



ABERDEEN  
CITY COUNCIL



Aberdeen City Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan  
**Strategic Overview and Management Plan**

July 2013

**Planning and Sustainable Development**  
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## 1 Strategic Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Within the local authority area of Aberdeen City Council there are currently eleven conservation areas ranging from the Georgian engineered city centre to Victorian residential suburbs; a coastal village and a medieval educational hub. Between them they cover 656 hectares. Each conservation area is unique with its own distinctive character and pattern of development. Together their differences all contribute to creating the identity of modern Aberdeen.

The historic environment helps to create the City's sense of place and provides a context for everyday life. It is dynamic and able to adapt and respond to changing needs. Conservation areas however need to be actively managed in order to keep their flexibility, without losing their special qualities. This is where this guidance comes in. It provides a comprehensive overview of all our conservation areas in one single document and puts forward policies and plans to protect their special character. This reflects the Council's commitment to protecting its historic environment whilst allowing for change to keep these areas vibrant and meaningful for today's and tomorrow's residents.

### 1.2 What is a Conservation Area?

A conservation area is defined in legislation as "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997). It embraces the quality and interest of an area as a whole, rather than individual buildings within it. Conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities, like Aberdeen City Council, who have a statutory duty to identify those parts of their area that merit conservation area status. Once designated, local planning authorities should periodically review them and put forward schemes to protect and enhance them.

It is not only buildings that are of architectural or historic interest in a conservation area, but also the spaces between them such as the streets, open spaces and the public realm. All of these elements combine to create an area's special character. Planning is therefore directed at maintaining the integrity of an entire area and being mindful of the balance and relationships between the various component parts.

under current legislation, conservation area designation automatically brings the following works under planning control:

- Demolition of buildings;
- Removal of, or works to, trees;
- Development involving small house extensions, roof alterations, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior, provision of hard surfaces and additional control over satellite dishes and
- Minor works that are "permitted development" elsewhere such as replacement windows and doors (Appendix 3)

Local residents and property owners also have a major role to play in protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area by ensuring that properties are regularly maintained and original features retained. It is also important that they consider what impact their proposals may have on an area's wider character.

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### **1.3 What is the purpose of this document?**

Local planning authorities and the Scottish Government are required by law to protect conservation areas from development that would harm their character. In order to do this we need to know what makes up an area's special character and appearance. Essentially this is what a conservation area character appraisal does. It defines and evaluates key attributes such as buildings, streets, views and open spaces that contribute towards the special architectural and historic interest of the settlement. The area's special features and changing needs are assessed through a process that includes researching its historical development and carrying out a detailed townscape analysis. The character appraisal also provides an opportunity to reassess the current conservation area boundaries to make certain that they accurately reflect what is of special interest and to ensure that they are logically drawn.

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 commits us to producing conservation area character appraisals in order to support our built heritage planning policies, specifically Policy D4 – Aberdeen's Granite Heritage and D5 – Built Heritage (Appendix 1). This document provides a framework for the controlled and positive management of change in conservation areas and forms a basis on which planning

decisions in the area are made. As such it is intended to provide guidance to the public and help developers identify and formulate proposals in conservation areas. Once adopted as Interim Planning Advice we will use it as a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning; advertisement; tree work; listed building and conservation area consent applications as well as to inform management issues in our conservation areas. It will complement our Supplementary Guidance on other topics set out in Appendix 2.

Conservation area management plans take the character appraisal one step further as they provide guidance and programmes to help secure the long-term viability of the conservation area. The appraisal itself provides the basis for the development of a programme of action that is compatible with the sensitivities of the historic environment. The management plan identifies opportunities for preservation and enhancement not only by the local planning authority, but also by other interested parties and community groups. We have combined the conservation area character appraisals and the management plan together in this document and used national guidance in its preparation as set out in the Scottish Government's Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71 Conservation Area Management (2004).

### **1.4 Public consultation**

The successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support and input from stakeholders, in particular local residents and property owners. Before starting to prepare this document we conducted scoping consultation with organisations representing key interest groups, such as the relevant local Community Councils, and no issues were raised at that initial stage. A draft document was the subject of a much wider public consultation in spring 2013, which was amended in light of the feedback received. It was approved by the Council's Development Management Sub Committee on 18 July 2013 as Interim Planning Advice.

### **1.5 Using this document**

Aberdeen's conservation areas were designated, extended and adjusted between 1968 and 2003. A number of these have had character appraisals prepared in the past, but no management plans have been produced.

This document contains a management plan for all the conservation areas in Aberdeen supported by individual conservation area character appraisals. Ultimately we intend that it should be formally adopted by the City Council as Supplementary Guidance to aid planning

decisions and directly support the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012. As this is an ambitious task we are dividing it into two phases of work with six conservation areas being covered in this first tranche (Albyn Place/Rubislaw; Bon-Accord/Crown Street; Cove Bay; Ferryhill; Great Western Road and Marine Terrace Conservation Areas) and the remaining five in the second (Footdee; Old Aberdeen; Pitfodels; Rosemount and Westburn and Union Street Conservation Areas). As this document represents only the first part of the exercise it is envisaged that it has been adopted as Interim Planning Advice pending the completion of phase two and the adoption of the whole document as Supplementary Guidance. The conservation areas in the second phase have had character appraisals prepared for them in the past, but now need updating.

The individual conservation area character appraisals in Section 3 should be read in conjunction with the Management Plan in Section 2. The two elements together form the guidance. We have used this format to avoid constant repetition and unwieldy documents. The Management Plan includes guidance applicable to all conservation areas as well as that relating to individual named conservation areas.

## 1.6 Development of Aberdeen

This section gives a brief overview and sets the context for the development of Aberdeen as it is today. Building on this, each individual conservation area character appraisal gives an account of that particular area's development.

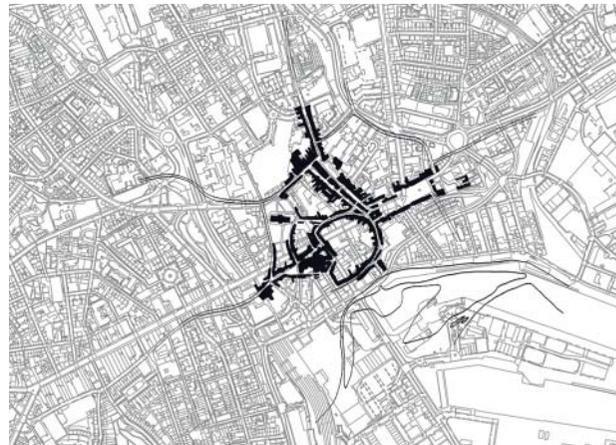
### 1.6.1 Historical context

#### Medieval

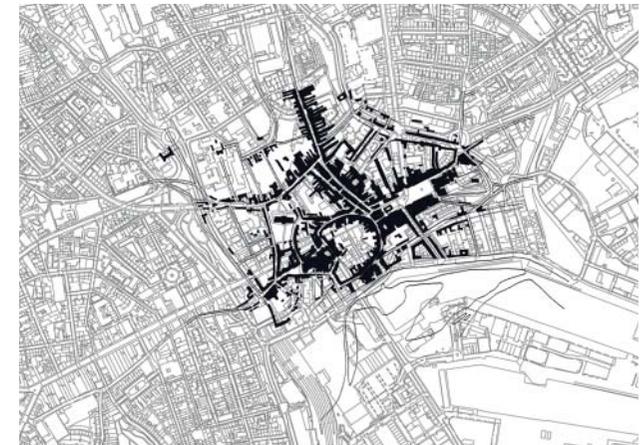
Archaeological discoveries have placed the origins of Aberdeen back 6000 years. The early pattern of development, (1661 James Gordon map), shows Aberdeen as two distinct settlements. Old Aberdeen, a linear single street settlement to the north was established around the Machar Kirk (begun 1370) and Kings College (1500), with a market place at the northern end of the High Street. New Aberdeen developed around St Katherine's, Castle and Gallowgate

Hills, on the high ground at the junction of the Denburn and Putachie Burn. The City's street pattern is a response to the topography that existed at that time with curved streets responding to landscape contours. Although giving the impression of having an irregular layout, the development of medieval Aberdeen is quite logical, with ordered streets set within landscape constraints. Evidence of the medieval core of Aberdeen around St Katherine's Hill can still be seen today at Shiprow, Netherkirkgate, Correction Wynd, Back Wynd, Flourmill Lane and Carnegie's Brae. A building from this period is the Kirk of St Nicholas (Mither Kirk), built before 1151 and one of the largest medieval burgh kirks in Scotland.

Access to the new town was controlled at six fee paying ports, or entrances, at Shiprow, Netherkirkgate, Fuddy, Justice, Gallowgate and Upperkirkgate. The main road routes in and out of New Aberdeen followed high ground.



City Centre street pattern, circa 1660



Urbanisation, City Centre, circa 1770

The route south by road was from The Green, across the Denburn, along Windmill Brae and Hardgate before crossing the Holburn near Justice Mill and then crossing the Polmuir Burn. Beyond this, the road split and access could be taken along ancient route to the west while the other fork continued to the Bridge of Dee (completed in 1527) and beyond. Heading north, from Broad Street, past Gallowgate Hill and to Mounthooly the route is joined by two further routes, the Forest of Stocket route and Causewayend, before continuing along the Spitalhill, High Street of Old Aberdeen and past Hillhead of Seaton to the Brig o' Balgownie.

The Dee estuary has long provided a sheltered harbour with the first recorded reference to it being in 1136 when King David first granted the Bishops of Aberdeen the right to levy a tithe on all ships trading at the port. Trade links with Europe increased slowly over the centuries,

but from the late 1500s onwards the growing trade with Scandinavia and the Baltic resulted in a number of improvements to the harbour. In 1607 a bulwark at Torry was constructed to deepen the harbour entrance. The Act of Union in 1707 led to substantially increased trade and with that came further improvements such as the first section of the North Pier completed in 1780, which increased the depth of water and provided shelter at the entrance.

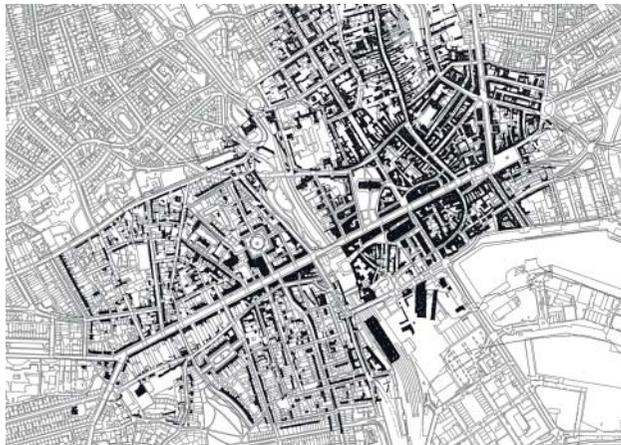
### Urbanisation

Until 1750 New Aberdeen maintained the basic medieval street pattern, sitting close to St Katherine's Hill. In 1750 a Tollbooth was erected in the Castlegate, which marked a new era of street construction and signalled the start of a new era of modern urban growth. Marischal Street, built from 1767, was the City's first

planned and skilfully engineered street that provided a direct route from the town centre to the harbour. Within the next decade ten new large residential streets were built including Schoolhill and Belmont Street, the latter marking the western edge of the town abutting the Denburn Valley, which later became Union Terrace Gardens. New streets to the north and north west of St Katherine's Hill provided access from Broadgate to the flesh market.

### 19th century expansion

During the early part of the 19th century, improving access to and mobility in the inner town was a priority for the civic leaders who commissioned a report to find the best means of achieving this. Charles Abercrombie's proposals for the improvement of Aberdeen included two new routes to the south; a new



19th Century expansion, circa 1863



City Centre street pattern, circa 1999

*“As I entered New Aberdeen, I beheld amongst the first objects, the active and liberal hand of improvement before me on every side.....I was much gratified by observing that the streets were spacious, and the houses in general very handsome.”*

Sir John Carr : Caledonian Sketches or a Tow through Scotland in 1807

east-west street; a new road to the north and development to the west of the Denburn. The decision was taken to build the east-west street; a new street to the north which led to the Bridge of Don and a new street to the south. The development of new streets enabled New Aberdeen to expand. Improving access on an east-west axis was achieved by building Union Street, which linked medieval Aberdeen to the undeveloped land beyond the west bank of the Denburn. Union Street was a major engineering feat that involved the removal of the top section of St Katherine's Hill and the creation of a bridge and a series of vaults across the Denburn Valley. It quite literally paved the way to the creation of modern Aberdeen and linked it to the surrounding rural area with the street improvements marrying in with five turnpike roads that were being developed in the shire.

The decision to provide the City Centre with wide streets on a system of viaducts over the valleys below had far reaching effects. The street width allowed buildings to be of a scale and quality which firmly established Union Street as the City's principal street. Union Bridge was opened in 1805 as the architectural centrepiece of Union Street. A northerly route was projected on a second street, which became King Street. The skeleton of the two new streets was in place by the end of the first decade of the 19th century. 'From 1807 the line of the Great Southern Road (Holburn Street) was fixed...other arterial routes laid out included George Street' (The Stationary Office 1997: 22).

Development to the west had been slow, apart from Crown Street, Diamond Street, Silver Street and Golden Square, which were speculatively laid out in 1806 by the Hammermen Corporation of Incorporated Trades (MacInnes 2000). Major public buildings such as Trinity Hall, Smith's screen in front of St Nicholas Kirk and the Music Hall were built during the 1820s. The introduction of the railway over the culverted Denburn transformed the surrounding industrial area into an urban park - Union Terrace Gardens. Construction of the Denburn and Rosemount Viaducts enabled further development of land at Schoolhill.

Development beyond the city centre and in particular in the west end was rapid, and spanned just over thirty years. In 1875 the West End of Aberdeen had only reached Queen's Cross. St Swithin Street was present, but nothing more. As Fraser and Lee explain 'Towards the end of the 19th century developers... had taken the middle class suburb as far as Argyll Place, Argyll Crescent, Westburn Drive, Hamilton Place, Fountainhall Road and Belvidere Street'(Fraser and Lee 2000:28).

Further infrastructure improvements that occurred included the building of the new Don Bridge (1827-30) to the north and to the south the construction of the Wellington Bridge (1831). Alongside the increase in the built environment, the administrative boundary of Aberdeen also increased. The Aberdeen Municipality Extension Act of 1871 incorporated parts of Rosemount; Fountainhall; Mannofield; Broomhill; Ferryhill

and the Dee estuary, while the 1891 legislation incorporated Old Aberdeen; Woodside and Torry.

Alongside the road improvements, the railway and harbour were expanded. The Board of Management/Commissioners, established in 1829, embarked on a massive programme of remodelling, involving construction of a new tidal dock, new fish markets and, between 1871-7, the diversion of the river Dee. Railway development continued with the building of the Aberdeen based Great North of Scotland Railway (from 1854), and the opening of the arched-roof Joint Station (William Smith design) and the Denburn Valley link line in 1866-67, designed by John Willet.

By 1909 the 3rd edition OS map shows the street pattern and infrastructure mostly as it sits today, with the exception of Anderson Drive.

### **Drivers for growth**

The population of Aberdeen in the early 18th century was approximately 5,500; by 1840 this had risen to 63,000. The drivers for growth during this period are varied and diverse. During the mid and late 18th century there was a growth in factory and sea borne trade orientated industries, in particular for textile (linen, cotton, wool and flax) and paper mills. Further to this, a growing trade in exporting granite had emerged with nearly 35000 tonnes per annum shipped to London by 1821. While ship building created a boom in 1850-70, the exporting of cattle in the 1850s and the rise of fishing, using sea trawlers in the years after 1882 again

added to the mix of employment opportunities is Aberdeen. By 1898 granite quarrying had reached its all-time maximum output. There was a large workforce employed in quarrying and polishing, while in 1909 Aberdeen commanded half the Scottish white fish market. By 1911 the population of Aberdeen had reached 164,000.

Residential development went hand in hand with this economic expansion as considerable amounts of new housing were required for Aberdeen's expanding population. Landowners became increasingly aware of the financial and social benefits associated with developing their land.

### 1.6.2 Setting

#### **Topography**

Aberdeen sits on a coastal location with its eastern boundary being the North Sea. Development has been contained to a degree by natural features. The two rivers, the River Dee and the River Don, are to the south and north of the city respectively. A number of hills also surround the city. To the north-west sit Tyrebagger Hill, Elrick Hill and Brimmond Hill. To the west are a collection of three peaks and to the south are Tullos Hill and Kincorth Hill. Originally, small medieval settlements formed in the dry high ground between the Don and Dee valleys, which itself was dissected by a number of shallow valleys and small watercourses, which formed lochans and marshland. The rivers, burns and valleys flow to the city providing a

gentle undulating landscape. To the south-west and west of the city are intrusions of granite.

The topography of the city centre is less obviously apparent due to the planning and engineering works that took place during the early part of the 19th century. The undulating nature of the three hills and the Denburn Valley upon which Union Street sits are still visible at Market Street; Marischal Street; Bridge Street; Rosemount Viaduct and Union Street. Union Bridge; Union Terrace Gardens; Back Wynd and Correction Wynd staircases to and from Union Street also reveal the natural and historic topography of Aberdeen.

There are many strategic views of the city. Within the city many of these follow long linear streetscapes. Views into the city are most noted along approaches from major urban roads, such as the A90, A96, A944 Lang Stracht and A956 Wellington Road, which generally offer strategic views of the city from a variety of vantage points.

### 1.6.3 Built heritage/ materials

Aberdeen is well known as the Granite City given the widespread use of this building material. Rubislaw Quarry, situated in the west of the city, is argued to be the point of origin for nearly 75 percent of Aberdeen, 'producing some 6 million tonnes of granite over its 230 years of operation' (Morgan 2009:161). The supply of building granite greatly increased from 1730 due to James Emslie's opening of the Loanhead Quarry, and 1741 saw the reopening

of Rubislaw Quarry by the Town Council.

19th century Scottish buildings are characterised by their use of high quality facing stones; Aberdeen continues this trend but is distinctive in that it uses granite as its building material. Granite is an extremely hard stone making it unsuitable for ornate decorative carving. Consequently the typical Aberdeen building style is one of plain, almost austere buildings with minimal detail; relief being provided through windows and doorways. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the architecture left this style becoming more varied and bolder, with both institutional and residential properties becoming more ornate. This can be seen in the late 19th century development of villas for the wealthy that have a more individualistic expression at the hands of skilled architects who use contrasting pink and grey granite to great effect. In the 1920s, and especially the 1930s, there was a return to a taste for simpler buildings.

A distinctive masonry pattern is also found in Aberdeen which is called Aberdeen bond. This technique is mostly used on the gable and back walls of buildings; however it is also used on front elevations. A coursed, usually not dressed, block of granite is set with three smaller pieces of granite in a vertical pattern before the pattern is repeated.

A further building material that can be found on back walls, gable extensions and boundary walls is red brick from the Seaton Brickfields. There is a higher concentration of this in Old Aberdeen than in any of the other conservation areas.

## 2.1 Working assumptions

This guidance is intended to add more detail, where required, to Scottish Planning Policy as set out in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (2011), and to policies within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 (see Appendix 1). It covers all eleven of Aberdeen's conservation areas, unless otherwise specified. This is because there are a large number of generic management issues that emerged from the conservation area character appraisals in section 3. In considering the future of our conservation areas we have used the following working assumptions:

- a) Conservation areas are managed by a large number of stakeholders – businesses, residents, the City Council and other agencies. Together they share responsibility for their care and maintenance. Aberdeen City Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance the historic environment. We will try to ensure that initiatives and projects in the area are mindful of that and that work is carried out in partnership with stakeholders.
- b) We have had conservation areas in Aberdeen for over forty years and some have stood the test of time better than others. Inevitably mistakes have been made and we want to learn from them. For the future we want to ensure that our

conservation areas are those whose historic environment is the most worthy of protection and enhancement. We also recognise that planning requirements are more stringent in conservation areas particularly with regard to the removal of Permitted Development (PD) rights (Appendix 3). To that end we will amend boundaries or de-designate any areas where a robust, evidence based case for retaining conservation area status can no longer be made.

- c) Conservation areas are more than historic buildings and spaces. They help give Aberdeen its distinct sense of place, telling the story of our common past. Although this document is primarily aimed at the physical fabric of conservation areas we recognise the important role that they play in the City's environmental sustainability, economic and social wellbeing. We welcome opportunities to work with residents and businesses to promote and improve our conservation areas as attractive places to live and work.

## 2.2 SWOT analysis

The following SWOT analysis draws together the various general characteristics of Aberdeen's conservation areas. 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.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread use of granite as a construction material provides architectural cohesion and a strong sense of place despite diverse building styles</li> <li>• Affluent city that suffered little bomb damage</li> <li>• Distinctive conservation areas such as Old Aberdeen and Footdee</li> <li>• Integrity of the 19th century suburban conservation areas</li> <li>• Clear street hierarchy with emphasis on linear grid pattern of the development</li> <li>• High quality buildings, many of which are listed, generally in good state of repair and maintenance</li> <li>• Abundance of street trees, open spaces and trees/vegetation within front gardens/ courtyards that soften the extensive use of granite as a building material</li> <li>• Range of detailing especially on upper floors</li> <li>• Sustainable, permeable development layouts well suited to walking</li> <li>• Public transport linkages</li> <li>• Small, compact city centre</li> <li>• Undulating topography</li> <li>• UK's only commercial harbour in the heart of a city centre</li> <li>• Relationship to planned urban parks and landscapes</li> <li>• Article 4 Directions removing permitted development rights in most conservation areas</li> <li>• Integrated planning policy framework – Aberdeen Local development Plan; City Centre development Framework and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property tenure often fractured with individual buildings in multiple ownerships with no/inadequate factoring arrangements in place. This leads to poor ongoing property maintenance.</li> <li>• Absentee landlords</li> <li>• Inappropriate development in past e.g. windows and dormers</li> <li>• Few conservation area character appraisals and no management plans to date</li> <li>• Lack of sustained co-ordinated development/ management over past 40 years</li> <li>• Varying standards and styles in roads maintenance and street furniture.</li> <li>• Loss of the original development pattern and boundary walls due to back land developments, car parking and rear extensions.</li> <li>• Inappropriate signage materials, proportions and colours</li> <li>• Loss of traditional street signage</li> <li>• Satellite dishes</li> <li>• Heavy goods vehicles in city centre accessing harbour</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use both the built and natural heritage in conservation areas to help promote Aberdeen as a desirable location in which to live, do business and visit</li> <li>• Heritage led regeneration and integration with initiatives to revitalise Union Street and city centre</li> <li>• Encourage active community involvement in conservation area management</li> <li>• Programme of public realm, signage and street improvements that encourages sustainable transport and community well being</li> <li>• Redistribution of both commuter and heavy vehicles to the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will free up road space that can be assigned to sustainable transport initiatives</li> <li>• Work with the area's natural topography to create interest and celebrate a local sense of place</li> <li>• Reinstate street trees where these have been lost</li> <li>• Repair and reinstatement of traditional cast iron railings</li> <li>• Preparation of design statements to support planning applications with an emphasis on a contextual appraisal for new developments</li> <li>• Improve use of informal open space</li> <li>• High quality contemporary design, materials and detailing that add to the character of conservation areas</li> <li>• Education to ensure property owners are aware of the history and value of conservation areas, information on how to maintain historic buildings and their obligations as property owners (especially with regard to tenement properties and communal repairs)</li> <li>• Upgrade Aberdeen City Council's existing conservation area web based information and Technical Advice Notes</li> <li>• Conservation areas are a rich resource for environmental education and local studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing retail patterns and short term uses</li> <li>• Diminishing public investment</li> <li>• Economic downturn affecting investment in property maintenance and improvements</li> <li>• High land values resulting in over development</li> <li>• Car parking – both on and off street</li> <li>• Loss of vegetation in the front courtyard and rear gardens due to car parking and extensions</li> <li>• Unsympathetic development which does not reflect or relate to the character of the conservation area</li> <li>• Lack of public resources to manage conservation areas</li> <li>• Cumulative effects of incremental minor changes – windows, doors, removal of boundary walls etc</li> <li>• Removal of conservation area status</li> </ul>

The character appraisals reveal a large number of common issues facing our conservation areas, many of which are shared across the country. Many factors need to be considered in order to manage the future of our conservation areas, ensuring that their historical character and assets are protected and maintained. Some of these topics are already the subject of national and local guidance and others are more ones of day to day management and maintenance:

### **Development**

- Control the design and type of development within the conservation area, ensuring it is sympathetic and of high quality.
- Ensure the appropriate use of materials with regard to longevity and sustainability to protect and enhance the character and quality of the conservation area in the long term.
- Require the submission of design statements and contextual appraisals for new developments.
- Encourage the adaptive re-use of buildings and mixed use projects that address physical, visual or economic decline, subject to compatibility with neighbouring property and uses.
- Increase maintenance through awareness and education of owners about the importance of their buildings and responsibilities.
- Support increased energy efficiency measures in buildings where this does not conflict with conserving the historic environment

- Control the proportions, style, materials and quality of shop signage within the conservation area.
- Only allow repair and replacement of windows and doors with those of traditional style, proportions and materials.
- Ensure placement of burglar alarms so that they provide their function without having an adverse impact on the character and amenity of the building.
- Prevent the proliferation of satellite dishes.
- Stem the decline in the numbers of trees in private properties by encouraging the planting of trees and sound management of existing trees.

### **Public realm**

- Compile a rationalisation and repair strategy to reduce the street clutter, repair damage to pavements and identify areas where significant further investment is required for renewal.
- Increase the opportunity for the enhancement and improvement of the public realm including street tree provision, reinstatement and repair of iron railings, rationalisation of street furniture and signage
- Ensure adequate enforcement for utilities companies who breach the conditions of their reinstatement certificate, or complete the works with damage or disregard to the conservation area.

### 2.3 Generic guidance for all conservation areas

There are several common issues and the following generic guidance **will apply to all conservation areas:**



Scottish Government  
Planning Advice Note 68

#### A | Design statements

Applications for development in a conservation area need to be accompanied by a design statement unless the development comprises the alteration or extension of an existing building. We strongly recommend however that developers do provide one for significant alteration or extensions of existing buildings in conservation areas based on the guidance in Planning Advice Note 68 Design Statements. The design statement will outline:

- the significance of the site in terms of the setting of the conservation area, using the character appraisals as a basis;
- the design approach used, including concepts and design development;
- an assessment of the impact that the design and layout of the development proposal would have on the conservation area.

This helps the planning officer understand the issues more easily, which in turn enables the application to be processed more swiftly.

The quality of design in conservation areas could be improved by referring projects at the pre-application stage to the Aberdeen City and Shire Design Review Panel for consideration.

#### B | Development form

A high quality standard of design will be expected from proposals for new development and alterations in conservation areas. Where appropriate we will encourage good quality contemporary design that makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and whose materials are sympathetic to the local building palette. If a traditional approach is considered more appropriate, the architectural detail, proportions and material should reflect local distinctiveness.

Preserved patterns of development, open spaces and building lines all contribute to an area's form and character. These features require special consideration in the face of development pressures. A careful and holistic analysis of the building and its setting is always the starting point when assessing development proposals in a conservation area. The context and prevailing scale of existing historic buildings should be respected. Where possible proposed development should enhance or maintain views of local landmarks and the wider townscape character as detailed in the individual conservation area character appraisals.

## **C | Sustainable development**

The impacts of climate change are far reaching and affect the existing historic built environment as much as new development. A holistic approach to adapting and “climate-proofing” both existing and new buildings will be encouraged wherever possible. Care should be taken to ensure that such proposals integrate with their context and do not harm the special character of the conservation area. Measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change will be encouraged in both existing and new development.

New development in conservation areas must consider the location, site layout and orientation of buildings, outdoor spaces and the connectivity of their proposals together with ventilation and cooling, insulation, drainage and water requirements of the development and the visual impact these may have on the conservation area. It should comply with the sustainability requirements and expectations for all development, but at the same time take account of its location in a conservation area.

## **D | Disabled access**

When considering historic building alterations opportunities to improve the accessibility to all sections of the community should be included in the development proposals, except where it can be demonstrated that it would seriously harm the conservation area’s historic or architectural significance. Whilst there can be a conflict between the retention of historic fabric and improving accessibility it is usually possible to improve the situation with careful and holistic consideration of the building and its setting.

Similar considerations need to be taken on board when designing the public realm to ensure that, for example, surfacing materials respect the historic character of the place, but are easy to negotiate for those with visual or mobility impairments. For more information please see Historic Scotland’s Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Accessibility.

## **E | Roads**

The streetscape is an enormously important element of our conservation areas, many of which feature extensive linear streets as a defining feature. In the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 Policy D4 Aberdeen’s Granite Heritage we are committed to retaining original granite setted streets and granite pavements in conservation areas as they are such a defining ingredient of the city’s streetscape. The individual character appraisals identify streets and lanes

that make a particularly important contribution to a conservation area. This information can be used to help prioritise road improvement and maintenance programmes in conservation areas.

There can sometimes be conflicts between the historic environment, and the tourism economy it helps to sustain, with other factors such as accessibility and maintenance costs. Our policy is clear that granite setted streets and pavements should be retained, however careful design and thought has to be given to how this is best achieved on a street by street basis. For example some of our existing setted streets are uneven making access difficult for those with limited mobility. In such cases it may be more appropriate to lay new replacement granite setts to ensure a level surface in areas of pedestrian traffic whilst using salvaged granite setts in other locations.

Many largely tarmaced streets still retain granite setts and crossings that can help manage traffic speed as well as side gutters that serve to emphasise the linear quality of most of our streets. Cumulatively these features make a very strong positive contribution to our conservation areas and should be retained.

### F | Street signage

The individual street letter tiles with their trademark directional pointing fingers are found in all of our conservation areas with the exception of Cove Bay. They are a very significant element in Aberdeen's streetscape and unique in Scotland. As the conservation area character appraisals have noted, many of these traditional road signs are being lost and replaced with inappropriate modern signage. Within conservation areas historic street signage should be replaced with similar traditional street letter tiles. As part of our road maintenance repair programme we will replace modern style signage in the city centre and identified key conservation area streets with traditional street signage on a phased basis.

### G | Street furniture

The character appraisals in section 3 have identified clutter and uncoordinated seating, litter bins, bollards and lighting as issues that detract from the conservation areas. The design and quality of street furniture is one clear way of re-enforcing the historic development pattern and hierarchy of spaces. The streetscape quality should be commensurate with its conservation significance.

### H | Commemorative signage

Signage on buildings can add to the visual clutter of a conservation area; however some interpretation and memorial signage can enhance understanding. In many instances signs will require advertisement consent and we already have supplementary guidance that covers signage. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland)

Amendment Regulations 1992 however excludes memorials from its definition of advertisement. Listed building consent is required where the erection of a plaque materially affects the building's special architectural or historic interest. In instances where all of the following criteria apply to memorials we will treat them as not making a material difference to a listed building provided that the memorial:

- 1 is only on a category B or category C listed building. Category A listed buildings will normally require consent;
- 2 does not exceed 500mm in diameter;
- 3 located not below 1m from entrance level and not more than 3m above;
- 4 is the only plaque on the building;
- 5 is secured in place using non ferrous fixings positioned into the mortar joints



Relaid granite setts and paving, The Green



Traditional black tile street signage



Urban park, Rubislaw Terrace

## **I | Open spaces and parks**

Landscaped open spaces and planned urban parks make a valuable contribution to the character of our conservation areas. The relationship of the built environment and street pattern to these spaces must be evaluated to demonstrate how they are conserved and enhanced in any new development proposal. Clearly identifying ownership and maintenance responsibilities will help target opportunities. The Council's Open Space Supplementary Guidance and Open Space Strategy contain further advice on appropriate management and enhancement of existing areas of open space.

## **J | Parking in front gardens**

Granite boundary walls are a strong feature of our conservation areas. They help to define the streetscape making a clear delineation between public and private realm. They are particularly important in unifying a street, especially when accompanied by appropriate railings. We will seek to retain such walls in conservation areas. Allowing the removal of front garden boundary walls to create parking spaces in front gardens will result in fragmented street frontage and public realm and will therefore be resisted in most circumstances. Parking in all but the largest front gardens, which already have been designed with driveway access in mind, will have a detrimental effect on the setting of buildings in the conservation area, potentially obscuring important features. Please see the Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance for more details.

## **K | Trees**

It is important to retain existing mature trees as they add to the amenity value of the conservation areas. They also provide other benefits to the urban environment such as wildlife habitat and visual diversity as the seasons change. An arboricultural impact assessment is needed for any development sites in conservation areas that have mature trees on them as part of any planning application. Any tree loss will be subject to the requirement for two for one replacement planting and where this is not possible on the site an alternative planting site will have to be found nearby. Please see the Council's Trees and Woodlands Supplementary Guidance for more information.

Street trees make an important contribution to the streetscape and emphasise the linear nature of many of the roads in our conservation areas. They are valued by the public, however the root systems of some of the original species planted have spread, lifting up pavement slabs and undermining boundary walls. This has resulted in trip hazards and accessibility difficulties. Whilst street trees are to be retained wherever possible there is a fine balance to be struck between this objective and addressing hazards to the public. Where replacement or new street tree planting is proposed this should include details of the use of a root management system to prevent future damage to the adjacent hard surfaces. In many instances the replacement tree species may be a smaller variety to reduce potential trip hazards.

## **L | Neglected buildings and land**

The condition of buildings, streetscape and land can strongly influence the appearance and character of a conservation area. Uncared for buildings that are poorly maintained and in a state of disrepair, together with eyesore sites, can have a significant adverse impact on the whole area. Working with Aberdeen City Heritage Trust we will encourage owners to maintain their properties and land. There may be occasions where more stringent action is required and in such circumstances we will use the statutory powers available to us as a local planning authority.

## **M | Buildings at Risk Register**

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCHAMS) maintains a national Building at Risk Register for Scotland on behalf of Historic Scotland that identifies historic buildings in a serious state of disrepair and/or with no current viable use. Four of the 24 buildings on the Register in Aberdeen are located in conservation areas. We will work with Historic Scotland, other agencies, owners and developers to improve the condition of these neglected buildings and bring them back into use.

## **N | Review of Article 4 Directions**

All conservation areas in Aberdeen, with the one exception of Rosemount and Westburn, have an Article 4 Direction on them which removes householder Permitted Development (PD) rights. These Directions were put in place to protect the conservation areas from the adverse effects of cumulative inappropriate

minor changes. In 2012 the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 came into force that removed PD rights from all residential properties in conservation areas, which has very broadly the same effect as the Article 4 Directions. It is likely that the Government will extend this further to include non-residential properties. At that point we will review our Article 4 Directions and, subject to legal guidance, remove or amend them as appropriate.

### **O | Information and communication**

Informed decisions in conservation areas need to be based on accessible up to date information and we will provide information about conservation areas and their practical implications for residents and businesses on our website. We welcome working with local amenity and community groups, the public and other interested parties who wish to improve or promote understanding of their local conservation area as far as resources permit.

### **P | Review and monitoring**

P1 Review: all conservation areas change over time and it is our intention to review them every five years to ensure that the individual character appraisals and management plans are up to date, reflect contemporary issues and relate to subsequent reviews of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. This will be dependent upon budget and other constraints existing at that time. Public consultation will be carried out where there have been substantial changes in a conservation area or where significant modifications to the document or conservation area boundaries are proposed. The role of this document will also be reviewed periodically as part of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan process.



Union Bridge over the Denbrn valley

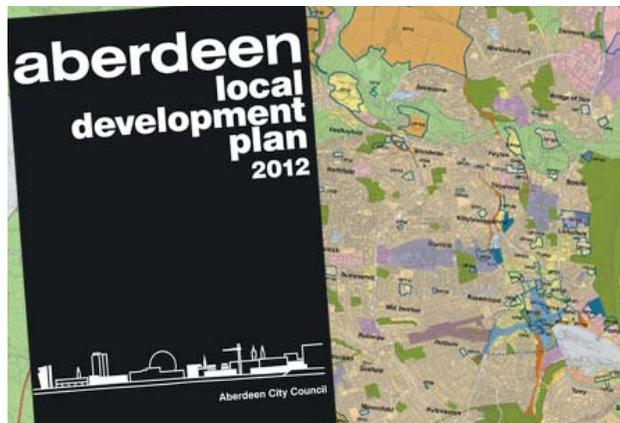


Victoria Buildings, Bridge Street



Union Street

- P2 Photographic surveys: in June 2012 we conducted a detailed photographic survey of all buildings and open spaces within the conservation areas to give us clear baseline data to enable us to monitor future changes. We intend that this survey should be carried out every ten years in the conservation areas, subject to available resources.
- P3 Observation: officers from the planning authority visit conservation areas at regular intervals and check on the progress of any restoration and enhancement schemes. They can also note any unauthorised development works that do not have the necessary planning consents and take appropriate enforcement action.



Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012

## 2.4 Guidance for individual named conservation areas

### Q | Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area Rear extensions to terraces in the West End Office Area

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan supports the principle of office use in the West End Office Area. This Area lies within Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area and comprises a large number of listed buildings. These large, predominantly 19th century buildings come under considerable development pressure for new or enlarged rear extensions. Properties are generally set within proportionately large feus served by rear access lanes with some coach houses and later garages. Usually rear extensions can be successfully accommodated on detached and semi detached properties.

The terraced properties in the West End Office Area are all Category B listed buildings and, as such, are more sensitive to inappropriate development. There can sometimes be a conflict between the drivers of supporting commercial development on the one hand and conserving our historic environment on the other. These terraces are:

- 1 – 16 (inc) Albyn Terrace;
- 1 – 10 (inc) Queen's Terrace and
- 1 – 26 Rubislaw Terrace.

When considering planning and listed building applications for rear extensions on

the above terraces we will take into account national advice set out in Historic Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Extensions and also the Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area Character Appraisal in 3.1.

We will assess proposals for rear extensions to address the following

- Q1 Relationship to the principal building
- Any extension should allow the listed building to be understood and appreciated. The form, scale, design and materials of any proposed development should complement and relate to the principal building and not normally exceed 30% of the original rear garden size. The traditional extension building form is an offshoot to the side of the building. Where an extension is centrally positioned across the rear of the listed building it should not normally extend more than 70% of the feu width and respect the location of existing windows and doors. In general extensions should not be greater than a single storey in height above ground level (excluding sub basement level if present) unless:
- (i) the design is of an exceptionally high quality with reference to scale; massing; materials; detail and setting and/or
  - (ii) it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that a larger extension is required to act as enabling development to secure the long term viability of the listed building.

## Q2 Context

Rear extensions do not impact solely on the principal listed building, but also on the wider terrace. Any proposed development will be assessed in terms of its impact on the adjoining listed buildings and on the terrace as a whole. Some terraces have had more and larger rear extensions than others and these variations should be taken into account when assessing any development. Contextual analysis and drawings will be required to support planning and listed building consent applications.



Stoneyhill Terrace, Cove

## R | Cove Bay Conservation Area

Review of conservation area status

The Cove Bay Conservation Area character appraisal in section 3.3 details an area in severe decline that no longer meets the legal definition of a conservation area as being “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Without solid community support and action Cove Bay would become a conservation area in name only. This would be contrary to the basic assumption set out in 2.1 b) that “we will amend boundaries or de-designate any areas where a robust, evidence based case for retaining conservation area status can no longer be made.”

Although the character appraisal documents insufficient evidence to retain Cove Bay’s conservation area status there is nevertheless significant local support for retention of conservation area designation. After careful consideration it is recommended that Cove Bay remains a conservation area and that its character is reviewed and monitored after a minimum period of 12 months from the date that this document is approved by the Council. This is to enable the local community to formulate plans to improve and enhance the character of Cove Bay Conservation Area.

## S | Ferryhill Conservation Area

The boundary of Ferryhill Conservation Area has been extended to include 4 – 10 Devanha Gardens West. This is a terrace of four early 20th century properties showing an Arts and Crafts influence (Plan 1). Constructed in a traditional manner of granite they are set back from the pavement with small front gardens. The terrace is generally well preserved and adds to the historic street scene and is consistent with the rest of the northern side of Devanha Gardens West already being included in Ferryhill Conservation Area.

## T | Marine Terrace Conservation Area

Coull Cottage, 1 ½ Devanha Terrace, was included in the second extension to the Marine Terrace Conservation Area that was designated in June 1978. Over the years a cartographical error has resulted in this property being excluded from the boundary of the Conservation Area as shown in the Aberdeen Local Plan (2008) and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012). This mistake is to be rectified and Coull Cottage included within Marine Terrace Conservation Area.