although the bridge was not completed until 1830. There are two access roads into Hillhead that come off Don Street; one for cars and the bus and the other for service deliveries. Vehicular access is allowed on all other roads located within the character area.

An on-road cycle path is located on Don Street northbound between the Territorial Army Building and Hillhead Halls. Also, the number 20 bus uses this section of Don Street.

### 3.3.3 Pavements

Modern paving has been used in the new open space created in the middle of New Carnegie Court in Hillhead Halls of Residence. Pavements are generally a suitable width throughout the character area with suitable materials such as paving stones and Tarmac. There is generally a good use of drop kerbs to make the area more accessible for all.

Further pedestrian routes exist through Seaton Park, including Core Path 6, which follows the line of the River Don and Core Path 21, which runs in a north eastwards direction.

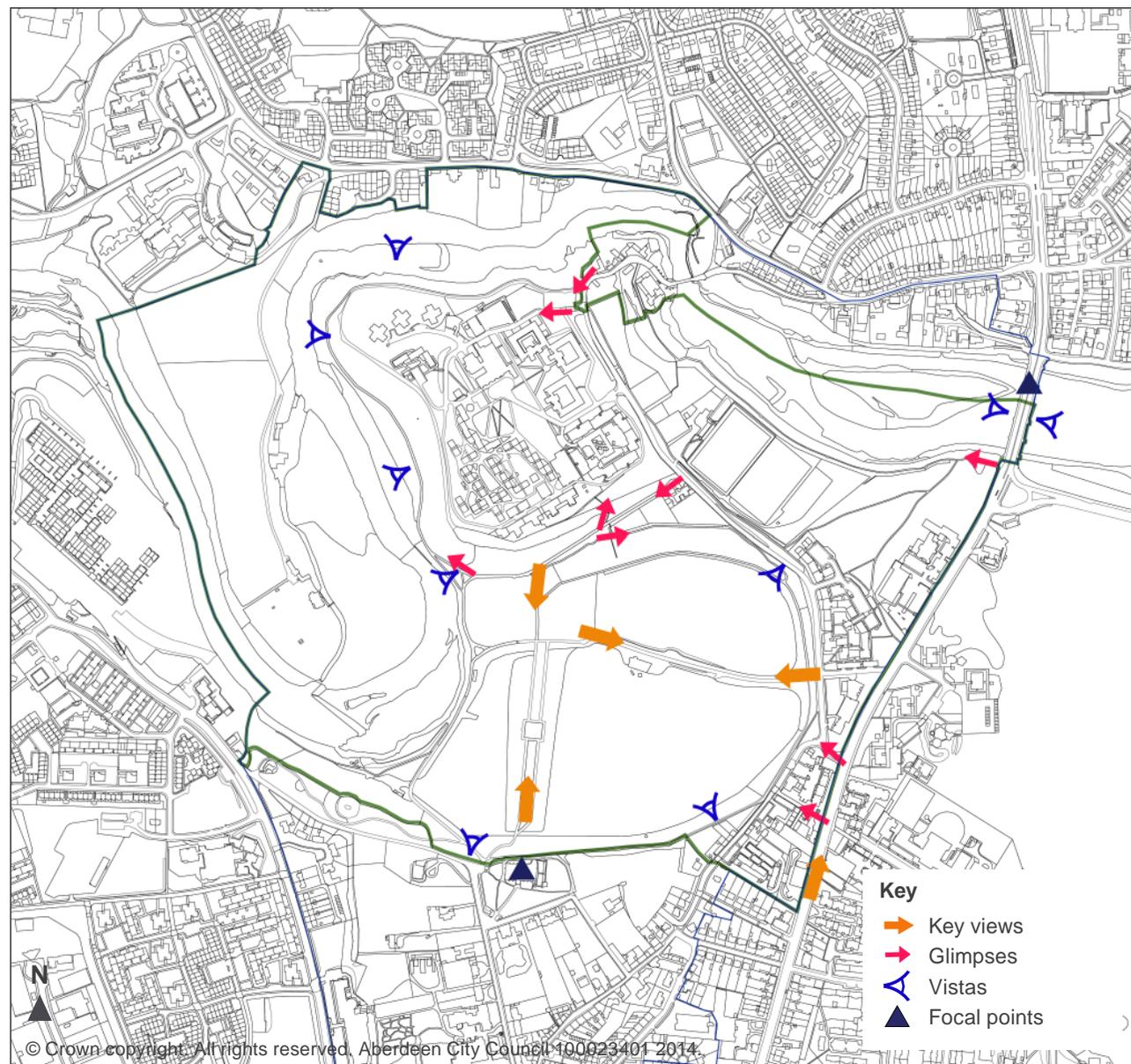
### 3.3.4 Street trees

Most trees in this character area are located within open space, however there are some mature trees that line the east side of Don Street.

### 3.3.5 Signage

There is a mixture of traditional and modern street signage within the character area. There is also some signage within Seaton Park however this is focused more on longer distance routes than accessing areas within the park. University of Aberdeen signage is also found within the character area; examples can be found in Hillhead and at the Sports Centre.

Townscape analysis for Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill



### 3.3.6 Street furniture

There are different forms of street furniture throughout the character area. The new open space created in the middle of New Carnegie Court has different lights to the rest of Hillhead Halls of Residence. Lighting is again different along Don Street and within the Sir William Wallace Wynd development. There is little street furniture within the character area.

### 3.3.7 Negative factors

- There are no pavements along Seaton Place and much of the west side of Don Street. Pedestrians on Don Street must walk up and down a very steep path to the east side of the street.
- Some poor signage within the character area, specifically on the student accommodation blocks located on Don Street.
- Poor quality advertisement banners, many of which appear to have been designed for only temporary use.



Local store, Hillhead

Activity and movement through Character Area D :  
Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill



### D 3.4 Natural environment

#### 3.4.1 Open spaces

The River Don flows through this character area, which has high landscape and wildlife significance given its proximity to Aberdeen. The wooded nature of the riverside area gives it a secluded, rural quality. The river is also used for canoeing, fishing, walking and informal recreation.

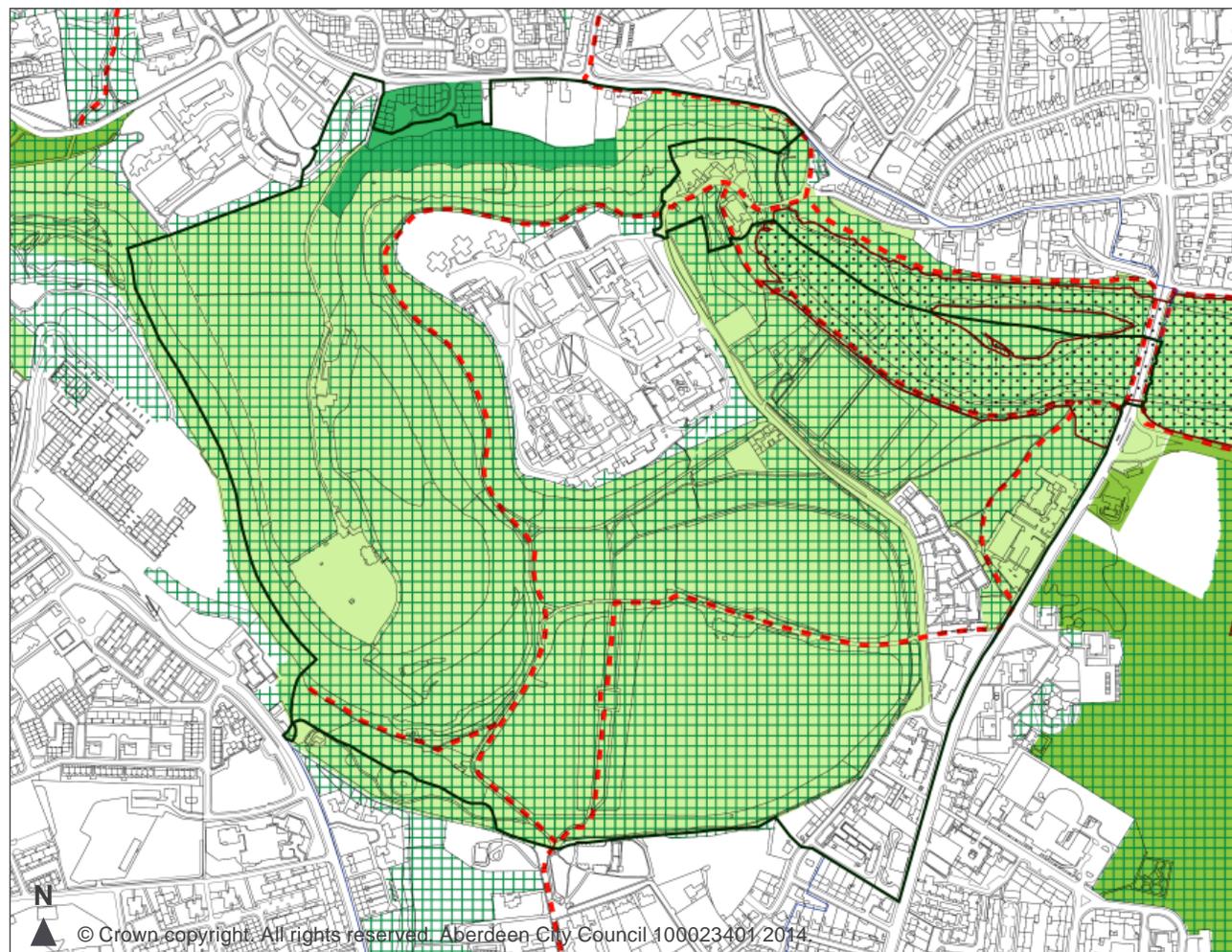
The most significant formal open space within this character area is Seaton Park. There are also other pieces of predominantly residential amenity land.

As previously mentioned, there are also two Core Paths that run through the character area, specifically in Seaton Park. - Core Path 21 River Don to City Centre and Core Path 6 River Don Path (Dyce to Bridge of Don).

#### 3.4.2 Trees and parks

Covering 27 hectares, Seaton Park is one of the largest public parks within the City and was bought by Aberdeen Town Council from the Hay family using monies from The Common Good Fund for use as a public park in 1947. Seaton House was built here in the mid 17th century by the Hay family who significantly extended it to a design by James Gibb in 1728. The house ceased to be occupied after 1957 and in 1963 it was burnt down by vandals and subsequently demolished. The boundary walls of the estate and the walled garden remain.

Natural heritage map for Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettonk's Mill



**Key**

- Urban Green Space
- Greenspace Network
- Greenbelt

- TPO areas
- Local Nature Conservation Sites
- Core Paths

- Conservation Area boundary
- Character Area D boundary



Aerial View of Character Area D showing extensive woodland.

The park has a dedicated community group, the Friends of Seaton Park. There is an abundance of trees throughout the park, predominantly around the park walls, along the paths and along the river. Many of these trees help screen views of Hillhead Halls from the park. One of the park's key features is its boundary wall, which is mostly in granite and in places built of Seaton brick.

There is considerable woodland on both banks of the River Don which enhances the secluded and rural quality of this area. Many trees are self seeded Sycamores.

#### 3.4.3 Negative factors

- In recent years flooding has become an issue on the eastern side of Seaton Park where the land is at its lowest. It has become quite common for large masses of water to accumulate, particularly in winter and during wet weather. The ground is now damp and boggy throughout the year.
- Footpath condition along the River Don is poor in places due to drainage problems.
- Lack of maintenance and facilities within Seaton Park. There is one public toilet located adjacent to the car park in the east of the park and the one near the River Don that has been closed for some time now. Planning permission has recently been granted for a change of use to this unit from public toilets to a Council office.



Top: Flooding issues in Seaton Park  
Bottom: Drainage issues on some footpaths

Top: Poor facilities in Seaton Park  
Bottom: Poor path maintenance in Seaton Park

### D 3.5 Key characteristics

The following key features characterise Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/ Kettock's Mill:

General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hillhead student accommodation complex in woodland setting, owned by the University of Aberdeen</li><li>• Purpose built private student accommodation</li><li>• Flatted developments</li><li>• Seaton Park</li><li>• Mature trees and woodlands</li><li>• River Don and riverside paths</li><li>• Wildlife habitats</li><li>• Boundary walls especially those around Seaton Park that include exceptional stretches of Seaton Brick walls</li><li>• King Street leading to Bridge of Don</li></ul>

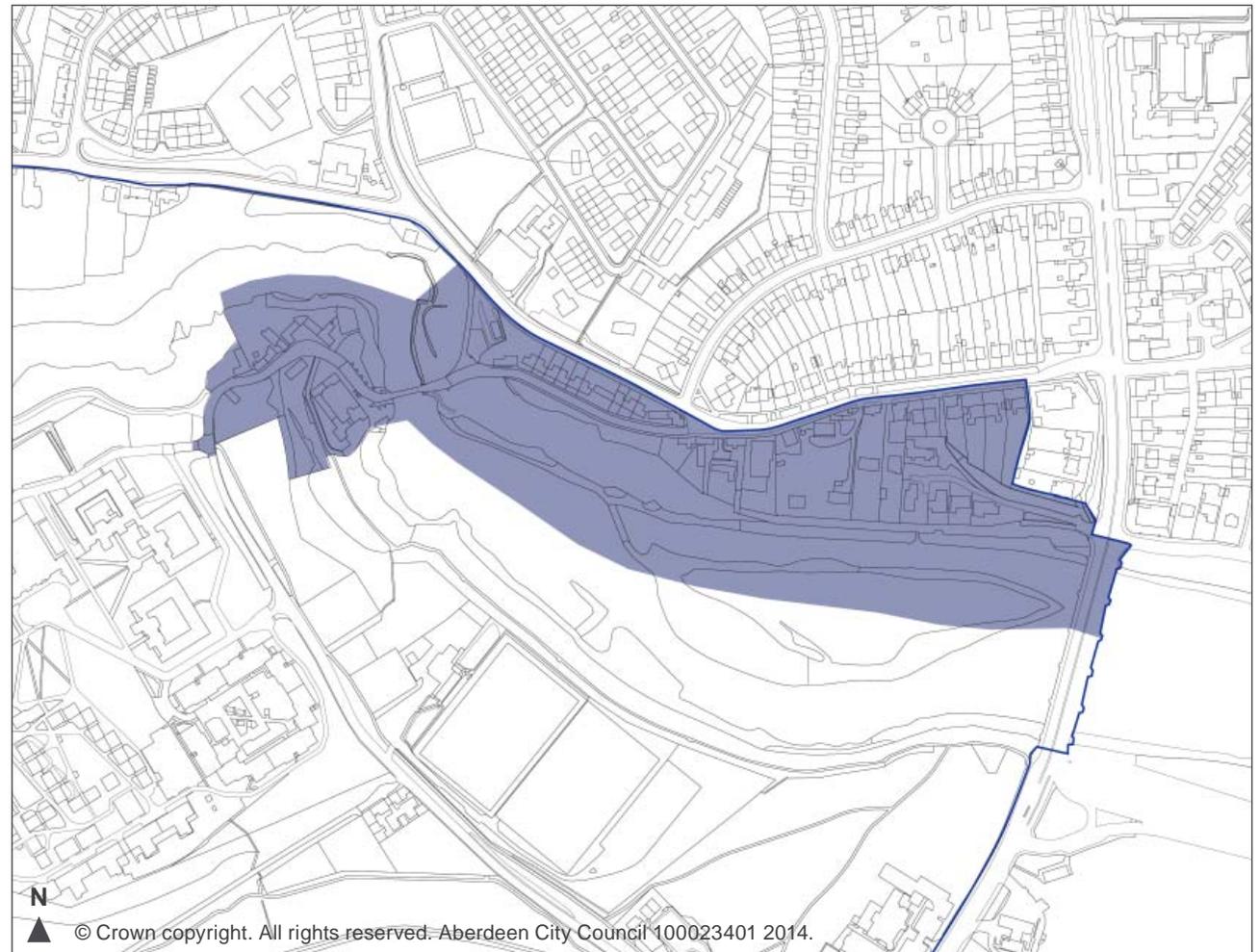
## Character Area E : Balgownie

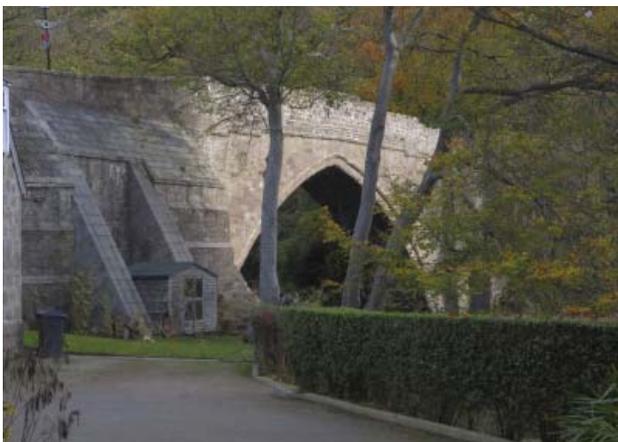
### E 3.1 Setting

Approaching the Brig o' Balgownie from the north and south, Don Street and Cottown of Balgownie twist and turn through a series of sharp bends, carefully planned to make the bridge more difficult to take by cavalry charge in times of war. The dense woodland setting is another defining feature of the character area. The village nestles, hidden beneath the tree line, on the steep wooded banks of the Don which provide a dramatic landscape setting for the bridge itself. The 14th century category A listed Brig o' Balgownie is a single pointed arch, characteristic of Gothic architecture, which spans a deep, dark pool known as the Black Neuk that features in Byron's poem, Don Juan.

The collection of houses clustered around the historic Donbank Mill buildings are highly visible when travelling north across the Bridge of Don. The Mill would originally have been accessed by a track running along the high water mark, and the houses now address the river. When viewed from the Bridge of Don, the houses are seen to step up the gently sloping riverbank towards Balgownie Road

Character Area E : Balgownie





Top: Brig o' Balgownie  
Bottom: View down Don Street

Top: Corbie-step (crow-stepped) gable, Balgownie Hall Cottage, Don Street  
Bottom: Donbank House, Balgownie Road

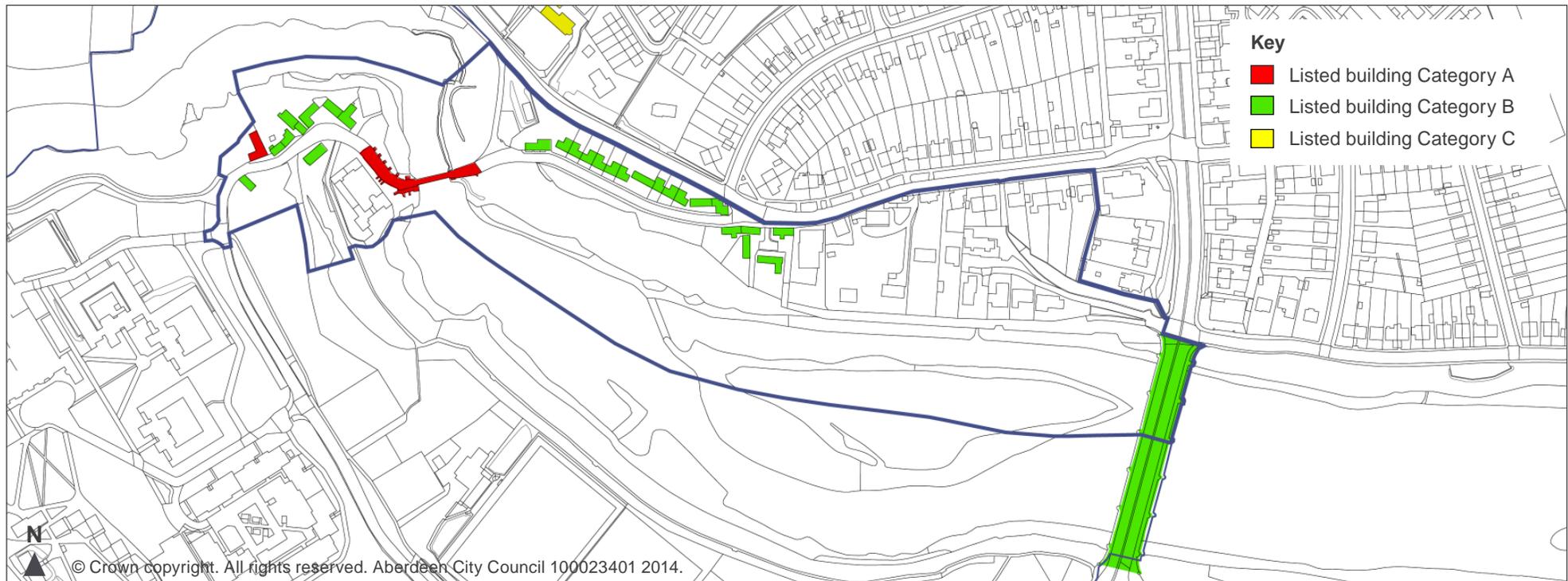
## E 3.2 Built environment

### 3.2.1 Typical building forms and features

**Brig o' Balgownie:** Throughout its history, the bridge has been considered an important asset. For five centuries possession of the bridge was the only way to move large armies quickly along the eastern coast of Aberdeenshire. It also provided a trade route to the wealthy areas of the north-east of Scotland. The bridge dates from 1314-18 and was built by Richard Cementarius, the King's Master Mason and first Provost of Aberdeen. It was extensively renovated in the early 17th century. Constructed of granite and sandstone, the bridge consists of a single gothic arch that spans over 12 metres. At low tide the apex of the arch lies over 17 metres above the water-line.

**Don Street:** Balgownie is characterised by a lack of uniformity or repetition in its building forms. This is a result of its organic growth and evolution over hundred of years. The buildings on Don Street and Cottown of Balgownie are all important examples of 16th-19th century vernacular architecture. On Don Street, the buildings are relatively modest, compact and low-rise, each between one and two-and-a-half storeys. They are all flat-fronted and have pitched roofs of a broadly equal angle, some of which are dormered (most likely the result of later alterations). Although there is no polite ornamental detailing, interesting decorative features include crow-stepped gabling on Balgownie Hall Cottage (common in rural Scotland but unusual in Aberdeen), sandstone window encasements on

Listed buildings in Character Area E : Balgownie



The Chapter House, also known as Cruickshank's Lodgings, and finely detailed cherry-caulking on Brig End.

**Cottown of Balgownie:** This one-storey terrace of 18th century workers' cottages displays rhythm and consistency along the entire terrace. There is a single building line per terrace, and each cottage is flat fronted, with central front entrances and two symmetrical 12-pane sash-and-case windows. The unbroken roof line is punctuated by brick chimneys - the combination of brick and

stone within a single building is an important characteristic which is distinctive to Old Aberdeen. The front gardens are bounded by a low granite wall, with a central opening leading directly to the front door. Most of these cottages now have substantial flat-roof extensions to the rear.

**Donbank:** The 20th century development around the historic Donbank House and Mill is largely modern, suburban family housing. Most have been built individually over time, as garden grounds have gradually been split. This has

resulted in great variation in forms and features, but the majority are detached one or two storey homes. Many have also been substantially altered over time.

### 3.2.2 Materials

The predominant building material in Balgownie is granite. The buildings range from harled rubble to ashlar, reflecting a progression in construction methods over 200 years. This variation helps to define the character and historic interest of



the area. The category A listed Cruickshank's Lodgings (1655) is built from the stones of the medieval Clatt Manse, which formerly stood on the Chanonry.

Most of the buildings have painted timber-frame windows and doors although some have been replaced with uPVC. Where present, boundary treatments are either granite/stone or painted timber. The roof material is typically grey slate. However, the cottages on Cottown of Balgownie are distinguished by the use of terracotta pantiles, with grey slate for the bottom two courses. This attractive detail is repeated across the whole group.

The suburban housing around Donbank makes wider use of a range of contemporary materials. The majority are finished in a light-coloured render, with dark timber/uPVC window and door frames and guttering. These similar materials, along with the regular stepping up from the riverbank, give the houses an element of coherence as a group when viewed from a distance.



Top: Cottown of Balgownie  
Bottom: Mill Cottages, Balgownie Road

### 3.2.3 Orientation/ building lines/ heights

Although it may appear disorderly and random, the layout of Balgownie has evolved in response to the course of the main thoroughfare, which was carefully planned so as to protect the Brig in times of war. The orientation of the buildings on Don Street are often sharply juxtaposed, revolving with the angles of the road. As such, each building bears a different relationship to its plot and there is no clear demarcation between plots. In contrast, the cottages on Cottown of Balgownie are of a uniform size and orientation, with a single straight building line fronting the road and an unbroken roof line which is very important for binding the group together visually. The terraces are set back with richly planted front gardens.

The housing at Donbank does not address a single street, although each house is broadly oriented to the river. The houses are accessed by a number of narrow driveways which permeate the group. The overall pattern of development is somewhat random- different sized plots, reflect incremental development on what was once garden ground and the curtilage of the Mill.

### 3.2.4 Uses

The houses on Don Street and the green riverbank corridors are designated as Green Belt in the Local Development Plan. The rest of the character area is zoned as residential and there are no "Opportunity Sites" identified. Today, Balgownie is almost exclusively in residential use, with the exception of the Royal British Legion

## Urban form for Character Area E : Balgownie



hall on Balgownie Road. Over the centuries, there has been a much greater mix of uses in the area including a mill, local store, village hall, commercial salmon fishing station and an alehouse. These are a testament to the village's history as an important and distinct settlement in its own right. All of these uses were converted to residential many years ago. The public spaces and footpaths of the area are well-used for recreation. The Brig in particular is an important tourist attraction for the whole of Aberdeen.

### 3.2.5 Negative factors

- Development pressure for the Cottown of Balgownie communal gardens, for car parking (one example already)
- Cars parked on street on narrow Don Street detracts from the streetscape and ambience of the settlement
- Some examples of inappropriate extensions, window and door alterations/replacements.



Top: Brig o' Balgownie  
 Bottom: Parking in Cottown of Balgownie

### E 3.3 Public realm

#### 3.3.1 Views/vistas/glimpses

The winding roads in Balgownie create a series of deflected views as the road twists and turns. These views intrigue and entice, and create a feeling of discovery when visiting the village for the first time. The famous view of the Brig o' Balgownie from the lower banks of the Don is one of the most recognisable and important in Aberdeen, but is being obscured by self-seeded tree growth and a lack of tree management. Looking east from the Brig o' Balgownie to the sea, no development breaks the tree line which helps to contribute to the isolated and peaceful character of the village. Other important views within, into and from the area are marked on the map.

#### 3.3.2 Roads

The central thoroughfare through Balgownie is the northernmost section of the historic 'Spine' which runs through the Heart of Old Aberdeen. This was the principal medieval route north until the construction of King Street. The narrow bridge is now closed to through vehicular traffic, but is used by pedestrians and cyclists. In general, the roads are extremely quiet, with only sporadic pedestrian traffic. There is no off-street parking in the main part of the village and many residents park their cars on the street. The Donbank Mill houses all have private off-street car parking, interspersed between the houses.

Most of the roads in the character area are now surfaced with asphalt, which is generally in good condition, and setted gutters are still exposed on Don Street and Cottown of Balgownie. For a short section of Don Street and the bridge itself, the original granite setts remain and are in good condition.

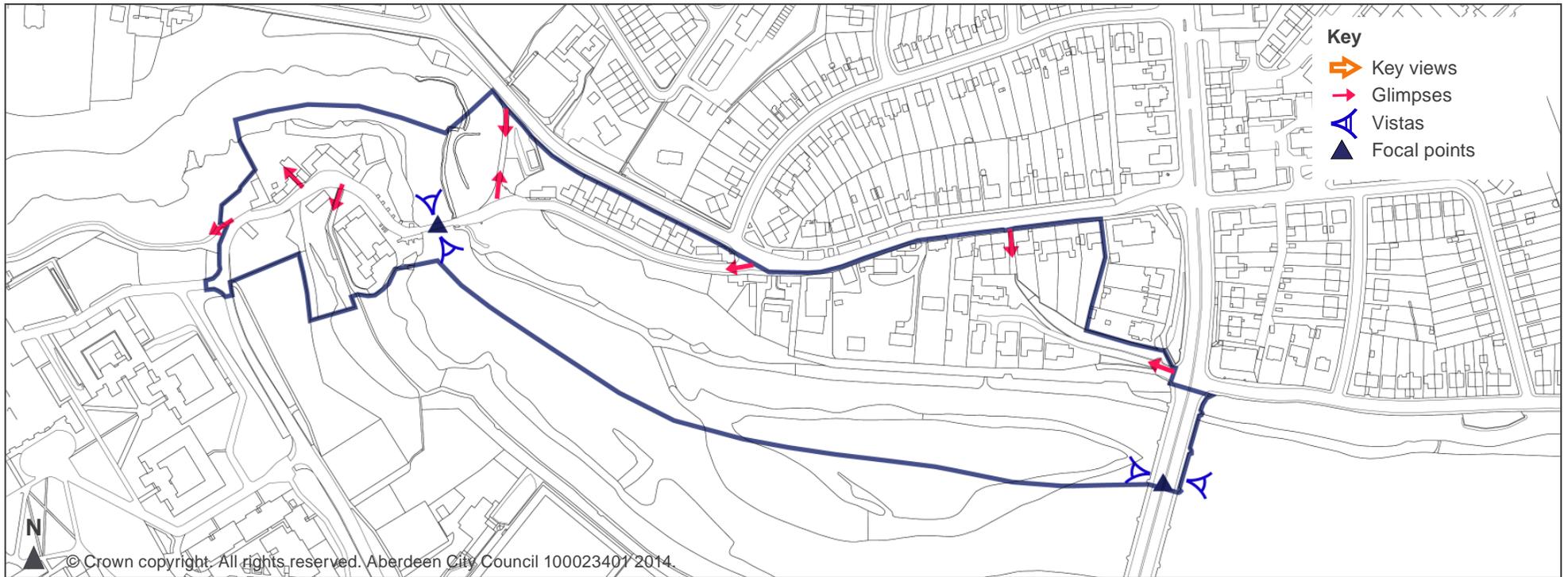
#### 3.3.3 Pavements

Not every section of the area has pedestrian pavements; they are little needed on Don Street given that there is no through traffic. Where pavements exist they are generally in good condition. For a small section of the western side of Don Street, the pavements are granite slabs, in various shades of grey, with granite kerbs. Additional pedestrian routes exist over the bridge and to the north of the Don, via Core Path 13, linking to King Street and Balgownie Road.

#### 3.3.4 Street trees

There are no publicly planted street trees in the area, although mature trees in private garden ground and along the river bank all contribute to a green public realm and woodland setting. The majority of the trees are deciduous with a large proportion of sycamores.

Townscape analysis for Character Area E : Balgownie



Left: Self-seeded trees obscure views of the bridge  
 Right: Netherdon, The Studios



## Activity and movement through Character Area E : Balgownie



## Key

- vehicular traffic
- pedestrian traffic

## 3.3.5 Signage

There is relatively little public or private signage within the area and what does exist is generally appropriate and unobtrusive. Street signs are generally in a traditional Aberdeen black and white style. Some have the distinctive tiled lettering that can be seen throughout Aberdeen.

## 3.3.6 Street furniture

The age, style and condition of street furniture is mixed. For the most part, it is minimal and utilitarian. Although it is clearly modern, most is broadly in-keeping with a 'heritage' style. The traditional black streetlamps make a positive contribution to the historic feel of the area. Although some are in a poor state of repair, those on Cottown of Balgownie are particularly well maintained with attractive hanging baskets. The footpath on the southbank of the river has regular benches, however these are poorly maintained and are located in a shaded area. Their views of the river are obscured almost completely by self-seeded woodland.

## 3.3.7 Negative factors

- Historic cobbles and setts on roads and pavements removed or concealed by modern road surfacing
- Some street lighting in poor condition, with broken glass, peeling paintwork etc.

### E 3.4 Natural environment

#### 3.4.1 Open spaces

The Council's 2014 Open Space Audit shows that Balgownie has a significant amount of open space of fair-to-good quality. This is mostly in the form of woodland and the natural 'buffer strip' or green corridor along the river bank as well as the open water of the river itself. These

provide ample opportunity for recreation along the wooded riverbank footpaths. The footpaths are, however, heavily shaded and can be muddy, meaning their use is limited for many.

#### 3.4.2 Trees and parks

There are no formally laid out public parks within Balgownie. Private front gardens and planting make a significant positive contribution to the character area. Of particular importance are the richly planted, mature communal gardens on the southern side of Cottown of Balgownie, which

Natural heritage map for Character Area E : Balgownie



are enclosed by a low wooden fence. The vast majority of these gardens remain intact although a small section has been lost to form a private car-parking space.

### 3.4.3 Negative factors

- Garden ground on Cottown of Balgownie has already been lost to car parking.
- Tree management issues on the banks of the Don, where self-seeded sycamores obscure famous views of the Brig, creating shaded and damp footpaths.

## E 3.5 Key Characteristics

The following key features characterise character area E, Balgownie,:

General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steep, wooded riverbank setting</li><li>• Low-rise, 18th &amp; 19th century stone cottages</li><li>• Famous views of the River Don and Brig o' Balgownie</li><li>• Brig o' Balgownie</li></ul>



Steep wooded riverbanks,



Original salmon house and bridge



Cottown of Balgownie

## 4 Management

In addition please see Section 2 Conservation Areas Management Plan (<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=51256&slD=8453>) for all general guidance relating to the management of Conservation Areas. Section U contains specific advice relating only to Old Aberdeen Conservation Area. For the sake of clarity this is set out in 4.2 of this section.

The majority of listed buildings in the Conservation Area were designated in 1967. Historic Environment Scotland has indicated its willingness to review them in the future.

### 4.1 SWOT analysis

The following SWOT analysis draws together the various characteristics of the Conservation Area by character area. It provides a basis from which to develop strategies to conserve all that is positive, identify opportunities to enhance it, and address the negative issues.

#### Character Area A : Spital

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of buildings and features of historical interest.</li> <li>Significant number of dominant and historic boundary walls remaining.</li> <li>Mature trees.</li> <li>Enclosed, well wooded and planted front gardens on King's Crescent.</li> <li>Early use of concrete (1875) as a building material in the terrace at 17-21 King's Crescent and 1 Jute Street.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor condition of St Margaret's Convent and Chapel on the national Buildings at Risk Register.</li> <li>Inappropriate extensions, alterations and replacements of original materials and features.</li> <li>Derelict St Peter's Nursery.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to pavements - surfaces and width.</li> <li>Consolidation of road signage and street furniture.</li> <li>Restoration of St Margaret's Convent and Chapel.</li> <li>Redevelopment of St Peter's Nursery site.</li> <li>Restoration and repair of boundary walls, railings and gates.</li> <li>Improvement of road surfacing, including removal of unnecessary markings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of maintenance to buildings, boundary walls and railings.</li> <li>Continued decay of St Margaret's Convent and St Peter's Nursery.</li> </ul>

**Character Area B : Old Aberdeen Heart**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medieval burgh plots and the street pattern of the old burgh are still clearly evident.</li> <li>• Distinctive character and separate identity.</li> <li>• Well conserved 18th and 19th century buildings, many of them listed. Some retain a gable end on orientation to the road.</li> <li>• Strong vernacular quality.</li> <li>• Outstanding iconic buildings – King’s College, St Machar’s Cathedral and the Town House in particular.</li> <li>• Setting of King’s College including playing fields to east.</li> <li>• Significant groupings of listed buildings.</li> <li>• 96 and 81 High Street, 9 The Chanonry and 20-22 Don Street (category A listed).</li> <li>• Good stewardship of significant historic buildings by the University of Aberdeen.</li> <li>• Historic boundary walls especially in The Chanonry area.</li> <li>• Abundance of trees and open space providing a green and tranquil setting and a haven for wildlife.</li> <li>• Cruickshank Botanic Garden.</li> <li>• Historic street pattern still very much in evidence.</li> <li>• Mote dating from at least 2nd century AD.</li> <li>• Granite setted roads.</li> <li>• Widespread use of Seaton brick in walls buildings and features, particularly chimneys.</li> <li>• Use of natural clay pantiles as roofing material.</li> <li>• Semi-rural feel of medieval Tillydrone Road.</li> <li>• Arts and Crafts influenced Tillydrone Avenue residential properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic management scheme.</li> <li>• Lack of vibrancy outside of term time.</li> <li>• Weak views down some closes.</li> <li>• Wallace Tower (Benholm’s Lodgings) unused and on Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.</li> <li>• Poor east west way finding.</li> <li>• Historic roads can be difficult to negotiate by wheelchair users. Particular issue for east west routes across the campus.</li> <li>• Poor condition of granite sett roads.</li> <li>• Descriptions for most listed buildings date from 1967.</li> <li>• Cumulative unauthorised and inappropriate minor external alterations to buildings.</li> <li>• Unauthorised banner signage on Don Street.</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater potential for tourism.</li> <li>• University of Aberdeen’s aspirations for its estate as set out in its Estates Strategy and supporting development framework. Any proposals would be subject to national and local planning policies.</li> <li>• Improved east west way finding.</li> <li>• Greater role for Cruickshank Botanic Garden.</li> <li>• Celebrate and reinstate traditional closes.</li> <li>• Improve views down closes from High Street and College Bounds.</li> <li>• Restoration and use for Wallace Tower (Benholm’s Lodgings).</li> <li>• Improved signage, street furniture and lighting.</li> <li>• Sensitive development on former Dunbar Halls of Residence site.</li> <li>• Re-use vacant site at 34 Don Street.</li> <li>• Restore granite flagstone pavements to Don Street.</li> <li>• Improve wheelchair accessibility.</li> <li>• Comprehensive traffic management review.</li> <li>• Review of listed building entries by Historic Environment Scotland.</li> <li>• Exploration of Management Partnership Agreements with the University of Aberdeen and Historic Environment Scotland.</li> <li>• Restoration or re-use of tennis court site.</li> <li>• Removal of unauthorised banner signage on Don Street.</li> <li>• Restoration of original granite setts/cobbles on roads and improvement of road surfacing.</li> <li>• Visual impact of new development and big buildings on the Old Aberdeen Heart area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insensitive development of burgage plots.</li> <li>• Sub division and development of larger plots, especially on the Chanonry.</li> <li>• Incremental damage resulting from minor alterations eg door furniture, signage.</li> <li>• Further loss of retail uses.</li> <li>• Visual impact of new development and big buildings on the Old Aberdeen Heart area.</li> <li>• Increasing density of HMOs [Houses of Multiple Occupancy].</li> </ul>

**Character Area C : Modern University Campus**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscaped space to the west of the campus that visually unites library, Meston and Fraser Noble buildings.</li> <li>• Iconic Sir Duncan Rice Library.</li> <li>• Residential amenity of Crombie and Johnston Halls.</li> <li>• Historic routes running through area – Regent Walk, Dunbar Street, Meston Walk and Elphinstone Road.</li> <li>• Crombie Halls of Residence (category A listed).</li> <li>• Sunnybank Park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of architectural and public realm coherence on the east side of campus creating a weak sense of place.</li> <li>• Orientation of MacRobert Building towards King Street and away from campus.</li> <li>• St Machar Drive separates Zoology Building from the rest of campus.</li> <li>• Poor connections and way finding especially in the north east area of the campus.</li> <li>• Amount of visible car parking.</li> <li>• Lack of residential amenity for Hunter and Coopers Courts.</li> <li>• Limited social open space to the north east of the campus.</li> <li>• Poor accessibility for disabled people.</li> <li>• Weak character on the edges of campus.</li> <li>• Visual impact of Elphinstone Road Flats.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Aberdeen’s aspirations for its estate as set out in its Estates Strategy and supporting development framework. Any proposals would be subject to national and local planning policies.</li> <li>• Appropriately designed development on the open space to the north of Sir Duncan Rice Library could strengthen links with the Zoology Building.</li> <li>• Create more accessible connections throughout the east of campus.</li> <li>• Reduce car parking and improve open space to the east of the campus.</li> <li>• Future of unused open space to the north of the Zoology Building.</li> <li>• Comprehensive assessment of pedestrian movement across campus.</li> <li>• Exploration of Management Partnership Agreements with the University of Aberdeen and Historic Environment Scotland.</li> <li>• Edward Wright Annexe site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate development of unused open space to the north of the Zoology Building.</li> <li>• Future unsympathetically designed development may compromise views to Sir Duncan Rice Library.</li> <li>• Uncoordinated piecemeal development impacting adversely on the Conservation Area.</li> </ul>

### Character Area D : Seaton Park/Hillhead/King Street north/Kettock's Mill

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Don and its setting. Good access from Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Outstanding natural environment and wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• High quality open space.</li> <li>• Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Wealth of mature trees.</li> <li>• Views from Seaton Park to the Cathedral and across the River Don.</li> <li>• Links to nearby Core Paths.</li> <li>• Views of St Machar's Cathedral from Seaton Park, the riverside and Don Street.</li> <li>• Seaton Park boundary walls, particularly sections of Seaton brick.</li> <li>• The rural undeveloped peninsula on the north side of the River Don, Kettock's Mill.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor facilities in Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Flooding and drainage issues in Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Lack of signage.</li> <li>• Piecemeal development along Don Street.</li> <li>• Poorly maintained tennis courts on Don Street.</li> <li>• Inappropriate late 20th century development on Don Street and King Street.</li> <li>• Unauthorised banner signage on Don Street.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New and improved facilities and signage in Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Redevelopment of former Dunbar Halls site, Don Street.</li> <li>• Improved sports facilities on Don Street.</li> <li>• Drainage improvements in Seaton Park.</li> <li>• Removal of unauthorised banner signage on Don Street.</li> </ul>	

**Character Area E : Balgownie**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant collection of 17-19th century vernacular buildings.</li> <li>• Riverbank, woodland setting.</li> <li>• Mature trees and woodland.</li> <li>• Good accessibility along historic 'spine'/Core Paths.</li> <li>• Quiet/peaceful, no through traffic so pedestrian friendly.</li> <li>• Well maintained front gardens.</li> <li>• Brig o' Balgownie.</li> <li>• Bridge of Don.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covering/loss of historic granite cobbles/setts on roads.</li> <li>• Category B listed Rose Cottage fallen into ruin.</li> <li>• Car parking on roads.</li> <li>• Some inappropriate modern alterations/extensions.</li> <li>• Some damage to street furniture e.g. streetlamps.</li> <li>• Riverside walks are poorly signed.</li> <li>• Widespread self-seeded sycamores.</li> <li>• Restricted views of Brig o' Balgownie from river and the Bridge of Don (A956).</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration of cobbles/setts on Don Street/Cottown of Balgownie.</li> <li>• Greater access to the river e.g. signing and improvement of riverside paths.</li> <li>• Repair or replacement of street furniture where appropriate.</li> <li>• Woodland tree management.</li> <li>• Improve views to Brig o' Balgownie from river and from the Bridge of Don (A956).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for parking creating pressure on Cottown of Balgownie communal gardens.</li> <li>• Poor tree management obscuring views of and from Brig o' Balgownie as well as Bridge of Don.</li> <li>• Inappropriate alterations, extensions, porches etc.</li> <li>• Pressure for development which could be visible and have a negative impact on the setting of the area.</li> <li>• Further splitting of feus and 'backland development' in the Donbank area.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Proposed Management Plan guidance

The following guidance will be added to Section 2 Conservation Areas Management Plan that would only apply to Old Aberdeen Conservation Area:

### U1 The Chanonry

The Chanonry is characterised by large properties set in substantial garden plots that are mostly residential. This is a well-established historic pattern of development that should be protected in order to keep the area's character. There will therefore be a presumption against the sub-division of plots on the Chanonry and the construction of separate buildings in the grounds of existing properties other than minor structures that are ancillary to the existing main use.



The Chanonry boundary walls

### U2 Burgage plots

Because of its medieval origins, much development in Character Area B, Old Aberdeen Heart, especially on College Bounds and the High Street, has a tradition of burgage plots with closes leading to rear buildings. It is important that this distinctive pattern be retained in any new development or alterations. Access to rear buildings should be carefully designed, reflecting local detailing. New development and alterations should seek to retain and enhance existing closes and rear buildings or open up previously closed entrances. In considering development affecting historic closes and lanes, the creation or improvement of views at either end of them will be an important consideration.



High Street, close leading to rear buildings

### List of Streets in the Old Aberdeen Conservation Area

Auckland Place, all nos, (off Merkland Place)

Balgownie Road, 3-21a odd nos, 51, 71-81 odd nos, Royal British Legion, North Lodge and South Lodge

Bede House Court, all nos, (St. Machar Drive)

Bedford Road, TA Centre and all University Buildings

Boa-Vista Place, all nos, (off Spital)

Brewery Lane (off High Street)

Bridge Terrace, all nos, (other name for Cottown of Balgownie)

Chanonry, all nos, all University Buildings, St Machar Cathedral

Cheyne Road, 14

Church Walk (off High Street)

Clark's Lane, all nos, (off Dunbar Street)

College Bounds, all nos, all University Buildings, King's College

Cottown of Balgownie, all nos

Don Street, all nos, Brig House, Nether Don, Seaton Park, Seaton Stables, University Halls

Douglas Lane, (off High Street)

Douglas Place, all nos, (off High Street)

Dunbar Street, 1-9a, 61-79 odd nos, 10, 68, 70, Old Aberdeen House, Bede House Court, Edward Wright Building, St. Machar Hall

Elphinstone Road, 3-11, 32, 34 and all University Buildings

Firhill Place, all nos, (off Spital)

Firhill Road (off Sunnybank Road)

Froghall Terrace, 1-11 inclusive

Froghall Road, 1-15 odd nos

Grant's Place, 1, 2 (off High Street)

High Street, all nos, all University Buildings, Old Town House

Hillhead Terrace, all nos, (off Spital)

Jute Street, 1

Kettock's Mill Road, Glenseaton Lodge, Seaton Cottage 1-13 inclusive

King's Crescent, 9-39 odd, 40-54 even nos and bus depot wall

King Street, 559-595, 661-739, all University buildings

Lord Hay's Grove

Lord Hay's Road

Mackenzie Place, all nos, (off High Street)

Market Lane, (off High Street)

Merkland Place, 1-53 all nos

Meston Walk, all University buildings

Mill Cottages, all nos, (off Ellon Road)

Orchard, The, all nos, Orchard Cottage (off Spital Walk)

Orchard Lane, 2, 6, (off Spital)

Orchard Place, 1-5 inclusive, 7, 9, 11, Orchard Cottage, The Orchard

Orchard Street, 47-65, 30-64

Orchard Walk, 1-13, 25-31, all University Buildings

Regent Walk, all University buildings

Rockybank, 1, 2 (off Don Street) (Old Aberdeen)

St Machar Drive, 17, 23, 60, 68, 80, all University buildings, Bede House Court, Mission Hall

St Machar Place, 3-8 inclusive  
St Peter's Gate, all nos, (off Spital)  
St Peter's Place, all nos (off Orchard Street)  
St Peter Street, 38  
Seaton Park, (off Don Street)  
Seaton Place, 8-9, 10-14  
Sir William Wallace Wynd, (off Don Street)  
Spital, all nos, St Margaret's Convent  
Spital Walk, all nos

Sunnybank Road, 2-4 inclusive, 6, 14-24a even nos and Sunnybank Park  
Thom's Court (off High Street)  
Thom's Place, all nos, (off High Street)  
Tillydrone Avenue, Zoology Dept, 54-88 even nos  
Tillydrone Road, Benholm's Lodgings (known as Wallace Tower)  
University Road, 7-77 odd nos, Butchart Building  
Wagril's Lane, (off High Street)  
Wrights' and Coopers' Place, all nos, (off High Street)



Tillydrone Avenue



High Street/corner of Wrights' and Coopers' Place