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# ABERYSTWYTH

## Conservation Area Appraisal

March 2024

Prepared for

**Ceredigion County Council**

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The GRIFFITHS HERITAGE CONSULTANCY Ltd

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Historic Environment in Ceredigion

1.1.1 The Ceredigion landscape is rich in evidence from the past. The term ‘historic environment’ describes the results of human interaction with the natural environment over many thousands of years, including the buildings, monuments, conservation areas, townscapes and landscapes that we value as a community and wish to preserve. This series of appraisals and management plans are to assist the Council and the local community / public with understanding the special value and interest of the conservation areas in Ceredigion, and how it can best be protected and enhanced.

1.1.2 Many historic features are protected through legislation and the planning system (see below). In addition to Ceredigion’s designated assets there are numerous undesignated features including archaeological sites and historic buildings. Undesignated assets can be more vulnerable to unsympathetic change or loss through development and other works. As well as analysing the contribution of designated assets to the towns of Ceredigion, the acknowledgement of undesignated assets, through tools such as this appraisal, can help to identify their significance and to protect them for the future. In Wales, over 200,000 undesignated heritage assets are recorded on the four regional Historic Environment Records that are now a consideration in the planning system under the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.



*Fig. 1 General View of Marine Terrace, the beach and Constitution Hill*

- 1.1.3 There are 1896 buildings and structures included on the national 'List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest' in Ceredigion. Many more pre 1948 structures are protected by being within the 'curtilage' of a listed building. A Listed building is one which has been identified, by Cadw, as being of national architectural or historic importance. As such, any works which would affect the character of the structure or any features of architectural or historic interest would require permission - known as Listed Building Consent. Contrary to popular belief, the listing covers the whole of a building - inside and out, and includes any fixtures or fittings.
- 1.1.4 Ceredigion has 262 Scheduled Monuments. Scheduling is the way that a monument or archaeological site of national importance is recognised by law. The term 'scheduled monument' is wide ranging and includes not only well-known castles, abbeys and prehistoric burial sites, but also sites such as limekilns, deserted medieval settlements and the remains of the iron, coal and slate industries. Some scheduled monuments contain standing buildings or ruins and others have no visible remains above ground, but their buried archaeology is of national importance. The aim of scheduling is to preserve the archaeological evidence that survives within sites and monuments. This includes the physical fabric of the monument, its setting and any associated artefacts and environmental evidence. This means that if you want to carry out work that would physically alter a scheduled monument you will probably need to apply to Cadw for permission - known as Scheduled Monument Consent.
- 1.1.5 There are 12 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens within Ceredigion. Registration identifies parks and gardens which are of special historic interest to Wales. They range in date from the medieval period to the mid-twentieth century. Registration is a material consideration in the planning process; local planning authorities must take into account the historic interest of the site when deciding whether or not to grant permission for any changes.
- 1.1.6 Four areas in Ceredigion have been designated through the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales. The largest of these is the Upland Ceredigion Historic Landscape which covers much of the eastern and northern part of the county. The Lower Teifi Valley Historic Landscape, is located in the south-west, and is partially shared with Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. The Drefach-Felindre and Towy Valley Historic Landscapes are located within Carmarthenshire, but part also falls within Ceredigion's southern boundary.
- 1.1.7 Ceredigion also has 13 designated conservation areas, which means there are additional controls over demolition (requiring Conservation Area Consent) and works to trees in these areas. The conservation areas are:

- Aberaeron
- Aberystwyth
- Adpar
- Cardigan
- Lampeter
- Llanbadarn Fawr
- Llandysul
- Cenarth
- Llanddewi Brefi
- Llanrhystud
- Llansantffraed
- New Quay
- Tregaron

Of these areas; Cardigan, Llanddewi Brefi and Tregaron have Article 4 Directions in place. These Directions remove the permitted development rights for a particular building, site or area meaning that there are more restrictions regarding what works can be carried out without the need for planning permission. Trees in Conservation Areas are also protected: the local authority must be given 6 weeks notice before carrying out works to trees in a conservation area.

## 1.2 Conservation Areas

1.2.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to **preserve or enhance** the character and appearance of designated conservation areas under The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This Act also requires the Local Authority to identify and designate new conservation areas by determining which parts of their area are of special architectural or historic interest.

**Fig. 2 Victorian period architecture in Aberystwyth is varied and often of high quality**



- 1.2.2 There are more than 500 conservation areas in Wales and they are valued as special places by those who visit and live or work in them.
- 1.2.3 Conservation areas are rich in the physical evidence of the past. Their special interest is expressed in the character of the area and not in isolated buildings. This could be the pattern of settlement, the organisation of space and building plots, and the networks of routes, as well as the style and type of building, their materials and detailing.
- 1.2.4 This means that it is essential to manage change carefully in conservation areas to make sure that their character and appearance are safeguarded and enhanced. To achieve this, there are special controls around demolishing buildings and cutting down, topping and lopping trees.

### **1.3 Appraisals and Management Plans**

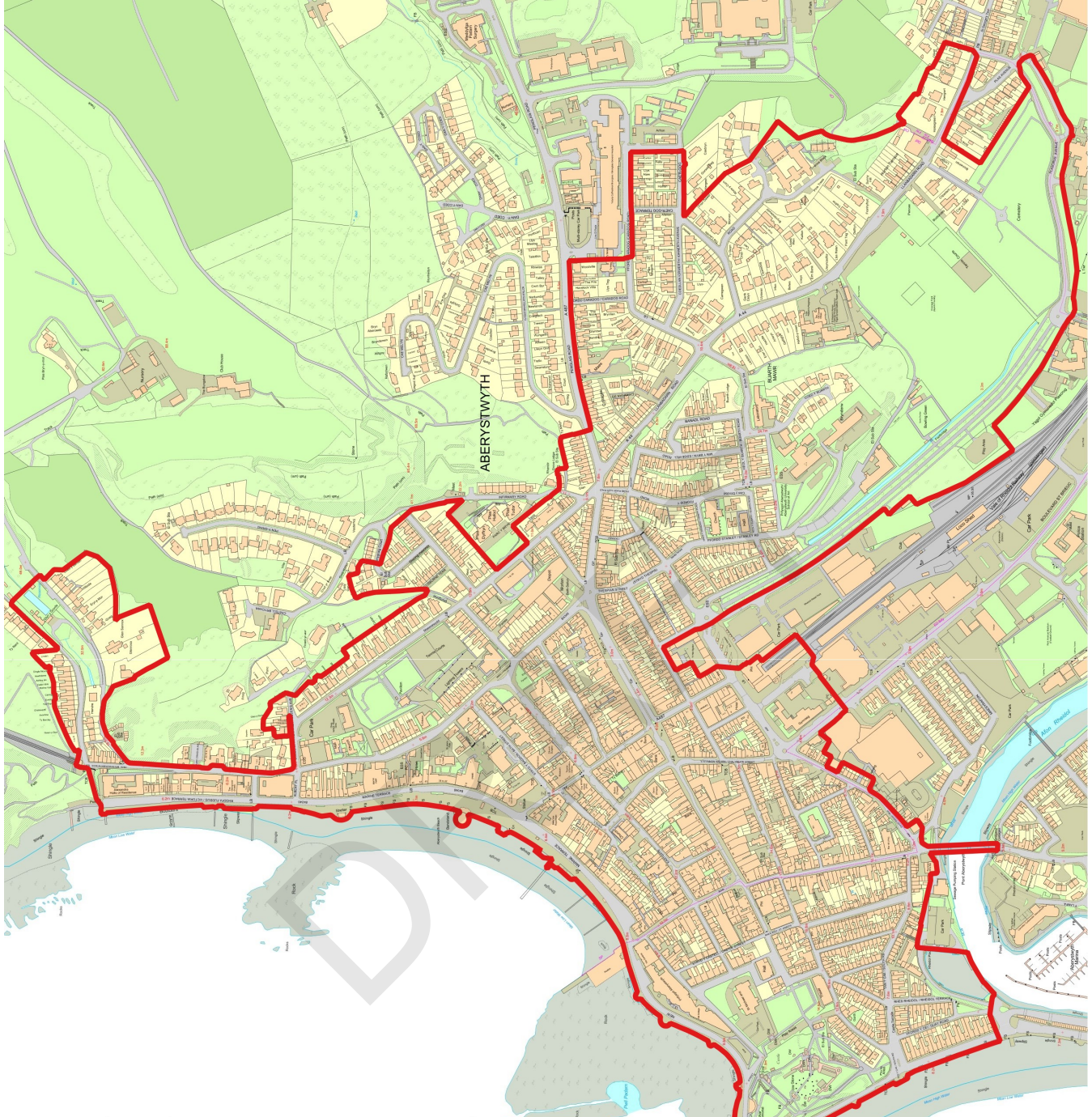
- 1.3.1 Section 71 of the 1990 Act sets out that it shall be the duty of the LPA, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment identifies conservation area appraisals as the foundation for such proposals as they provide a basis for more detailed management plans.
- 1.3.2 A conservation area appraisal is the foundation for positive management. It provides a detailed picture of what makes an area special and can be used to identify opportunities and priorities for action. The appraisal offers a shared understanding of character and importance, and highlights problems and potential, which can be used as the evidence base for a more detailed management plan supported by a robust local policy framework.
- 1.3.3 Ceredigion County Council has commissioned The Griffiths Heritage Consultancy to prepare appraisals and management plans, alongside undertaking a boundary review, for the conservation areas in 6 of the County's towns.
- 1.3.4 The appraisals and management plans have been subject to initial stakeholder and public consultation as set out in section 4.5. If agreed, following further public consultation, they will be adopted by Ceredigion County Council as supplementary planning guidance (SPG).



## **2. INTRODUCTION TO ABERYSTWYTH CONSERVATION AREA**

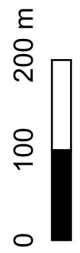
### **2.1 Designation and The Conservation Area Boundary**

- 2.1.1 The conservation area was designated in 1969 and extended in 1980, 1981 and 1984. It covers the core of the town along the shoreline and north of the railway line.

Fig. 3 Current Conservation Area Boundary at Aberystwyth



 <p><b>Cyngor Sir Ceredigion</b>  <b>Ceredigion County Council</b>          Neuadd Cyngor, Ceredigion, Penmorfa,          Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA          Ffôn/Tel. 01545 570881</p>	<p><b>Aberystwyth</b></p>	<p>Allwedd / Key</p> <p> Conservation Area</p>	<p>Graddfa / Scale: 1:7 078          Aigriffwyd ar / Printed on: 2024-04-17</p> <p style="text-align: right;">G N</p> <p><small>© Hewlett-Packard Development Company, 2004. Crown Copyright, 100024419          © Crown copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey 100024419          © Hewlett-Packard Development Company, 2004. Ordnance Survey 100024419          © Geographing plc 2000   © COWI Ebersay 2008          © Hewlett-Packard Development Company, 2004. Crown Copyright, 100024419</small></p>
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- 2.1.2 The modern industrial and commercial areas to the south and east are excluded from the boundary, as are the Hospital, University and National Library areas to the north and east.

## 2.2 Location and Setting

- 2.2.1 Aberystwyth is situated in a rural location on the west coast of Wales approximately halfway along Cardigan Bay. It is the largest town in Ceredigion. It is located where the Rivers Ystwyth and Rheidol enter the sea. To the immediate east is the flood plain of the River Rheidol and beyond that are the Cambrian Mountains. For many years the flood plain restricted development of the town towards the east.
- 2.2.2 To the north is Constitution Hill and to the south Pen Dinas, effectively creating a ring of higher ground around the town.
- 2.2.3 Aberystwyth is relatively remote, with the nearest sizable settlements, Carmarthen located 50 miles to the south, Swansea located 70 miles to the south, Newtown 40 miles to the east, Shrewsbury 75 miles to the east and Wrexham 80 miles to the north-east.
- 2.2.4 Its special location, next to the sea with a natural harbour and stunning coastline and surrounded by protective hills and picturesque landscape, was undoubtedly part of the reason for the choice of location for earlier settlement and has contributed to the town's success and development over time.

## 2.3 Summary Description

- 2.3.1 Whilst Aberystwyth appears to many to be a substantial Victorian seaside town, it started as an important Medieval settlement, no doubt drawing on the success of the early Christian community at Llanbadarn Fawr, whilst taking advantage of Aberystwyth's natural topography and location. In fact, Aberystwyth has many high quality and important Georgian buildings in addition to its renowned Victorian architecture and the Medieval street layout defines much of the current town. Nevertheless, Aberystwyth today is dominated by its seafront location and the impressive sweep of the Victorian terraced development along the Promenade. A wide diversity of Victorian styles of architecture demonstrate its phases of development during this period, combining commercial, civic, spiritual, domestic and recreational buildings into streetscapes which showcase a delightful variety of design and materials, punctuated by pleasant and active open spaces. Careful and high quality architectural detailing is a hallmark of Georgian and Victorian architecture and Aberystwyth is no exception, hosting myriad examples of ironwork, decorative stone, brick and tile, windows, doors, porches, and many other examples.





**Fig. 4 Leafy suburbs and elegant Victorian town houses in Queen's Road**

### **3. LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

#### **3.1 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, places a duty on public bodies to *'improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in accordance with the sustainable development principle that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*.

3.1.2 It is widely recognised that the historic environment can have a positive impact on people and communities and contribute towards quality of life and well-being. If the historic environment is going to continue to deliver its rich benefits to communities there is a need to identify what is significant and manage change in a sensitive and sustainable way.

3.1.3 Essential to maintaining the special quality of a particular area (or any heritage asset) is the positive management of change based on a full understanding of the character and significance of the area. This is underpinned by raising awareness and understanding of the benefits that they can deliver and the skills necessary to do so.

#### **3.2 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) as amended by The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.**

3.2.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to identify *'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character*

or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and designate them as conservation areas. They must also formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas from time to time. The Act also requires local planning authorities to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas in local development plan policies and when taking planning decisions.

3.2.2 The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 amended the 1990 Planning Act in a number of ways, including a requirement for the submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment with applications for Conservation Area Consent.

3.2.3 The forthcoming Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 14 June 2023 and it is expected that the Act will come into force in the latter part of 2024. It will bring all the existing legislation together in one bilingual Act without affecting existing levels of protection or duties.

### 3.3 National Policy and Guidance

3.3.1 *Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 12, 2024)* sets the context for sustainable land use policy within Wales and identifies the need for the promotion of good design.

3.3.2 Policy on the historic environment is contained within Chapter 6 of PPW, which sets out national policies requiring that Local Planning Authorities exercise a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character of a Conservation Area and/or its setting when considering development proposals.

3.3.3 *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment* provides guidance on how to consider the historic environment in development plans and planning decisions.

3.3.4 Local planning authorities should take account of Cadw's (2011) *Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles)* to achieve high-quality sensitive change. The document sets out six guiding principles for the conservation of the historic environment:

- Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values
- Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital
- The historic environment is a shared resource
- Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent

- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

3.3.5 Cadw has also produced a series of best-practice guidance publications that complement the legislative framework and associated planning policy and advice and support the sustainable management of the Welsh historic environment. These include: *Managing Conservation Areas in Wales*; *Managing Historic Character in Wales*; *Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales*, *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales*, and *Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest*, amongst others.

3.3.6 Cadw's (2017) *Managing Conservation Areas in Wales* supplements PPW and TAN 24 and sets out the policy context and duties for local planning authorities to designate and manage conservation areas. It also identifies key aspects of good practice for their designation and appraisal, including the participation of stakeholders and the development of local policies for positive management and enhancement so that their character and appearance are preserved and enhanced.



**Fig. 5 Four storey Victorian town houses in various architectural styles in North Parade**

### 3.4 Local Planning Policy

3.4.1 Ceredigion Local Development Plan (LDP1): 2007 - 2022 (Adopted 2013) sets out policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land in Ceredigion for the 15 year period up to 31 March 2022. The replacement LDP (LDP2) is, however, currently on hold due to

Phosphate issues and therefore LDP1 is the current Development Plan for the county.

- 3.4.2 In LDP1, Policy DM07 requires that development within conservation areas must demonstrate that regard has been had to Conservation Area Appraisals, where available, and national guidance.
- 3.4.3 Ceredigion County Council's SPG: Built Environment and Design provides supplementary guidance for development relating to or affecting the historic environment.
- 3.4.4 In 2013 Cadw produced an Urban Characterisation Study of Aberystwyth (*Aberystwyth: Understanding Urban Character*). This document, although now ten years old, is extremely detailed and well researched and it remains an exemplar of characterisation and should continue to be referred to for decision making and for providing advice regarding character areas and architecture. This document covers the greater extent of the existing town and has been extensively used to inform this appraisal. This appraisal differs from the characterisation study in regards to: the area covered; the appraisal, analysis and management policies; community consultation; and the changes of the intervening ten years.
- 3.4.5 An extensive amount of work was undertaken by the Council to produce a draft conservation area appraisal in 2015, particularly in relation to the town's character areas. This document has been used to inform this appraisal and updates it to cover changes in the intervening years, to take account of new guidance and processes, and to finish any parts which were outstanding.

#### 4. DEFINITION OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

##### 4.1 Summary of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

EVIDENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE	HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE	AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE	COMMUNAL VALUES
HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE / HIGH	HIGH

- 4.1.1 This table, together with the explanations below, summarise the state of the conservation area at the current time and identifies the special interest, which should be preserved, and also where enhancements can be made. A 'High' value does not mean that improvements cannot be made. They are based on the physical and historic research and assessment undertaken for this appraisal and used in conjunction with Cadw's (2011) *Conservation*

*Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales*, which identifies four heritage values by which significance can be identified:

- **Evidential value:** every historic asset has a unique story to tell. The surviving historic fabric and detail — whether above or below ground — helps us to understand when and how each historic asset was made, how it was used and how it has changed over time. Pictorial and documentary sources may also increase our understanding.
- **Historical value:** historic assets may illuminate particular aspects of the past. They can help us to understand how people lived and worked, and the beliefs and values they cherished. They may be associated with notable people or events. Through evocation and association, historic assets can connect past people, aspects of life and events with the present.
- **Aesthetic value:** we may value historic assets for their visual qualities, whether they result from conscious design and craftsmanship, or from the fortuitous effect of change over time. Tastes alter and so do historic assets: earlier records and careful analysis of what survives may help in appreciating aesthetic value.
- **Communal value:** historic assets may be cherished by the people and communities who relate to them, and they may play an important part in collective experience or memory. Historic assets can have economic as well as social value with the capacity to provide a valuable source of income or employment.



**Fig. 6 Remnants of Aberystwyth's Georgian history contribute to its historical and evidential values**

- 4.1.2 Aberystwyth Conservation Area is essentially the product of a series of tightly controlled planned development phases. Starting with the Medieval grid layout of the old town and the subsequent restricted development within the town walls and the later design restrictions imposed by the Town Corporation.
- 4.1.3 The overarching Victorian architectural character means it can be difficult to recognise the few remaining earlier buildings and structures and no doubt many would think of Aberystwyth as a purely Victorian seaside town.
- 4.1.4 Aberystwyth's location has had pronounced influence over its current character - from the restrictions of developing on the surrounding marshland, the need to provide bespoke developments catering for the seaside tourism industry, to its development as a regional hub due to its distance from any other towns of a reasonable size.

## 4.2 Evidential

- 4.2.1 The evidential value of Aberystwyth's street plan layout, archaeology and buildings of many eras demonstrates centuries of planned development and provides an insight into the social order and reasons for development of different historical periods.
- 4.2.2 There is high potential for both below ground and standing archaeological (buildings) evidence to have survived and for it to be able to inform us about the earlier and subsequent phases of development within the town.
- 4.2.3 Substantial archival and historical research material is available for further study into the history and development of Aberystwyth.

## 4.3 Historical

- 4.3.1 Aberystwyth's strategic importance in the Medieval period was recognised by Edward I by establishing one of his first castles in the area.
- 4.3.2 The association with the nationally important monastic centre at Llanbadarn Fawr provides an insight into the importance of the church in Medieval society.
- 4.3.3 Aberystwyth was an important maritime centre and an influential tourism destination. It was the administrative centre of local industry such as lead mining and is now the primary county town.
- 4.3.4 Many Important historical figures have influenced the development and character of the town.

#### 4.4 Aesthetic

- 4.4.1 From the gracious sweep of Marine Terrace to the imposing severity of the castle, through a multitude of historic shops and buildings, relaxing squares and street cafes, and fascinating architectural detailing, Aberystwyth has an aesthetic to please most critics.
- 4.4.2 A relatively high proportion of empty shops and upper floors, lost street trees and dense traffic detract from the aesthetic values of the town, mostly due to the impact on vitality, visual clutter and build up of maintenance these cause. This aspect has a high potential for improvement.



*Fig. 7 The decorative tiling of this public house adds to the rich aesthetic value of the architectural detailing at Aberystwyth*

#### 4.5 Communal Values

- 4.5.1 The conservation area contains a high number of public buildings and community resources such as the Town Hall, Castle, museum, churches, pubs, chapels, shops, banks, restaurants, hotels, arts centres, and community buildings amongst others.
- 4.5.2 Much commercial and economic activity happens within the boundary of the conservation area boundary meaning that the area has a high community value for income and employment.

4.5.3 During the process of producing this appraisal, an initial survey was sent to stakeholders asking them to identify what they thought was important about the conservation area and if there were any issues. One response on behalf of 19 people was received to this survey.

4.5.4 In order to gather public comments about the first draft of the appraisal and management plan, a public consultation drop in event was held at Aberystwyth during September 2023. The draft appraisal and management plan were also available to download via a web link. Twelve people attended the session the documents were downloaded over 40 times. A good number of comments were received which have been used to revise the appraisal. Responses related to the following matters, amongst others:

- Growth and historical development is important
- Location is important
- Variety of building materials and architectural features which should be protected or reinstated where lost
- Open green areas and trees are important features
- Historical architecture is important including specific types and features such as public houses, municipal buildings, the Promenade, the Castle, Victorian town houses and Constitution Hill
- The town is aesthetically pleasing and economically and historically important
- Unique identity and sense of place
- Neglect and lack of maintenance is an issue
- Loss of historic architectural features and use of inappropriate materials is an issue
- More public involvement with decision making regarding development
- Provide more information and interpretation about the history of the town
- Support for the introduction of an Article 4 Direction
- Support for extending the conservation area boundary, and to extend further to include the pier and jetty, the historic areas of Trefechan, and at each review to include buildings that are at least 80 years old
- Provide provisions for the conservation of the Welsh language in the appraisal, such as house and street names



4.5.5 This rate of engagement is, from experience, considered to be very positive. It is clear from the written and verbal responses that the local community has pride in the town, its architecture and history and would like it to be preserved and enhanced. Specifically more investment in particular projects such as celebrating the history and development of Aberystwyth and protection of its architecture.



*Fig. 8 Protection of historic architectural features is a high priority for the local community.*

## 5. PHYSICAL CONTEXT

### 5.1 Geology

5.1.1 According to the British Geological Society the bedrock in this area is the Aberystwyth Grits Group - Sandstone and mudstone. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 443.8 and 433.4 million years ago during the Silurian period.

5.1.2 There is a mixture of superficial deposits across this relatively small area, mainly due to its coastal location at the mouth of a river:

- ◆ Till, Devensian - Diamicton, a sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

- ◆ Alluvium - Clay, silt, sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 11.8 thousand years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.
- ◆ Glaciofluvial Ice Contact Deposits, Devensian - Sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.
- ◆ Storm Beach Deposits - Gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period

5.1.3 There are abundant trace fossils along the shore.

## 5.2 Topography

5.2.1 The main centre of the town is low lying and mostly flat, at around 9 to 11m above sea level.

5.2.2 The Rheidol valley carves a lower-lying course along its length from east to west, lying generally south of the developed town.

5.2.3 The land rises quite steeply at the northern edge of the town to over 100m above sea level, with this ridge of high ground continuing around to the northeast. While to the south the steep hill of Pen Dinas also rises to over 100m and after a short drop this continues to the south east of the town.

5.2.4 Aberystwyth is essentially located within a river mouth basin surrounded and sheltered by hills and higher ground to the north, east and south.

## 5.3 Landscape Character

5.3.1 Natural Resources Wales' LANDMAP resource identifies this area as being centrally within the National Landscape Character Area of 'Rheidol and Ystwyth Hills and Valleys'. LANDMAP's historic landscape character statement reports a 'built-up area of Aberystwyth and Llanbadarn. It includes the old centres of these two settlements, modern housing development, institutions such as the university and National Library of Wales and industrial estates. Tourist/leisure facilities such as sports fields and a golf course are included.' 'Horticulture. Nucleated Settlement. Other Settlement. Processing/Manufacturing. Communications. Military. Designed Landscape. Recreational'. These landscape assessments are broad brush and cover a far wider geographic area than that considered by this appraisal.

5.3.2 NRW's description for the 'Rheidol and Ystwyth Hills and Valleys' landscape character area provides an excellent summary of the hinterland and landscape around the town: '*This is the landscape of Aberystwyth and its hinterland. It is the area between mountains and sea, whose*

*rivers converge near the town. Within their relatively short length, the rivers tumble dramatically from the adjacent Pumlimon massif, often in steep-sided, wooded gorges, being some of the best examples in Wales. They emerge to become gentle, sometimes braiding lowland rivers, flowing through a landscape of thick hedges and improved pastures, before meeting the sea abruptly around Aberystwyth. Intervening ridges straddle the upland-lowland divide, some being enclosed, others afforested or open. Long views are gained from them, out across the sea in Cardigan Bay.'*



**Fig. 9 Pen Dinas, South Beach and Cardigan Bay from the Castle**

## **6. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **6.1 The Early Settlement**

- 6.1.1 Little evidence has been found for the prehistoric settlement of the area but the Iron Age fort at Pen Dinas, to the south of the town, suggests that there was at least a later prehistoric presence.
- 6.1.2 Aberystwyth was part of the ancient parish of Llanbadarn Fawr with its important Medieval monastic settlement until 1861. The settlement at Llanbadarn Fawr is known to have been in existence from the 10th century. The settlement was known as Llanbadarn Gaerog (or fortified Llanbadarn) until about 1400, when the name Aberystwyth was first used.
- 6.1.3 An early twelfth-century Norman castle was built by Gilbert Fitz Richard on the southwest bank of the Ystwyth overlooking its original mouth (Tan y Castell or Old Aberystwyth Castle). A settlement beside this castle was mentioned in 1197.

## 6.2 Edward I's Castle and the Medieval Town

6.2.1 Aberystwyth was one of the first Castle Towns to be established by Edward I with its charter being granted in 1277. The Castle and a walled town was built by Edward's brother Edmund of Lancaster with the town wall defences starting in 1278. Much of the town was destroyed during a Welsh revolt in 1282 but the Castle and walls were substantially complete by 1289. The Castle ruins are the only standing structures to survive from this early period, but the Medieval town street pattern is virtually intact together with the distinctive layout of the Medieval burgage plots.



*Fig. 10 Some of the remains of Aberystwyth Castle*

- 6.2.2 The Medieval town was laid out in a typical grid pattern which still defines the grain of development in the area around the Castle.
- 6.2.3 The line of the walls and ditch is still followed by King Street, Baker Street, Chalybeate Street, Mill Street and South Road. There was a gate at the foot of Great Darkgate Street, at the junction with North Parade where it is intersected by the line of Baker Street and Chalybeate Street, and another at the foot of Bridge Street adjacent to the bridge. There was a third gate at the end of Eastgate.
- 6.2.4 Parts of the town walls survived until the early nineteenth century, when the gates were finally removed and the stone of the walls extensively appropriated for building work elsewhere.
- 6.2.5 The town was the victim of Welsh unrest during the late Medieval period. It was burnt by Owain Glyndwr in 1401, taken by his forces in 1404 and retaken by the English in 1408. As

such it failed to prosper during this time and by the 1530s, John Leyland found the walls in a ruinous state. By the late sixteenth century, there were only 'three or four core inhabited houses and as many if not more uninhabited dwellings in decay' (W.J. Lewis (1959) 'Some aspects of the history of Aberystwyth', Ceredigion, Vol. III, No. 4).

### 6.3 Post Medieval

- 6.3.1 During the Tudor period, once again Aberystwyth was the victim of internal unrest, particularly during the Civil War. The castle was held for the Royalists, taken by the Parliamentary forces after a siege, and deliberately ruined in 1649.
- 6.3.2 Little development appears to have occurred during this period. Two areas of common land on either side of Bridge Street and other open areas behind the properties on Pier Street, remained undeveloped until the end of the eighteenth century. No building was permitted on the common land, which lay beyond the walls, until 1797.

### 6.4 Georgian Period

- 6.4.1 This was the period of agricultural revolution, industrialisation and economic prosperity for the UK. The oldest surviving buildings in the town date from this period and it is clear that its fortunes were changing as it grew on the back of the local lead mining industry and became popular as a seaside resort.
- 6.4.2 During this period the custom house was transferred to Aberystwyth from Aberdyfi in 1763, a harbour trust was established in 1780, and the harbour was finally improved in the 1830s, starting with the construction of a stone pier (extended in 1858 and the 1870s).
- 6.4.3 Before 1808, the common was unenclosed land over which the burgesses enjoyed special rights. Between 1813 and 1834 the Court Leet let much of the old common on long leases to pay legal fees and this allowed the town to expand greatly. Having had control over the town, its markets, development, law and order and so on since the late 1600s, the Court Leet ceased to exist at the end of 1835 with the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act.



*Fig. 11 Georgian town houses in Market Street*

- 6.4.4 The Powells of Nanteos were large land holders and built several significant developments within the town. Notably, the residential development at Laura Place, the Assembly Rooms in 1820 and buildings in Pier Street, Eastgate, New Street and Market Street. Other influential wealthy families, such as the Pryse family of Gogerddan, also built prominent residences and other buildings within the town as it became fashionable with the elite.
- 6.4.5 New hotels and inns were built to accommodate the new tourism industry as well as purpose built letting houses. Marine baths were established by 1809, the Promenade started by 1819 and by 1848, 60 houses had been built along Marine Terrace.
- 6.4.6 In 1835 two Acts of Parliament changed the way in which the development of the town was controlled. The Municipal Corporations Act abolished the Court Leet and introduced the elected Borough Council and a local Improvement Act which set up Town Improvement Commissioners to improve the town and supply it with water.

## 6.5 The Victorian Period

- 6.5.1 The Commissioners and the Borough Council undertook or oversaw a number of improvement works within the town which enhanced conditions within the town and contributed to its development. These included:
- Setting up the town's own water supply
  - Construction of drains and sewers
  - Street lighting with gas and later the provision of electricity
  - Replacement of the cobbled pavements with flagstones
  - Setting up the Aberystwyth Police Force
  - Construction of a new County Hall
  - New market in St. James's Square
  - Establishment of a fish market below the Guild Hall
  - Election of a School Board and opening of a Board School (now Ysgol Gymraeg) in Alexandra Road
  - Opening of a free public library in 1874
  - Cattle market moved from the Queen's Road area to Park Avenue
  - Building of the Town Clock (now demolished)
  - Construction of the Hotel Cambria
  - Construction of the Cliff Railway
  - New hospital at North Road
  - Opening of new cemetery at Llanbadarn Road
  - Slum clearances in Skinner Street, Poplar Row and Trinity Row in the early 20th century

6.5.2 The authorities continued to grant leases for new private building works, although with strict design and scale restrictions controlled by the leases. It was during this period that the town further expanded in response to additional tourism demand, partially due to new access via the railways (Aberystwyth and Welsh Coast Railway in 1864, and the Manchester and Milford Railway (from Carmarthen) in 1867). Construction on former areas of common land allowed larger structures than developing solely within the grid of Medieval streets. New styles development, the railway brought in new materials and extravagant architecture was planned if not always executed (e.g. John Pollard Seddon's Victoria Terrace).

- More boarding houses were built on Marine Terrace
- The enormous Queen's Hotel was completed in 1866
- Another large hotel was begun near the Castle, around the old Castle House, subsequently bought by the University College of Wales when funds ran out



***Fig. 12 The former Castle Hotel (currently being renovated)***

- Construction of a sea wall in front of the Queens Hotel - later extended to the foot of Constitution Hill
- Building of Victoria Terrace
- Back lanes and some of the old burgages were also built up (e.g. Crynfryn Row)

- Bathhouse constructed on rocks near the Queen's Hotel
- Some new streets created: New Street and Market Street were both laid out in the 1830s
- New buildings and replacement of many existing buildings - for example, along Portland Street, Portland Road, the south side of North Parade, and New Street
- Development of artisan housing along new streets such as Powell Street, William Street, George Street and existing streets such as High Street and Custom House Street.
- Development of the suburbs at The Buarth, Llanbadarn Road and North Road
- The construction of the Vale of Rheidol Railway

## 6.6 Modern

6.6.1 There has been little impactful development within the conservation area during the 20th and 21st centuries, since most major development during these periods took place at the edges of the town including the construction of the National Library buildings, the new University buildings and extensive suburbs.

6.6.2 There has, however, been some replacement of commercial buildings within the town centre, mostly during the mid to late 20th century and limited modern hotel / flats development. Some of the commercial developments from c.1960/70s would now be considered to be intrusive. During the 1930s construction of entertainment venues such as the King's Hall (now replaced by modern flats), bandstand, putting green, tennis courts and a swimming pool at Plascrug were typical but also limited.



*Fig 13 Poor quality 20th century redevelopment in the town centre*



- 6.6.3 The modern experience of Aberystwyth is essentially a pedestrian one since it is difficult to drive around and parking is very limited. During the modern period there has been piecemeal replacement and alteration of pavements and roads, provision and replacement of street furniture and signage, some replacement of traditional shopfronts and signage, accessibility improvements, and construction of out of town shopping centres and car parks.
- 6.6.4 Arguably the biggest impact from the modern era is lack of maintenance and loss of architectural detailing, primarily on residential properties and retail premises. Whilst many traditional buildings in Aberystwyth have been altered over time, their alterations have often been of high quality and are now deemed to have a significance of their own. It seems unlikely that future generations will endow modern poor quality windows and shopfronts with the same significance. Aberystwyth has the structure and architectural bones of a truly outstanding town but, not surprisingly in a harsh economic climate, lack of maintenance is causing issues.
- 6.6.5 However, there are clearly many projects in hand on certain buildings to conserve them and bring them back into suitable uses. There are also some excellent examples of good maintenance and a wish to provide traditional style signage, street furniture and use of materials.
- 6.6.6 Conservation programmes run by Ceredigion County Council with funding from various sources have also made a difference within the town. There have been several of these



schemes including: the Town Improvement Grant 2008-2012; Promenade TS 1996-2001; and Strategic Regeneration Area funding 2010-2015.

*Fig. 14 Repair or replacement of shopfronts in traditional designs and materials enhance the character of the area*

## 7 SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

### 7.1 Character Areas - Introduction

7.1.1 Both Cadw's Urban Characterisation study and the draft 2015 Appraisal identify that the town can be divided up into different character areas, which are still relevant today. It should be noted that Cadw's study covers a wider area than the conservation area and that whilst the character areas identified in this report roughly correspond to those identified by Cadw they do not match exactly. Five character areas have been identified and are shown on the map overleaf:

- The Old Town
- Marine Terrace, The Promenade, Pier and Constitution Hill
- Owain Glyndwr Square, North Parade, Portland Street, Alexandra Road and Terrace Road.
- Queen's Road, North Road, The Buarth and Llanbadarn Road Area
- Plas Crug, Vicarage Field and Cemetery Area

### 7.2 Character Areas - The Old Town

7.2.1 The Old Town, as understood by being the area within the old town walls, covers the following areas:

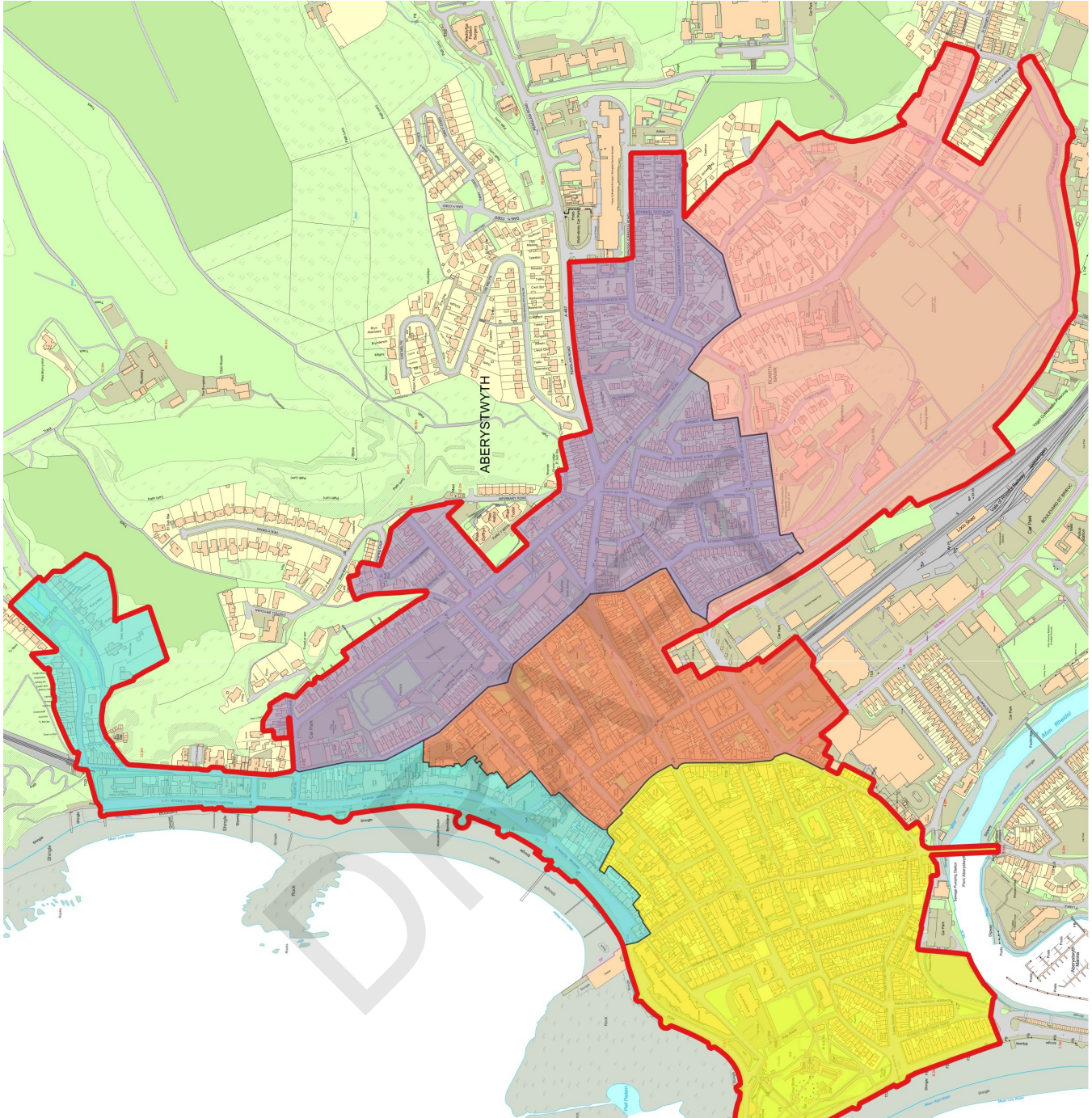
- Great Darkgate Street, Eastgate, Queen Street, Bridge Street and Pier Street.
- Laura Place and the Castle.
- Powell Street, Greys Inn Road, William Street and George Street.
- High Street, Custom House Street and South Road Area.



7.2.2 **Great Darkgate Street** with the intersecting **Bridge Street / Pier Street** were the two main streets of the medieval town and **Great Darkgate Street** remains an important spinal link within the town centre. The Town later expanded to the north and east and whilst the area around Bridge Street retained its residential character, **Great Darkgate Street** and **Pier Street** became more commercialised.

7.2.3 The main streets in this area were laid out with burgages plots when the town was established, which continue to be visible in the plot grain in many areas, though damaged by the development behind the frontages on the south side of **Great Darkgate Street**.

7.2.4 There was a market area at the intersection of these main streets, distinctive because of its absence of burgage plots (the area bounded by upper **Great Darkgate Street**, **Princess Street** and **Bridge Street**).

Fig. 15 Map of Character Areas in Aberystwyth



 <p><b>Cyngor Sir Ceredigion</b>  <b>Ceredigion County Council</b>          Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,          Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA          Ffôn/Tel. 01545 570881</p>	<p><b>Aberystwyth</b></p>	<p><b>Allwedd / Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="border: 2px solid red; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Conservation Area</li> </ul> <p><b>Aberystwyth Character Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="background-color: yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> The Old Town</li> <li><span style="background-color: lightblue; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> The Promenade</li> <li><span style="background-color: orange; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Owain Glyndŵr Square</li> <li><span style="background-color: purple; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> The Buarth</li> <li><span style="background-color: pink; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Plascrug</li> </ul>	<p><b>G</b> <b>N</b></p>  <p><b>Graddfa / Scale: 1:7,078</b>  <b>Argraffwyd ar / Printed on: 2024-04-17</b></p> <p><small>© Heddfest y Gorn a hysbais cronfa, 2024. Arwyng, Orllewin, 100024419          © Heddfest y Gorn a hysbais cronfa, 2024. Arwyng, Orllewin, 100024419          © Heddfest y Gorn a hysbais cronfa, 2024. Arwyng, Orllewin, 100024419          © Local Government Information House, Limited, copyright and database rights, 2024. 100024419          © Local Government Information House, Limited, copyright and database rights, 2024. 100024419          © Local Government Information House, Limited, copyright and database rights, 2024. 100024419          © Local Government Information House, Limited, copyright and database rights, 2024. 100024419</small></p>
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- 7.2.5 Mostly each Medieval burgage plot developed independently, resulting in the diverse mix of building age and type seen today, although most of the buildings on the principal streets are nineteenth century and only a handful may have earlier origins. Aberystwyth lost most of its local vernacular two storied houses with steep pitched rooves during the Georgian and Victorian buildings revolutions. However, there are several buildings within this area which retain the scale of the earlier vernacular style - two storeys with steeply pitched roofs which indicates that these buildings may date from the eighteenth century and thus being among the earliest buildings remaining in Aberystwyth.
- 7.2.6 The current grain of development in this area is of high density with variations in building fabric. There are sections along the streetscape of **Great Darkgate Street** that have been redeveloped in the twentieth century; however, the pattern of development to the street frontages retains the original Medieval street pattern.
- 7.2.7 Large town houses dominate **Bridge Street** with commercial buildings prevalent on all the principal streets reflecting the growth in the economic fortunes of the town during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 7.2.8 **Eastgate** has 19th century commercial buildings of a more modest scale while **Queen Street** is characterised by its mid-late nineteenth century taller residential properties.
- 7.2.9 The old town centre has a lively architectural character expressed in buildings of different scale, materials and finish. This area demonstrates the key periods of Aberystwyth's development from the medieval street plan to the boom eras of the Georgian and Victorian eras. It also contains a few buildings which are potentially pre-Georgian (see 5.2.5).
- 7.2.10 The area of **Laura Place and the Castle** is a high-status planned development on previously open ground with a spacious open character contrasting with the denser development in the old town to the east.
- 7.2.11 This area originally had a formal layout around a square bounded on its other sides by St Michael's Church and Castle House. The open space was lost when St Michael's Church was rebuilt on its present site in the 1890s.
- 7.2.12 **Laura Place** frames the eastern side of this area with a very fine restrained residential Georgian terrace whilst the more open interior spaces are dominated by the grand scales of the Victorian Gothic of St Michael's Church and the rear of the Old College / Castle House. Also visually dominant are the car park and the ruins and grounds of the Castle.



*Fig. 16 Laura Place*

- 7.2.13 All the buildings in this sub-area, apart from the majority of **Sea View Place** which are modest later Victorian residential properties, are Listed Buildings including several Grade II\* and the Castle at Grade I.
- 7.2.14 **Powell Street, Greys Inn Road, William Street** and **George Street** are primarily planned artisan housing from the second half of the 19th century.
- 7.2.15 This area has a relatively consistent architectural character. Most buildings are relatively modest residential with rendering and some good architectural detailing and some make use of exposed stone.
- 7.2.16 This modest housing development surrounds St Mary's Church (Listed Grade II) which dominates the area by its scale and use of decorated Gothic style.
- 7.2.17 **High Street, Custom House Street** and **South Road Area** represents one of the first planned areas of extension after the development of the Medieval town and once building was allowed on the commons inside the town walls.
- 7.2.18 This was probably the location of the Medieval harbour but the area's development, in the late 18th to early 20th century, has created a series of blocks of terraced houses in a mostly regular grid layout. The majority of these are two or three story artisan housing, built straight onto the street, and it appears that it is the later 19th century development or redevelopment of the sites which we can see today.
- 7.2.19 Once again render is dominant in this area with some good architectural detailing. Only later housing is of exposed stone with striking contrast detailing in yellow brick.

### 7.3 Old Town Area - Key Characteristics

#### 7.3.1 Important characteristics of this area include:

- High density development
- Distinctive Medieval street pattern
- Retention of burgage plots
- Some earlier C18th buildings
- Generally flat level topography with gentle downhill slope to the east
- Mostly straight narrow streets with tall buildings either side - sense of enclosure
- Predominantly 2/3 storey buildings
- Width of Great Darkgate Street and parts of Eastgate
- Continuous built development along streets / terraced properties
- Mostly straight but short truncated views
- Gradual change when travelling from west to east from mostly residential to commercial at ground floor with residential above
- Variety of traditional building materials: stone, brick, render
- Contrasting architectural detailing, especially around doors and windows
- Corner plots often characterised by former hotels and existing pubs, generally more prominent through the use of lavish detail or increased scale
- High percentage of listed buildings
- Good original shopfronts
- Poor modern shop fronts and fascia signage
- Retained Georgian and Victorian timber sash windows and doors / door casings, especially the Georgian curved bow or curved corner windows



**Fig. 17 Georgian curved bow windows**



**Fig. 18 Natural stone paving**



**Fig 19 Straight short truncated views**

- High quality individual building styles with ornate architectural detailing, particularly in the civic and commercial areas and on existing and former public houses
- Poorly designed timber or UPVC / aluminium replacement windows and doors
- Pedestrian areas and open spaces
- Traditional street paving (in some areas)
- Traditional chimneys
- Wide painted timber bracketed eaves
- Traditional slate roofs
- Traditional dormer windows (some modern additions detract from these)
- Traditional wrought iron architectural detailing
- Horizontal emphasis from shop fronts at ground level
- Vertical emphasis from bay windows, architectural detailing, fenestration placement and proportions
- Original street names
- Areas of modest traditional artisan dwellings
- Modern blocks of flats which fail to respond to the local vernacular
- One way traffic systems
- Empty shops and empty premises above shops
- Seagull / pigeon droppings (most obvious on rendered facades)



*Fig. 20 Victoria Terrace and part of Marine Terrace*

#### 7.4 Marine Terrace and The Promenade

7.4.1 **Marine Terrace** has been described as the ‘jewel in Aberystwyth’s crown’ and the curved crescent of seaside frontage lined with substantial former (and current) hotels and letting rooms, of three, four or even five storeys with regular architectural rhythms of windows and floors truly make this very important to the character of Aberystwyth.

- 7.4.2 Aberystwyth sea front is made up of three sections; the most southerly part is made up of **New Promenade** and **South Marine Terrace**. The middle part encompasses **Marine Terrace** and **North Beach** and the most northerly part includes **Constitutional Hill** and **Victoria Terrace**.
- 7.4.3 The **Promenade** itself was built in several phases but has a generally homogenous design. It has a strong character due to its scale and design. Important components include the sea walls with their cast-iron railings, the paving, some of the street furniture (notably the snake benches) and the shelter. Later additions include the bandstand and another small shelter, together with various semi-permanent food stands which are of good design and in keeping with their location whilst adding life to the seafront. The curves and serpentine nature of the seafront are particularly noticeable when walking the whole length of the promenade or when viewed from higher ground.
- 7.4.4 The pier and its pavilion also have a strong presence in this area and add distinctive traditional Victorian seaside resort features to the shoreline. It is currently excluded from the conservation area, although it has protection due to its Listed status. (Grade II - Cadw Ref: 10315)
- 7.4.5 The **Promenade** is a busy area in all seasons but particularly in the summer and holiday months. It retains a cheerful leisure character enhanced by the many period and modern features along its length. The Wales Coastal Path and National Cycle Route 81 also run along the promenade.
- 7.4.6 **Constitution Hill**, at the north end of the bay, overlooks the town, seafront and promenade and retains the Victorian funicular cliff railway, stations and a replacement of the Victorian camera obscura, yet is excluded from the conservation area. The Cliff Railway, upper and lower stations and Cliff Railway House are all Listed Grade II (Cadw Ref: 10208 and 10207).
- 7.4.7 The **north beach** is framed by the rocky platforms of the Pier and Bath Rocks and is composed of dark sand and pebbles backed by rocks and a stone sea wall. A series of breakwaters and groynes intersect the beach and provide shelter. The beach can be directly accessed from the concrete slipway or, as the stone sea wall becomes higher towards the northern end of the beach, via steps. The very northern end of the beach has large boulders to protect the seawall and promenade. A small shingle beach lies sheltered below the slopes of Constitution Hill, just beyond the end of the promenade.



- 7.4.8 The **south beach**, separated from the north by the pier and the rocky promontory of castle point, is a wide, gently sloping sand and shingle beach accessed via steps from the promenade.
- 7.4.9 Whilst being an important historic site, the **harbour** today is a quiet area filled with small leisure boats, with most of the harbour structures being relatively modern and surrounded by typical modern seaside developments. It is probable that elements of the historic harbour features survive, incorporated in the modern walls.
- 7.4.10 Neither the **harbour**, nor either of the **beaches** are within the conservation area boundary but they are important characteristics of its setting.



*Fig. 21 The Pier and rocky platforms beyond, at the south end of North Beach*

## 7.5 Marine Terrace and The Promenade - Key Characteristics

7.5.1 Important characteristics of this area include:

- Long terraces of former and existing hotels and boarding houses
- Late Victorian Architecture with considerable overall visual coherence
- Evidence for different building phases from different styles of architecture
- Well set back building line from the sea
- Virtually continuous curved building line
- 3/4/5 storey terraces
- Separation of buildings from pavements through use of lightwells and railings
- Wide, flat, curved / serpentine promenade

- Large public open space
- Street furniture, planters and promenade structures
- Regular rhythms of fenestration and bay windows
- Original windows, doors, door cases and porches, dormers and large chimneys
- Wide painted timber bracketed eaves
- Natural slate roofs
- Predominance of rendered buildings
- Traditional wrought iron architectural features
- Traditional seaside character
- Beach setting
- Stone sea walls
- Flagpoles
- Traditional style decorative lamp posts (some replaced with modern lighting)
- Many listed buildings
- Wide open views out to sea and along the coast, of the crescent and promenade

## 7.6 Owain Glyndwr Square, North Parade, Portland Street, Alexandra Road and Terrace Road

- 7.6.1 This area is now in the centre of the town but was once part of the common land which was developed during the 19th century. The first reference to buildings in this area is from 1798 and it seems that **North Parade** and the adjacent grid of streets had been laid out by 1809. However, the traditional buildings seen today mostly date from after the renewal of leases in the 1860s.
- 7.6.2 **Alexandra Road** and **Terrace Road** were probably not developed until after the arrival of the railways in the late 1860s and there is much early and late 20th century development in this area.
- 7.6.3 Although blurred by later development, there is still evidence of a planned hierarchy of streets. **North Parade** was laid out as a broad formal avenue with **Portland Street** as a secondary principal street, and the others as minor lanes and there are differences in the scale and status of the buildings in the different streets.
- 7.6.4 There is a great variety of building styles, materials and types in this area with many buildings set apart from others by their architectural detailing. Although, possibly due to the constraints imposed by the Corporation, there is a similarity of scale and storey heights which recognises the overall architectural proportions of the rest of the town.

7.6.5 **Owain Glyndwr Square** is noted on some maps as being the western end of **North Parade**. Essentially the character of these two areas is the same. The eastern continuation of Great Darkgate Street but much broader with wide pavements and continuous building lines on either side. The busy road is split in the centre with a raised block paved island along its length. This is one of the few areas in Aberystwyth with street trees but also plenty of signage since this is a continuation of the main A487 road. This area is primarily retail at ground floor changing to residential at the eastern end. Owain Glyndwr Square and the western end of North Parade have striking variety with almost every building plot displaying a different style of architecture but retaining a continuity of scale with most buildings being 3 or 4 stories with similar plot widths. Shop fronts at ground floor tend to be the same width as the building. A pleasing palette of colour is used throughout the area creating a cheerful character. Corner buildings are again marked out by their lavish architectural features such as corner turrets or by using architectural styles less familiar to Aberystwyth such as Classical Revival and Art Deco. The substantial residential properties at the eastern end are formal in style ranging from some Georgian to mostly later 19th century. They retain the architectural rhythms of other parts of the town with their fenestration and building heights. Some of these now have other uses but retain their residential character easing the transition into the Queen's Road area.



*Fig. 22 North Parade and Owain Glyndwr Square*

7.6.6 The parallel streets to the north and south (**Portland Street, Portland Road, Cambrian Street**) are primarily residential with smaller scale buildings dating to the later 19th century and narrower roads. Portland Street, together with Bath Street to its north, is an area with a range of places of worship for different denominations, while the western end of Portland Road has some retail properties at ground floor. There are some replacement 20th century buildings in this area.

7.6.7 **Alexander Road** is also a wide road and an extremely busy traffic route and contains the main transport hubs of the bus and train stations. It is shown on the 1887 OS map as Lewis Terrace. The western end on the north side is mostly residential transitioning into commercial and retail closer to the train station. There has been considerable late 20th century development along the eastern part of the road. The southern side of the road has several key civic buildings such as the Railway Station and the former school.

## 7.7 Owain Glyndwr Square, North Parade, Portland Street, Alexandra Road and Terrace Road - Key Characteristics

7.7.1 Important characteristics of this area include:

- Mixed retail and commercial on main streets with quieter residential behind
- Variety of architectural styles but with consistent scale and proportions
- Busy roads with much street signage and street parking
- Hierarchy of main roads versus back lanes and corresponding building architecture
- Residential architectural features such as: common building line, scale and proportions, bay windows, chimneys, render, architectural detailing, porches and door cases, traditional windows and doors
- Residential flats above retail premises
- Intrusive later 20th century development
- Wide painted timber bracketed eaves
- Natural slate roofs
- Poorly designed modern shop fascia
- Street trees (in place since at least the 1887 OS map)
- Linkage area between the Old Town and transport hub, the seafront and the transport hub, the suburban residential and civic area of Queen's Road and the retail and commercial town centre

## 7.8 Queen's Road, North Road, The Buarth and Llanbadarn Road Area

- 7.8.1 Most of this area was developed during the later half of the 19th century and early 20th century, beginning with a new Town Hall in 1856 (later destroyed by fire and rebuilt), the Infirmary in 1885 (demolished), Holy Trinity Church (1883 to 1886), and the start of **North Road** shown by 1889.
- 7.8.2 The residential parts of this area were developed within a short space of time (c. 1890s and 1900s) and thus there is a consistent architectural character through much of the area.
- 7.8.3 The northern part of this suburban area was part of John Pollard Seddon's vision for the seafront but as with much of his scheme for the town it was not completed by him.
- 7.8.4 The south-western side of **Queen's Road** has residential properties with similar characteristics as nearby streets with housing built directly up to the pavement. The north-eastern side of the street adopts a more spacious layout, including small front gardens, although housing is still essentially similar in character, with tall terraced rows.
- 7.8.5 The northern end of **Queen's Road** on the western side, roughly opposite Cambridge Terrace, has a high proportion of poor quality late 20th century development.
- 7.8.6 In **North Road** the suburban character is more noticeable with semi-detached or single houses, set in larger gardens and overlooking open recreation grounds and sea views from upper floors.



*Fig. 23 North Road suburban semi-detached properties with high quality detailing*

- 7.8.7 There is considerable survival of original architectural detail and style in this area which helps to demonstrate the variety of styles and materials available during this period despite the properties' overall homogeneity.
- 7.8.8 Civic buildings in this area include various religious buildings, the 'new' Town Hall, the Infirmary (demolished), two former schools (and a current modern one), a former nursing home, Barracks, and the Union Workhouse (now demolished).



*Fig. 24 The 'New' Town Hall*

- 7.8.9 A number of former quarries are located near this area, which is where the stone for the development of the town was quarried. Their age is difficult to assess but it seems likely that they were probably started in the Medieval period, when stone would have been a predominant building material, and many are shown on the C19th OS maps as 'old quarries'. They are not within the conservation area boundary but are part of its setting and relevant to the history and development of the town.
- 7.8.10 A small industrial area is recognised around **Northgate Road** and to the south of it by the names of roads and public houses: **Skinner Street**; The Skinners Arms; The Coopers PH. The housing in this area is again late 19th and early 20th century but of a more artisan scale and design. This consists mostly of long rows of 2 storey smaller terraced housing with less architectural detailing.

- 7.8.11 **The Buarth** area, as a rocky outcrop, was also one of the original sources of building material for the town and this area was developed at around the same time as **Queen's Road** and **North Road** with possibly slightly more early 20th century development.
- 7.8.12 Holy Trinity Church, which was built 1883 to 1886, was the beginning of development in this area. The church is listed grade II (Cadw Ref: 10415) and located in a railed churchyard at the N end of an island site set into the slope. Housing followed during the late 1890s and early 20th century, again on a lease basis from the town Corporation.
- 7.8.13 **Llanbadarn Road** also has a majority of very late 19th and early 20th century suburban residential properties with similar characteristics to those in the northern part of this area.
- 7.8.14 The area to the south of Bronglais Hospital around **Caradoc and St David's Road** again has the suburban character of the other areas but appears to have continued developing into the interwar period although sharing a large number of architectural characteristics from the earlier period, such as pairs of architecturally matched houses set within larger gardens and set back from the road with front gardens. Good architectural detailing and retention of original architectural features, gables to front and wide streets creating a spacious character. Two or three stories often with double height bay windows, porches and prominent chimneys.

## 7.9 Queen's Road, North Road, The Buarth and Llanbadarn Road Area - Key Characteristics

7.9.1 Important characteristics of this area include:

- Suburban character from late 19th / early 20th century
- Survival of original architectural features, including doors, windows, porches, decorative stone, tile and brick, ironwork, barge boards, chimneys, and so on
- Houses set back from pavement or within gardens
- Pairs of houses with matching architectural style
- Wrought iron architectural features
- High quality decorative architectural detailing
- Front gardens
- Views out towards the coast / bay
- Hillside development
- Predominantly south west facing development on hillsides
- Medium grain development, larger building plots and wide roads creating a more spacious character
- Small industrial / artisan area

- 2 and 3 storey buildings
- Gables fronted to road
- Traditional dormer windows
- Street trees
- Traditional street furniture
- Stone and brick boundary walls
- Wide streets
- Civic and religious buildings
- Green open space / Square in front of town hall
- Quarries
- Poor quality 20th century development

### 7.10 Plas Crug, Vicarage Field and Cemetery Area

7.10.1 This is an area with sparse development and mostly larger buildings, plenty of green open space and little residential building.

7.10.2 **Plas Crug Road / Avenue** was mostly undeveloped through the late Victorian period and remains so today except at the northern end where there its character is influenced by the 20th century **Rheidol retail estate** and the early 20th century housing at **Elm Avenue**. **Plas Crug Avenue** was well established as a popular walk by 1880 and improved with tree planting and benches by the town Corporation. The avenue remains today as a pleasant tree lined pedestrian walk.

7.10.3 There is relatively little residential development in this area apart from modern infill development at **Coed y Buarth** and at the top end of **Plas Crug Avenue**. The area north and east of St Padarn's primary school has a small area of residential development in the form of large late Victorian and early 20th century villas.



*Fig. 25 High quality decorative detailing, wrought iron railings and properties set back from the pavement*



These are set in very large gardens, well back from the road and complement the green open character of this area.

7.10.4 Other buildings are mostly large individual developments such as the Grade II\* listed School of Art (Cadw Ref: 10729, originally Edward Davies Memorial Chemical Laboratories, built 1907) and the modern Brynderw flats and office block adjacent. The Old Vicarage, as shown on 19th century maps, is now offices next to the early 20th century St Padarn's RC Primary School. **Plas Crug** (now a primary school) is said to have been the site of the castle of Aber-rheidol but the tower that remains seems to be more likely to be an 18th century folly on the site of a medieval embattled house.

7.10.5 South of these are large playing fields and south of that **Aberystwyth Cemetery**, which was opened in 1860. The cemetery is another green public space, laid out and planted by the plantsman, James Dickson of Chester. It retains the original (restored) iron gates by the Coalbrookdale Company 1860, and a designed Tudor-style cemetery keeper's lodge (1873), at the entrance on Llanbadarn Road.

7.10.6 Since the area has developed on top of the southern part of the old Buarth rocky outcrop the topography rises to a small hill in the central northern part of this area, around the School of Arts building resulting in views out over the town and to the sea.

### 7.11 Plas Crug, Vicarage Field and Cemetery Area - Key Characteristics

7.11.1 Important characteristics of this area include:

- Large open green spaces and mature gardens
- Spacious low density development
- Large individual buildings
- Cemetery and associated structures
- Plas Crug Avenue
- Large late 19th / early 20th century suburban villas
- Villa architectural detailing
- Educational buildings
- Trees
- Public access
- Views over the town and to the sea
- Poor quality later 20th century development

## 8. DESIGNATED HISTORIC ASSETS

### 8.1 Listed Buildings

8.1.1 There are currently 249 listed buildings within Aberystwyth Conservation Area;

- 2 are Grade I
- 14 are Grade II\*
- 233 are Grade II

8.1.2 The two Grade I listed buildings are Aberystwyth Castle (Cadw Ref: 10313) and the University College of Wales Old College Building incorporating Castle House / Castle Hotel (Cadw Ref: 10251).

8.1.3 Castle House was built by John Nash in 1794 as a picturesque villa and enlarged in 1858 by E H Martineau. John Pollard Seddon was later commissioned to create a large grand hotel out of the building and the Castle Hotel opened in June 1865. The hotel soon ran into financial trouble and the building was sold to the University of Wales in March 1867. Seddon was then commissioned to convert the hotel into a College which opened in October 1872. However, this was also short lived, as in July 1885, the building was severely damaged by fire. The building was repaired by Seddon and in 1894 Nash's villa was demolished and replaced.

8.1.4 Aberystwyth Castle is also a scheduled Monument (see below).



*Fig. 26 Church of St Michael & All Angels (Grade II Listed) seen through the ruined vestry (Grade II listed)*



## 8.2 Scheduled Monuments

8.2.1 Aberystwyth Castle is the only Scheduled Ancient Monument within the conservation area.

The monument consists of the remains of a castle, dating to the medieval period. It was begun by Edmund of Lancaster in 1277 as part of Edward I's Welsh Castle building programme and was destroyed by Gruffydd ap Meredydd and Rhys ap Maelgwm in the Welsh revolt of 1282. In 1403 it was taken by Glyndwr and recaptured by Henry of Monmouth in 1409. By 1636 the castle was largely ruinous and in 1637 a Royal Mint was established here. By 1800 John Probart, architect of Shrewsbury, had laid out the grounds which included the site of the existing St Michael's church and the car park. The castle is now a tourist attraction and recreational site.

## 8.3 Other Designated Assets

8.3.1 To the east of, but not within, the conservation area, the grounds and buildings of the University of Wales: Plas Penglais, Penglais Campus and Llanbadarn Campus and The National Library of Wales are the basis for a Grade II\* Registered Historic Park and Garden.

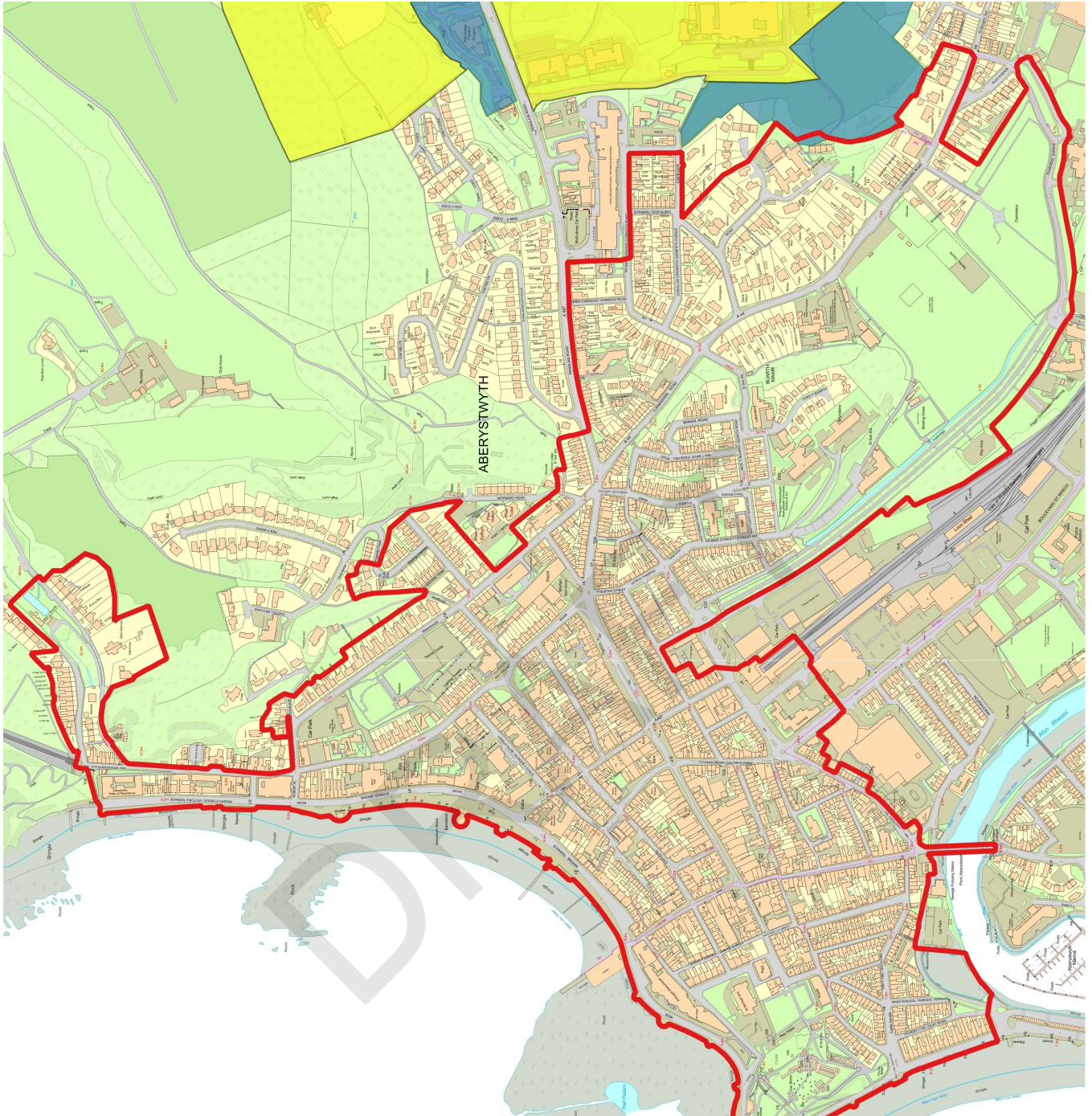
8.3.2 Aberystwyth town is within the 'transition' zone of the Lower Dyfi Valley Biosphere. Biosphere Reserves are areas internationally recognised under the 'Man and the Biosphere' Programme of UNESCO as "sites of excellence" to balance conservation and socioeconomic development between nature and people, and to explore and demonstrate innovative approaches as learning sites for sustainable development. The lower Dyfi Valley was first designated a Biosphere Reserve in the 1970s. Under new criteria a much larger area was registered with UNESCO in 2009. The Biosphere Reserve measures 845 square kilometres, of which 765 are land and 80 are sea. A transition zone is an area of more intensive urban/rural land use, as well as the open sea, where sustainable management and lifestyles are promoted and pursued. A Biosphere is not a restrictive statutory designation but a living, working area with opportunities for practicing sustainable development.


## 8.4 Buildings of Local Interest

8.4.1 There are two levels of buildings of interest - those which might meet the criteria for being included on a list of buildings of local special architectural or historic interest (see <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/historic-assets/other-historic-assets/historic-assets-special-local-interest>) and those which positively contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

8.4.2 Local planning authorities may choose to identify historic assets of special local interest and keep a list of them. This is known as 'local listing'. The criteria for the selection of assets

Fig. 28 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens to the east of Aberystwyth town centre



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should be drawn up by the local authority but can be based on Cadw's guidance. Selection should also be based on community involvement. Planning authorities can then develop policies for their protection and enhancement through Local Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

- 8.4.3 Buildings which positively contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area are often traditional buildings with historic value, quality architecture or detailing.



*Fig. 29 Mario Rutelli's war memorial at Aberystwyth*

It does not mean that they have not been changed in some way nor that there is not room for enhancement, only that their loss would negatively impact on the overall character or appearance of the designated area. Buildings not included on the list should not be viewed negatively since there are often opportunities to enhance a building or structure or reinstate features. Their lack of inclusion may mean that several elements of a traditional building have been lost or its integrity severely compromised through later alteration. Lack of inclusion should not, by itself, be a reason for granting consent for demolition or for permitting poor quality development, design, materials or alterations.

- 8.4.4 Within Aberystwyth Conservation Area there are many buildings which retain their original architectural features, have elements of previous historic development enshrined within their fabric or contribute to understanding the historical development of the town. These buildings are likely to positively contribute to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

## 9 HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

### 9.1 People

9.1.1 There are a number of important historical figures associated with the creation and development of Aberystwyth:

- Edmund of Lancaster (1245 - 1296) built the castle at Aberystwyth as part of Edward I's Welsh castle building campaign. Edmund was the fourth (but second surviving) son of King Henry III and the first Earl of Lancaster. Pope Innocent IV in 1252 nominated him as King of Sicily but he never took possession of that kingdom. In 1271 Edmund participated in the Ninth Crusade, the last major medieval Crusade to the Holy Land which is probably why he received the nickname 'crouchback' or 'cross back' - not because of a hunchback but because he was entitled to wear a cross-stitched into the back of his clothing. His brother Edward became King in 1274 and he loyally supported his brother in his endeavours, including wars in Scotland and Wales.



**Fig. 30 Crynfryn House**

- The picturesque nature of Aberystwyth has been captured by artists numerous times, including: JMW Turner, Edmund Marrison Gill, H Humphries, Thomas Girtin, Henry Gastineau, Julius Caesar Ibbetson, John Sell Cotman, Mary Lloyd Jones, and of course the iconic British Railways Poster art by Leonard Richmond, as well as many others. The town

has three works by the Italian sculptor Mario Rutelli; the War Memorial on the promenade; the Tabernacle Chapel Memorial on Powell Street; and the statue of Edward VIII as Prince of Wales in the Old College (the only statue of Edward VIII in Britain). All are Grade II listed structures.

- Several well known architects have worked within Aberystwyth and contributed to its character. These include: John Nash; E H Martineau; John Pollard Seddon; Eugenius Birch and others. The mosaic triptych at the end of the Old College / Castle Hotel is by C F Voysey.

9.1.2 Cadw's Characterisation study notes the following regarding the influence important local families had on the development of Aberystwyth. Aberystwyth became a fashionable resort in the 18th and 19th centuries and many local and national gentry built themselves prominent houses within the town:

- 'The Powells of Nanteos were one of the pre-eminent local families and, as significant property holders within the town, were influential in some aspects of its development in the early decades of the nineteenth century; most notably at Laura Place, where Assembly Rooms were built in 1820, and two rows of houses in about 1827. The estate also owned property on Pier Street and Eastgate, as well as in the areas of New Street and Market Street, and it was building here between 1809 and 1832.'
- 'The Gogerddan estate also played a prominent role in the affairs of the town. The Pryses of Gogerddan had a town house here in the seventeenth century ...on the corner of Eastgate and Pier Street.'
- The Pughs of Abermad (Westminster) had a town house on Bridge Street
- The Bonsalls of Fronfraith had a house built on Eastgate, which became Crynfryn House
- Uvedale Price had Castle House built for him by Joh Nash - 'a picturesque curiosity and probably played an important part in putting Aberystwyth on the tourist map '

## 9.2 Events and Traditions

9.2.1 One of the quirkiest and most well known of local traditions is the 'kicking of the bar', at the north end of the promenade, for luck. The 'bar' is a simple horizontal metal bar atop a concrete wall and you can kick with either one or both feet - both feet, of course, being more lucky but also more dangerous! No one really knows where the tradition came from and there are various theories but it cannot be much older than the age of the promenade.



- 9.2.2 The Winter Fair and Markets in November date back to Medieval times (records from at least the 13th century) and used to be called the hiring fairs, where people would find work for the year ahead.
- 9.2.3 A tradition which is no longer practiced but enshrined in Welsh folklore is the sounding of the ‘bangu.’ In 1911 it was recorded that ‘When a funeral takes place at Aberystwyth, in Cardiganshire, it is customary for the Town Crier to go through the streets tolling a small hand-bell, a short time before the funeral procession. This is a survival of a very ancient custom which was once very general throughout Wales, and in pre-Reformation times this corpse-bell which was known as “bangu,” was kept in all the Welsh Churches, and when a funeral was to take place, the bellman took it to the house of the deceased. When the procession began, a psalm was sung, and then the sexton sounded his bell in a solemn manner for some time, and again at intervals, till the funeral arrived at the Church.’
- 9.2.4 It is thought that there were several families in Aberystwyth who were said to have been descended from the Physicians of Myddfai and the Lady of Llyn Y Fan Fach, and therefore said to have fairy blood coursing through their veins.
- 9.2.5 An old superstition or belief from Aberystwyth is: ‘To spill salt denotes quarrels. To serve another person with salt, is to serve him with sorrow.’
- 9.2.6 A river legend: ‘The Severn, the Wye, and the Rheidol rise on Plinlimon Mountain. These rivers, which are called three sisters, agreed to make a visit to the sea in the morning. Severn rose up very early, and took compass through Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. Wye rose later and took her journey through the counties of Radnorshire and Hereford, falling in with her sister near Chepstow, and went hand in hand to the



**Fig. 31 Site of the old Guildhall at the junction of Great Dark Gate Street and Pier Street**

ocean. Rheidol indulged in her dreams and lay so late that she was forced to take the nearest road to Aberystwyth.'

## 10 HIDDEN HISTORIES

### 10.1 Above Ground Archaeological Potential

10.1.1 The Castle has both above ground and potentially below ground evidential value. The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval defensive practices. The monument is well-preserved and an important relic of the medieval landscape. It retains significant archaeological potential, with a strong probability of the presence of both structural evidence and intact associated deposits.

10.1.2 The probability of the existence of earlier 18th century fabric contained within later facades and rebuilds has been described above, particularly in the Old Town Area. Structures which



**Fig. 32** *Rear yard areas, especially in the old town, may reveal evidence of former land use*

are recorded as having earlier origins, and may therefore include earlier fabric either above or below ground include:

- Old Black Lion Hotel, No 16 Bridge Street - c.1700 origins and Georgian re-fronting

- Former Corn Market, junction of Eastgate and Market Street - Mentioned in 1738, taken down in 1870
- The Gogerddan Arms, Great Darkgate Street (Padarn Hall) - regarded as the town's oldest hotel. Associated with the locally pre-eminent gentry family of Gogerddan, the inn was already notable in the 1730s (built 1727?)
- Aberystwyth Town Hall - built during the late C17th century and demolished 1855.
- Pier Street - House at corner of Pier Street + Great Darkgate Street. Demolished. Late C17th / early C18th
- Guildhall in Aberystwyth, junction of Great Dark Gate Street + Pier Street - First mentioned in 1690, replaced in 1770 by a second hall on the same site. Pulled down in 1855 for erection of clock tower
- 39-41 Great Darkgate Street - Late C17 origins, early C20 re-fronting and modern alterations
- The Old Bank House, 14 Bridge Street - Opened in 1760, it housed the first bank in Aberystwyth
- 12 and 26 Pier Street - Shown on c.1790 map (other buildings in Pier Street shown on c.1797 map)
- 51 Great Darkgate Street - Shown on c.1790 map
- 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 23, 26, 35, 45, 47, 49 and 51 Bridge Street - shown on c.1790 map
- 44 Queen Street - shown on c. 1790 map

10.1.3 Within the town there are excellent examples of late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architectural styles and preservation of many original architectural features from these periods. These provide evidence of craftsmanship, use of materials and changes in architectural fashions in addition to their aesthetic value.

10.1.4 The intensity of land use over a long period of time has the potential for a complex sequence of archaeological remains both above ground within existing structures and below ground. Existing information suggests that any remains are likely to be isolated survivals and difficult to interpret. Rear yard areas may yield better preserved evidence of former land use.

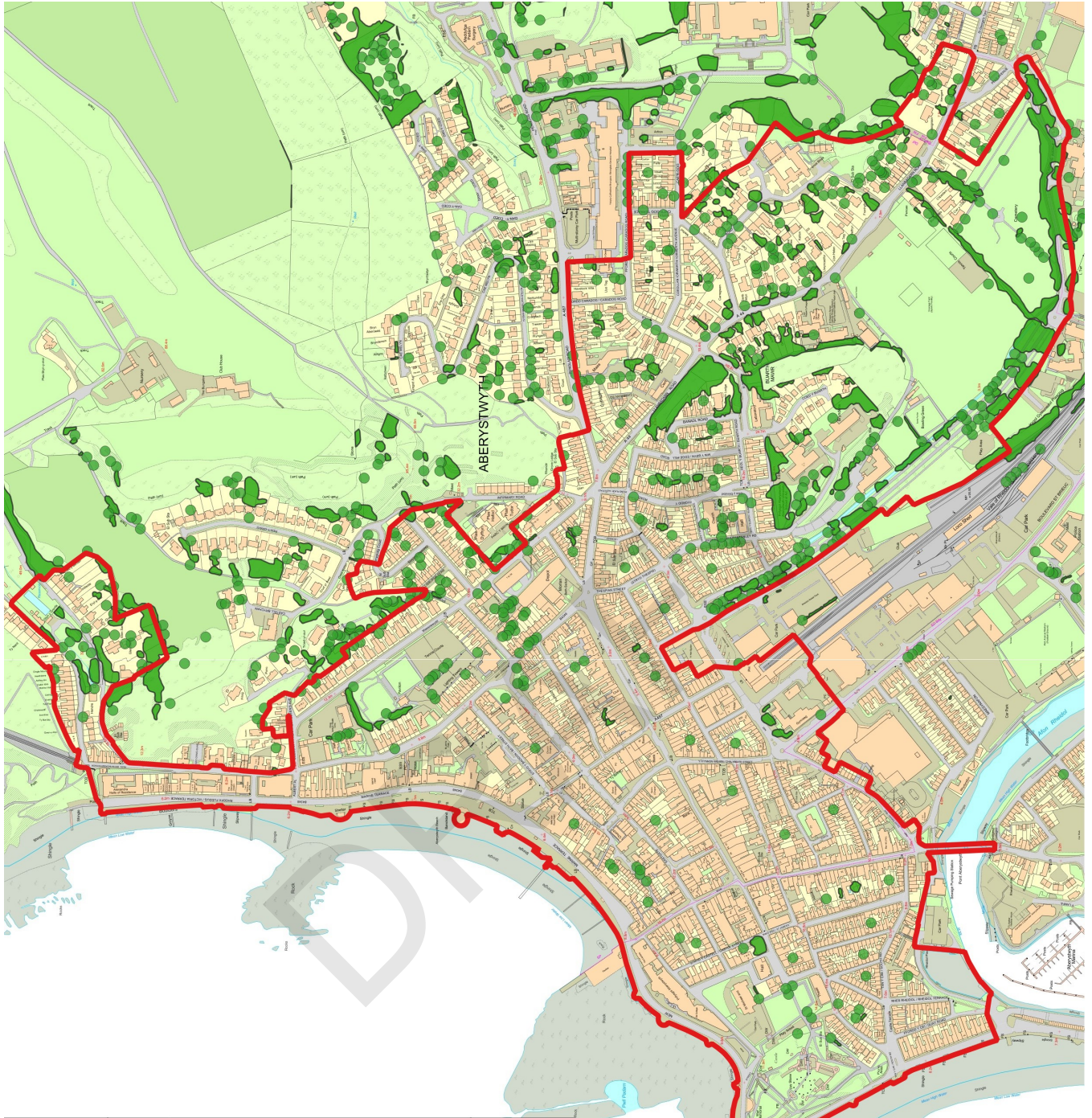
## 10.2 Below Ground Archaeological Potential

10.2.1 Within the town there has been very little archaeological investigation. Only a few small investigations have taken place with few tangible results. This means there is little actual evidence to support some assertions about the layout of the Medieval town and they are often based on typology and information learnt from elsewhere. This is not to dispute that

some of the factors which have been assumed are not correct but simply to point out that there is potential for the record to be evidenced and enhanced.

- 10.2.2 The Medieval walled town is the heart of Aberystwyth. Whilst it is popularly supposed that the line of the Medieval wall can be traced in the line of modern streets, this may not necessarily be the case. During the 1950s the exact line of the town wall at the junction of Sea View Place and South Road was noted during the cutting of a watermain trench. Elsewhere the exact line is not known. It may have been found in the 1970s on the north side of the town during road works crossing Pier Street on a line roughly following the centre of King Street. It seems likely that to the west, the former town wall may have been claimed by the sea. Nevertheless, much of the conjectured line of the wall runs beneath roads and through rear property boundaries, which may mean relatively good survival below ground. The wall was probably fronted by a wide ditch, which is potentially a good source of medieval midden material and waterlogged deposits.
- 10.2.3 The offset junction of the two main Medieval streets, Great Darkgate Street and Bridge / Pier Street, is also assumed to be this way because it was the site of the market place. Again, there is no solid evidence for this conclusion.
- 10.2.4 The date of layout of other streets within the Old Town area is also questionable. It seems likely that many of these streets were laid out during the Medieval period in the traditional grid pattern but there is no archaeological evidence to back this up.
- 10.2.5 The same issue arises with the location of the Medieval town gates. The modern place names mean that most authorities locate the town gates at the east end of Great Darkgate Street, the south end of Bridge Street and the east end of Little Darkgate Street (now Eastgate). Dyfed Archaeological Trust suggests that the Eastgate location seems unlikely due to its proximity to the gate on Great Darkgate Street and that a more obvious location for a third town gate would be on Pier Street close to the sea. The sites of the town gates also have the potential to yield substantial structural remains, though they may have been robbed out or truncated by later development.
- 10.2.6 The current layout of the town suggest the survival of the Medieval burgage plots in many areas. There is, again, no archaeological evidence to back this up and this assumption is based on knowledge of Medieval town layout gained from other places and interpretation of historic and current maps.
- 10.2.7 More definite Medieval remains have been noted in just a few places:

Fig. 33 DataMapWales (2018 data) showing tree cover at Aberystwyth







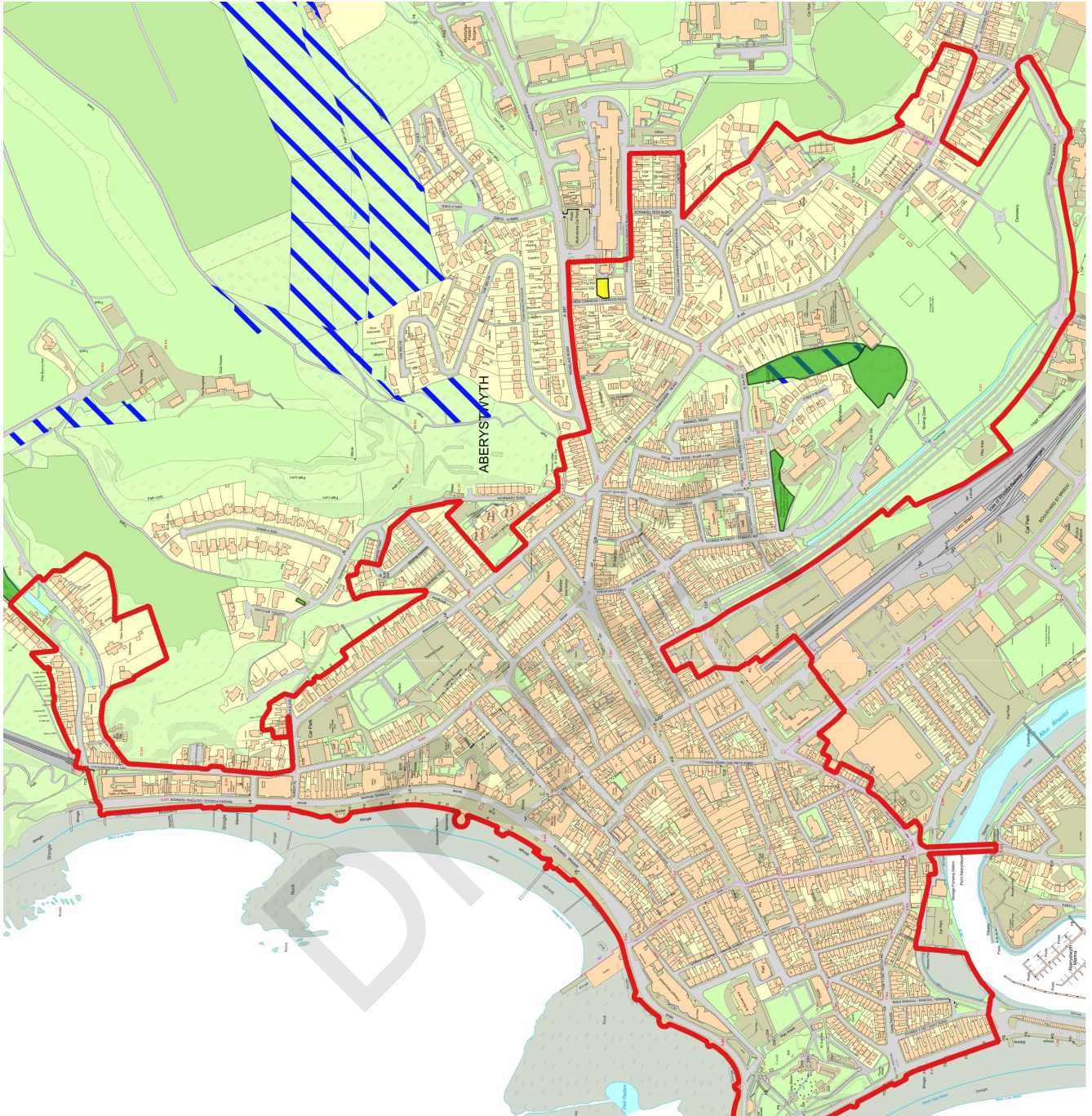






 <p><b>Cyngor Sir Ceredigion</b> Ceredigion County Council Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA Ffôn/Tel. 01545 570881</p>	<p><b>Aberystwyth</b></p>	<p><b>Allwedd / Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Conservation Area</li> <li> Urban Tree Cover 2018 (Individual Trees)</li> <li> Urban Tree Cover 2018 (Group of Trees)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Graddfa / Scale: 1:7,078</b> <b>Aigrafwyd ar / Printed on: 2024-04-17</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">G N</p> <p><small>© Hawflenni y Goron a hawliau corfforol addysg 2024. Arolwg Cymreidd 10002419 © Hawflenni a hawliau corfforol addysg Cymreidd y Gyhoeddwr ar Lywodraeth Lleoedd 2024. 100024419 © Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) 2024. All rights reserved. Limited copyright and database rights 2024. 100024419 © Next Perspectives. Welsh Government 2009, 2018. Llywodraeth Cymru 2009, 2013</small></p>
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Fig. 34 Map showing Tree Preservation Orders, Traditional Orchards and Ancient Woodland



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***Fig. 35 Trees are an important component of the street scene in many areas***

- In Vulcan street a Medieval drain was recorded as a field observation in 1979
- Our Ladies Mill; Riverside Terrace is noted as stone built corn mill, built c1530 and rebuilt in 19th century, it is referenced in several historical texts
- Medieval corn drying-kiln of uncertain form, unexcavated and unlocated, mentioned in records relating to Llanbadarn (Aberystwyth) Castle in 1298–1300, 1300, and 1301/2

10.2.8 Around Laura Place little is known about land use in the medieval period, and there is the potential for archaeological information to be derived from this area.

10.2.9 Below Sea View Place is the probable location of the medieval harbour and there is the potential for remains associated with this early harbour, and activities related to it, to survive here.

10.2.10 Along the seafront there is significant potential for palaeo-environmental deposits to survive. It is unlikely that any early deposits survive on the land side due to later intensive redevelopment and coastal erosion (it is recorded that a Medieval chapel here was destroyed by the sea in the 18th century).

10.2.11 Around the Queen's Road, North Road, The Buarth and Llanbadarn Road Area there is potential for evidence of pre-historic activity. Evidence for medieval quarrying here is likely to have been destroyed by later activity. There is also some potential for the survival of later small industrial sites around the lower North Road, Skinner Street area.

10.2.12 Below ground evidence may be the only way to achieve an understanding regarding the various lost 19th century municipal buildings around Llanbadarn Road and Penglais area.

## **11 BIODIVERSITY**

### **11.1 Green Infrastructure**

11.1.1 The conservation area includes few green open spaces within the town - notably the castle grounds and around St Michael's Church, the area opposite the Town Hall and some street trees in particular areas of the town. Private gardens in the north and east also provide relief from development and the playing fields, cemetery and Plas Crug Avenue within the Plas Crug, Vicarage Field and Cemetery Area probably have better biodiversity potential. The open spaces in front of North Road include a biodiversity garden and bowling green.

### **11.2 Local Nature Reserves**

11.2.1 There are two local nature reserves which form part of the setting of Aberystwyth Conservation Area. These are Pen Dinas and Tanybwllch to the south and Parc Natur Penglais to the north. Pen Dinas and Tanybwllch consists of an Iron Age Hill-Fort, hay meadow, river, beach, vegetated shingle spit, an old railway track and a disused landfill. Penglais is a broadleaved woodland and disused quarry, the woods formed part of the 18th century Penglais Estate.

### **11.3 Tree Cover**

11.3.1 DataMapWales (2018 data) shows Natural Resources Wales' data on Urban Tree Cover. It includes a number of groups of tree cover within and adjacent to the conservation area and also shows point data for individual trees which are potentially important to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The map, unfortunately, only includes non-woodland areas so cannot be taken as conclusive as to important wooded areas. For example, it doesn't include the woodland area to the north east of the town which can also be considered to be important to the setting of the conservation area.

## **12 COMMUNAL VALUE**

12.1.1 The community consultation has demonstrated that there is an evident pride of place and value placed on the history and built heritage of Aberystwyth.

12.1.2 Natural Resources Wales' Landscape Character assessment for this area (NLCA23: Rheidol & Ystwyth Hills & Valleys) has a useful summary of community interest and reminds us of its time depth: "Aberystwyth is a university and an administrative town. The Iron Age hillfort of Pen Dinas, which overlooks the town is a reminder that settlement and society date back



much further. Since the late 19th century, Aberystwyth has grown into a major cultural and intellectual centre, the home of the University, of the National Library of Wales, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and now the location of Welsh Government departments.”

12.1.3 The Guide to Aberystwyth website ([www.aberystwythguide.org.uk](http://www.aberystwythguide.org.uk)) lists over 70 community clubs and groups.

12.1.4 Infoengine (<https://en.infoengine.cymru>) lists 419 community services within 1 mile of Aberystwyth.

12.1.5 There is a wide range of civic, community, leisure, and retail uses of the buildings within the conservation area. Tourists over the centuries have been drawn to the area because of its architecture and setting.



*Fig. 36 Tourists and locals alike appreciate the Promenade on a sunny day, demonstrating its communal value*

## 13 ISSUES - SWOT ANALYSIS

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<p>Time depth of history</p> <p>High quality and variety of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architectural detailing</p> <p>Strong architectural character</p> <p>Unique landmark buildings</p> <p>Some flourishing commercial / retail areas</p> <p>Well maintained and preserved suburbs</p> <p>Active community</p> <p>Setting and location</p> <p>Catchment area - only town centre facilities for approx. 2hours</p> <p>Educational and cultural facilities</p> <p>Popularity with tourists</p>	<p>Poor condition of some buildings and architectural detailing</p> <p>Empty flats above shops / empty shops</p> <p>Inappropriate advertising and shop signage</p> <p>Limited long stay parking for residents and visitors within walking distance of town</p> <p>Signage and street / highway clutter</p> <p>Lack of strategic priority plan for spending funding</p> <p>Some neglected pocket areas within town centre</p> <p>Lack of strict control over alterations to non-listed buildings</p> <p>Some inappropriate 20th century buildings</p> <p>Lack of engagement with some property owners</p> <p>Lack of access to conservation professionals and craftspeople</p>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<p>Archaeological investigation, particularly of the Medieval town</p> <p>Training of property owners in good conservation practices supported by grant funding</p> <p>Diversification of product through innovative use of empty shops</p> <p>Reinstatement of lost architectural features</p> <p>Increased tourism potential</p> <p>Engagement of local architects in high quality imaginative modern design</p> <p>Heritage tourism development</p>	<p>Loss of architectural detailing / historic buildings / fabric through lack of maintenance</p> <p>Lack of recognition and loss of earlier historic fabric incorporated within later structures</p> <p>Loss of traditional street furniture, surfacing and lighting</p> <p>Introduction of inappropriate modern architecture</p> <p>Coastal erosion and storms</p> <p>Loss of green space and street trees</p> <p>Inappropriate colour choices</p>

FFYNIANT  
— BRO —

LEVELLING  
— UP —



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council



UK Government Wales  
Llywodraeth y DU Cymru

 Tyfu  
Canolbarth Cymru  
Growing  
Mid Wales

# ABERYSTWYTH

## Conservation Area Management Plan

March 2024

Prepared for

**Ceredigion County Council**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Management Plan**

1.1.1 This management plan addresses the issues raised in the appraisals and identifies appropriate responses commensurate with the significance of the area. The plan sets out realistic management objectives, taking into account resources and funding opportunities, and policies for enhancement.

## **2. ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS**

### **2.1 Introduction to Article 4 Directions**

2.1.1 The special interest of conservation areas is expressed in the character and appearance of the area and not in isolated buildings. This means that it is essential to manage change carefully in conservation areas to make sure that their character and appearance are safeguarded and enhanced. To achieve this, there are special controls around demolishing buildings and cutting down, topping and lopping trees.

2.1.2 There are additional planning controls which can be applied to conservation areas to protect the historic and architectural elements that make the area special. These special controls are called Article 4 Directions. They are decided by each local planning authority depending on what particular element of the conservation area they wish to protect. They are most likely to affect owners who want to make changes to the outside of their building. These can include cladding, replacing doors or windows, and installing satellite dishes and solar panels.

2.1.3 These controls are not intended to prevent change; instead they encourage developments in keeping with the area or that enhance its special character. Article 4 Directions could be used to help manage small-scale changes which would have little effect individually, but cumulatively could affect the appearance or character of a conservation area.

2.1.4 Articles 4(1) and 4(2) of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 enable local authorities to make directions that withdraw some permitted development rights, including from certain types of buildings or specified areas.

2.1.5 Article 4(1) Directions can be used to withdraw permitted development rights to most types of land and building but need to be approved by the Welsh Ministers.

2.1.6 Article 4(2) Directions apply to domestic buildings and structures, but only to those parts that front onto highways, waterways or open spaces. They can be confirmed by local authorities once the direction has been advertised locally and notice served on residents. Such directions

could also apply to the demolition of the whole or part of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure, which may or may not be associated with a domestic property.

2.1.7 Article 4 (2) Directions are the most commonly applied direction for control within conservation areas. They are often applied in a 'stick and carrot' scenario, where controls are applied through the planning system and the use of a Direction but incentives are applied through a grant system applicable to replacement or maintenance of traditional features.

2.1.8 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2022 contains a change to Article 4 Directions but as of the date of writing this has not yet come into force. This change removes Article 4(2) Directions and allows Local Authorities to make Directions without recourse to Welsh Government Ministers. In effect there will be two types of Directions, both served under Article 4(1) of the Order:

- An **Immediate Direction** is where permitted development rights are withdrawn with immediate effect and are then confirmed by the LPA following consultation;
- A **Non-Immediate Direction** is where permitted development rights are withdrawn following consultation and confirmation by the LPA.



*Fig. 1 The loss of traditional architectural features such as windows and doors has a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area*

## 2.2 Aberystwyth

- 2.2.1 There is currently no Article 4 Direction in place at Aberystwyth.
- 2.2.2 Traditional architectural features such as the following have been identified as highly important to the character of Aberystwyth Conservation Area: chimneys, doors and door cases, porches, windows, boundary walls, wrought iron detailing, roof lines and dormers.
- 2.2.3 The appraisal has identified that there has been a long term loss of traditional architectural features on domestic properties such as doors and windows and that this has cumulatively eroded the architectural character of the area.
- 2.2.4 Whilst painted render is a particularly strong characteristic of the conservation area there are a few properties which have chosen inappropriate colour schemes. In addition there are important properties which are not rendered and have significant architectural features such as contrasting brick detailing or natural stone walls and control over the application of render to these properties would be desirable.
- 2.2.5 Traditional dormer windows are an important element of the roof line of Aberystwyth however, there are a number of modern dormer windows and rooflights which are out of keeping with the individual building's character and wider area's architecture. Dormer windows and rooflights up to a certain size are permitted development on non-listed residential properties.
- 2.2.6 There are a number of satellite dishes throughout the conservation area which detract from the architectural composition of the buildings to which they are fixed. Satellite dishes are relatively old technology now but are still required by many people. It is likely that some of the existing ones are redundant but have not been removed. An Article 4(2) Direction could control the location and installation of any new dishes.
- 2.2.7 Within the suburbs boundary walls and iron railings are a key part of the character of these areas. Alteration of these is currently permitted development and in some cases there has been a loss of traditional materials and features.
- 2.2.8 Whilst there are many commercial premises and flats which either have or are in danger of losing architectural features, alterations to these buildings are already controlled through the planning process.

### 2.3 Recommendation - **Depending on what legislation is in effect at the time of adoption**

2.3.1 That an Article 4 (1 or 2) Direction should be applied to Aberystwyth Conservation Area. This cannot be applied retrospectively and only applies to dwelling houses and to elevations fronting a highway, open space or waterway. The Article 4 (2) should be applied to the following permitted development rights:

- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class A: The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house ( to cover alterations to windows, alterations to doors, the rendering, or re-rendering, of properties)
- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class B: Addition or alteration of a roof
- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class C: Other alterations to roofs
- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class D: The erection of porches
- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class F: Provision or replacement of a hard surface
- Schedule 2 Part 1, Class G: The alteration, erection, rendering, or removal, of chimneys
- Schedule 2 Part 2, Class A: The erection, alteration, rendering, or removal, of boundary walls, fences, or railings
- Schedule 2 Part 2, Class C: The external painting of buildings
- Schedule 2 Part 11, Class C: Demolition of boundary walls, fences or railings



**Fig. 2 Traditional architectural features have been identified as being important by the local community**

### **3. BOUNDARY REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 Local Planning Authorities have a duty to review their conservation areas and formulate and publish policies and proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Part of the review process is the consideration of whether the conservation area boundary is still considered to be appropriate and to see if any areas should be added or excluded.
- 3.1.2 Any further properties brought into the Conservation Area as a result of a review will be subject to minor additional controls. These are not onerous and designation can offer advantages to property owners, such as possible access to grant regimes.

#### **3.2 Aberystwyth**

- 3.2.1 The boundary of Aberystwyth Conservation Area has been extended three times since it was designated, in 1980, 1981 and 1994.
- 3.2.2 As a result of the initial stakeholder consultation it has been suggested that the boundary be revised to include the Pier. The Pier is a key feature of the Marine Terrace area and positively contributes to its appearance and character. It is part of the Victorian history of the town and of the current tourism offer, as well as being an important historical monument in its own right.
- 3.2.3 The Pier is, however, protected through being a Grade II Listed structure and being within the conservation area would not give it additional protection from inappropriate alteration or development.
- 3.2.4 The funicular railway and other structures on Constitution Hill are also not included within the conservation area. Some of these structures are listed grade II and being within the conservation area would not provide additional protection. There is, however, some potential for inappropriate development on the hill as its tourism business expands.

#### **3.3 Recommendation**

- 3.3.1 It is recommended that the boundary of Aberystwyth Conservation Area is extended to include the Pier and the funicular railway and associated structures on Constitution Hill.
- 3.3.2 A conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' This means that the Local Authority must identify what the historic and architectural elements are that make the area special.



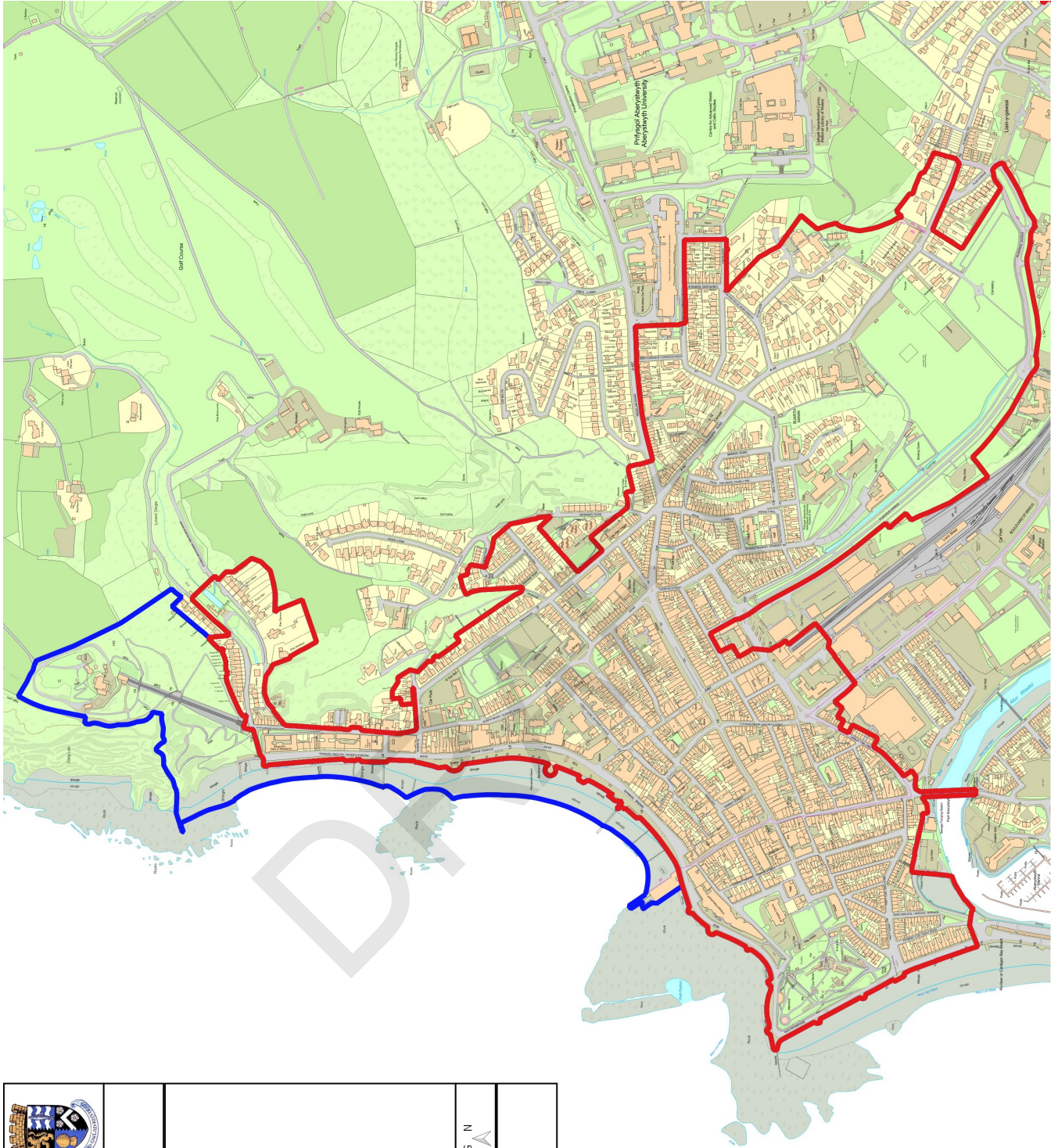
- 3.3.3 It is considered that both the Pier and the funicular railway and associated structures are an integral part of the Victorian development of the town and are important tourism locations. The existing boundary does not adequately capture all of the important historic features related to key periods of historical development of Aberystwyth and the boundary should therefore be amended to include these features.
- 3.3.4 Community consultation produced a desire to extend the boundary to include the historic areas of Trefechan. An assessment was undertaken of this area. Trefachan's architectural character is primarily mixed and generally of a lesser quality than that of the main town. Few buildings retain any original architectural features. A few buildings of individual interest are Listed and they and their settings are protected through stronger legislation than that which relates to conservation areas. It is suggested that this area is not included since the inclusion of inferior and mixed quality architecture would dilute the overall strong character and special interest of the existing conservation area.
- 3.3.5 The public consultation also suggested that the boundary is extended at each review to include buildings that are at least 80 years old at the time of each review. Age is not the only factor in designating a conservation area. Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Their special interest is expressed in the character of the area and not in isolated buildings. Each review would take into account buildings which are considered to contribute to the area's overall architectural or historic interest and this would include all buildings regardless of their age. Any buildings not included in the area at the time will be reviewed for their contribution to the area's overall character and may be included within a further boundary extension. It is recommended that it would be unwise to have a blanket policy which automatically includes all buildings over a certain age, regardless of their architectural or historic value as this may risk diluting the special interest of the area.





## **4. NEED FOR DETAILED DESIGN GUIDANCE OR PUBLIC INFORMATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 Local planning authorities are involved in the day to day management of conservation areas through their role in the planning process. Local planning authorities must aim to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas and need to scrutinise planning applications closely with these objectives in mind.

Fig. 3 Proposed Conservation Area Boundary Extension



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*Fig. 4 Guidance regarding good design for shopfronts together with planning and enforcement measures would help to improve the appearance of the conservation area*

- 4.1.2 Detailed information about particular aspects of the historic built environment can help owners, occupiers, planning agents and the Local Planning Authority to decide the best ways of managing positive change and keep to a consistent approach.
- 4.1.3 Public information or interpretation can help ensure that everyone understands why an area is special. People who understand why something is special are more likely to care about it and want to look after it. It can also help with the tourism offer and encourage investment in a local area

## 4.2 Aberystwyth

- 4.2.1 A shopfront guidance document for Aberystwyth was developed and adopted in 2013.
- 4.2.2 There is no existing appraisal and management plan for Aberystwyth to guide development management decisions and agents or owners looking to apply for planning permission.
- 4.2.3 There is currently no specific detailed advice regarding the management of architectural features of special interest and what actions might help to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

### 4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and used to guide decision making.
- 4.3.2 Produce an Aberystwyth Conservation Area leaflet for residents and businesses which explains what is important about the area, controls and what it means to be living and working within the area.
- 4.3.3 In partnership with other Local authorities, the South Wales and Mid-Wales Conservation Officers Groups, Cadw's Built Heritage Forum, IHBC, Twyi Centre and other organisations develop and adopt new guidance leaflets and information relevant to the area. Examples could include guidance on historic windows, micro generation and the forthcoming guidance on external wall insulation.
- 4.3.4 Update the existing shop front design guidance for Aberystwyth so that it can be used throughout all conservation areas in Ceredigion. Work with local business organisations to distribute and provide training.
- 4.3.5 Develop a colour design guide which would set out general guidelines and principles for appropriate colours and paint types to use within the conservation area, particularly for painting buildings, shop fronts and signage.



*Fig. 5 The development of a colour design guide would allow freedom of expression but discourage more flamboyant paint schemes*

- 4.3.6 Provide additional interpretation regarding Aberystwyth's Medieval history in a way which does not add to the street clutter. This could be an addition to existing signage, via street art or poetry, online, QR codes, (self) guided walks or other methods of delivery.

## 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL LISTING

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Local planning authorities may choose to identify historic assets of special local interest and keep a list of them. This is known as 'local listing'. The list can include all types of historic asset — buildings, parks, gardens, monuments and archaeological sites — so long as they are not already formally designated.
- 5.1.2 The assets identified for inclusion on the list should make an important contribution to local distinctiveness and have the potential to contribute to public knowledge.
- 5.1.3 Their selection should be based on clear criteria, sound local evidence and public consultation. A conservation area appraisal is one way of identifying these assets.
- 5.1.4 An adopted list of historic assets of special local interest must be added to the local historic environment record for public accessibility. The Local Planning Authority must then develop relevant local plan policies that can be used for decision making.
- 5.1.5 Further information and advice can be found here: <https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/Managing%20Lists%20of%20Historic%20Assets%20of%20Special%20Local%20Interest%20in%20Wales%20EN.pdf>

### 5.2 Aberystwyth

- 5.2.1 Aberystwyth has many historic buildings which are of particular local historic and architectural significance and which are not designated in their own right.
- 5.2.2 Recognising these buildings through inclusion on a 'local list' would:
- Provide recognition that these buildings are valued by local people
  - Provide an opportunity for the community to get involved in their identification and in caring for them appropriately
  - Allow the Council to apply for funding or grant schemes that would provide regeneration opportunities for locally listed buildings

- Enable changes to be carefully considered through the planning process to ensure they are positive and do not negatively affect the assets, their settings or the communities in which they are located.

### 5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 The Council should set up an 'Historic Assets of Special Local Interest Project' for the whole county that will identify the criteria for inclusion on such a list and develop the list.

5.3.2 Local communities should be involved with the selection process.

5.3.3 Ceredigion County Council should develop and adopt a relevant Local Development Plan policy.

5.3.4 The following sets out some suggested guidance on creating a list of buildings of special local interest (that are not already designated) that could be considered for inclusion:

- Any building which retains the majority of its historic architectural features and positively contributes to the street scene
- Any building which has particular community value or landmark presence
- Any building which is likely to retain archaeological evidence from a former historical period (consider pre-Victorian)
- Any structure which positively contributes to the public realm and has historical value
- Any building which strongly demonstrates its period of development through its architectural form and decoration (consider post-Victorian)



*Fig. 6 Unlisted structures with historic interest such as this Victorian urinal could be considered for inclusion on a 'local list'*

## 6. CONSIDERATION OF ENFORCEMENT

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Enforcement has a key role to play in the protection of conservation areas.
- 6.1.2 It is essential to ensure that all owners and occupiers of buildings understand where there are limitations for development, what their permitted development rights are, and that they can approach the LPA for advice.
- 6.1.3 Regular monitoring is a more proactive approach for LPAs which may help to reduce the number of contraventions.
- 6.1.4 Discussion and negotiation with the owner / occupier should be the first action taken in any case, which may lead to a suitable solution without the need for enforcement action.

### 6.2 Aberystwyth

- 6.2.1 There is no current comprehensive baseline review information for Aberystwyth.
- 6.2.2 A partial photographic survey and review was conducted in 2015.
- 6.2.3 Owners and occupiers may be unaware of their permitted development rights and where there may be restrictions on development.

### 6.3 Recommendations

- 6.3.1 The photographic survey produced as part of this conservation area appraisal should be used as baseline information for enforcement purposes.
- 6.3.2 The Council should make a commitment to follow best practice enforcement procedures within the conservation areas in Ceredigion.
- 6.3.3 The Council should take steps to ensure all owners and occupiers are aware of their permitted development rights and any restrictions.
- 6.3.4 A follow up photographic survey should be conducted during the next review of the conservation area appraisal, ideally every five years.
- 6.3.5 Consider owner negotiation / enforcement action (where evidence exists) for unauthorised removal of traditional features and unauthorised alterations on listed buildings. This would need an additional project to identify where unauthorised works have taken place, using the Council's planning records, the 2015 survey and ideally would involve the local community. Areas for consideration of enforcement action include:
  - Shop signage and fascia

- Clutter on listed buildings - satellite dishes, electrical wiring, alarms, redundant wall fixings etc
- Alterations to roofs, particularly on listed buildings - such as dormer windows, rooflights, loss of chimneys, use of inappropriate roof coverings etc
- Inappropriate replacements of windows and doors

## 7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGENERATION

### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Historic areas can be an important focus for community regeneration. Their distinctive character is an asset that can deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for Welsh communities. Regeneration can help to create a sense of place and local distinctiveness, and support valuable skills and encourage investment.

7.1.2 Many historic areas have suffered from declining economic activity, which results in underused buildings and low investment. In these circumstances, targeted actions may be needed to unlock potential and realise wider benefits. Regeneration activities can give historic assets fresh meaning and relevance, breathing new life into underused and undervalued buildings and areas.



*Fig. 7 The 1924 Grade II Listed Bathrock shelter has been subject to several regeneration projects following damage from fierce storms*



## 7.2 Aberystwyth

- 7.2.1 Several enhancement schemes have historically been undertaken within the town: Town Improvement Grant Scheme 2008-2012; Visit Wales Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) and Regeneration Area funding for Promenade Improvements 1996-2001; refurbishment of Aberystwyth Market Hall 2013; and Strategic Regeneration Area scheme RA 2010-2015.
- 7.2.2 Aberystwyth has the advantage of an interesting Medieval history and substantial castle remains which are free to visit.
- 7.2.3 Aberystwyth still has its fair share of empty shops and commercial premises within the town centre. There are also empty flats and premises above shops, which results in a lack of maintenance and reduces the night-time economy and vitality of the town.
- 7.2.4 There are currently a large number of buildings covered in scaffolding within the town. Whilst the details of these schemes have not been researched it is expected that this will result in an improved townscape and properly conserved and enhanced buildings.



**Fig. 8 Conservation of the Castle Hotel will hopefully provide a new life for this elegant building**

### 7.3 Recommendations

- 7.3.1 The Council needs to ensure that building owners and users have the tools necessary to carry out their own appropriate repairs and renovations. This may include guidance, training and mentoring.
- 7.3.2 Seek funding to buy and conserve a vacant listed building to set up a Conservation training establishment in partnership with organisations such as Cadw, the University, RCAHMW, the Welsh Traditional Buildings Forum, Building Research Establishment (BRE), the Strata Florida Project, the Towy Centre, Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training (HCT), Adult Learning Wales, Creative and Cultural Skills, or similar, to train local people in conservation techniques, create jobs which provide local conservation services to owners and occupiers in the town and surrounding areas. The centre could provide owners and occupiers with low or no cost training courses in general maintenance and assist with finding appropriate tradespeople and materials. This could provide a valuable and sustainable resource which would support regeneration in Ceredigion's town centres and conservation areas, in addition to providing some employment, upskilling owners and occupiers, and helping to preserve and enhance the historical architecture of the county. A model similar to Carmarthenshire's Adfer Ban a Chwm building preservation trust could be used.
- 7.3.3 Consider seeking funding from appropriate sources such as NLHF, Welsh Government, housing renewal, SDF funding and others as appropriate.

Priority areas for funding include:

- Maintenance and repair of existing historic buildings and architectural features, particularly windows, doors, door cases, porches and shop fronts.
- Training occupiers and owners in good conservation practice, especially in repair and maintenance with appropriate materials
- Replacement of lost architecture features on historic buildings combined with enforcement programme
- 'Living above the shop' schemes
- Encouraging re-use of empty shops - consider reduction in business rates for vacant listed buildings
- Repair of traditional street / path surfacing and replacement of inappropriate tarmac surfaces with high quality traditional paving (note failure of some materials on promenade

- Research and investigation, e.g. develop an archaeological research framework for Aberystwyth (and / or Ceredigion), undertake archaeological investigation into Medieval town, further research for enforcement purposes.



*Fig. 9 Living above the Shop schemes can help to save historic buildings and provide vitality and economic benefits to the town centre*

- 7.3.4 Investigate the possibility of expanding on the use of pop-up shops in empty buildings in the main shopping area, particularly during peak season.
- 7.3.5 Produce detailed development design guidance for sites within the conservation area which are identified for mixed use development in the LDP (M0301, M0302, M0303, M0304, M0305) and for sites which come up for redevelopment within the conservation area, particularly redevelopment of poor quality 20th century buildings.
- 7.3.6 Consider setting up a Heritage Tourism Group to produce a sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategy for Aberystwyth . Funding sources and potential partners could include: Visit Wales; Welsh Government; The University, National, regional and local cultural institutions; venues; accommodation providers, and so on. Examples include: **Dorchester** (<https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/docs/downloads/2021-Heritage-Strategy-Summary.pdf>), **Northern Ireland** (<https://www.tourismni.com/globalassets/business-development/support-by-sector/>

other-sectors/culture--heritage/tourism-ni-heritage-framework-a-prospectus-for-change.pdf) and **Cape Town** (<https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20strategies,%20plans%20and%20frameworks/Heritage%20Cultural%20Tourism%20Framework%20Final.pdf>)

- 7.3.7 Improvements could be made to the visitor experience at the Castle and for increasing understanding of the Medieval history of the town. Visitors appreciate the fact that the castle is free to visit, accessible, with fantastic views and that they can take dogs in, but additional interpretation would assist with improving the visitor experience. Litter should also be removed on a regular basis. Care should, however, be taken not to clutter the site or impact on the visual significance of the remains. Options could include events for which a fee could be charged such as live drama performances, re-enactments, a Medieval Fayre or (self) guided tours via in person guides, QR codes, a dedicated website or leaflets. An 'in person' tour guide / site staff would be a valuable addition during the tourist season and could be staffed by volunteers. Consider setting up a friends of Aberystwyth Castle group. It would be valuable to review the independent visitor comments on Trip Advisor.

## **8. ADVERTISEMENT GUIDANCE AND CONTROL**

### **8.1 Introduction**

- 8.1.1 One of the purposes of the advertisement control system is to encourage the display of outdoor advertisements which make a positive contribution to the appearance of the environment. Many conservation areas include commercial premises ranging from small corner shops to thriving commercial centres so outdoor advertising can be essential to commercial vitality. The kinds of advertisement which require planning consent include illuminated advertisements on business premises and advertisements on hoardings around development sites.
- 8.1.2 Authorities may also choose to adopt advertisement control policies as part of their proposals for the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas, for example, by the designation of areas of special advertisement control. Local planning authorities should use such controls flexibly in conservation areas to preserve those features of architectural or historic interest which led to designation.

### **8.2 Aberystwyth**

- 8.2.1 The conservation area has a vibrant commercial core. This area features a number of surviving historic shop frontages, public house frontages, and former dwellings which have been

sensitively adapted to a commercial/retail use. Over time some of the historic shop fronts have been insensitively altered mainly due to modern and unsympathetic advertisements (fascia and projecting/hanging signs), harsh corporate colour schemes and too many signs. In other instances modern signs obscure the shop front and building detail.



*Fig. 10 Shop front guidance and control over some advertising could help to enhance the shop fronts within the core of the conservation area*

### 8.3 Recommendations

- 8.3.1 Designate an area of special advertisement control within the commercial / retail centre of Aberystwyth
- 8.3.2 Review the 2013 Aberystwyth shopfront guidance to cover good practice in all conservation areas and consider a re-release of the guidance with additional promotion throughout conservation areas in Ceredigion.
- 8.3.3 Seek funding for a shop front and signage grant programme.
- 8.3.4 Consider enforcement for unauthorised signage and combine with a grants programme.

## 9. BUILDINGS AT RISK

### 9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Keeping buildings in use and repaired is the cornerstone of successful conservation area management. Neglected and underused buildings damage the vitality and attractiveness of conservation areas.

### 9.2 Aberystwyth

9.2.1 There are a number of Listed Buildings at Risk within the conservation area. The following vacant commercial listed buildings have been identified:

- Belle Vue
- Swyddfa'r Sir / County Hall
- DIVA
- Claire's Accessories - 37 Great Darkgate St
- Furniture Cave Shop in Northgate
- Old Post Office
- Gas Showroom
- Neuadd y Buarth (Hall)
- Yr Hen Ysgol (2 units)
- Siop y Prom
- Costa
- The old Scout Hut in Plascrug Avenue

### 9.3 Recommendations

9.3.1 The Council should set up a county wide Buildings at Risk Strategy which would work with both Listed Buildings and those considered to positively contribute to the character or appearance of conservation areas. This would identify a strategic approach to identifying and managing these buildings. (see: <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/historic-assets/listed-buildings/listed-buildings-risk#section-managing-listed-buildings-at-risk>).

9.3.2 Owners of listed buildings are obliged to keep them in a reasonable state of repair. Local planning authorities have powers to serve Repairs Notices and use other enforcement tools in extreme cases. If negotiation fails, then the Council should consider the use of its statutory powers.

9.3.3 The Council, to cover all conservation areas, listed buildings and non-designated properties, should investigate the possibility of setting up training schemes and courses - training occupiers and owners in good conservation practice, especially in repair and maintenance with appropriate materials. See Aberystwyth Conservation Management Plan for full scheme suggestion. Circulation of a publication such as 'Stitch in Time' (IHBC and SPAB) to all properties within Ceredigion conservation areas would provide a good start to this process.

## 10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

### 10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 In addition to the various enforcement tools available for local planning authorities there are additional opportunities for environmental enhancement. These include partnership working with national agencies, other council departments and local organisations such as Town Councils and business forums.

10.1.2 Opportunities for environmental enhancement often relate to the physical infrastructure of the town, including highways, works by statutory undertakers, environmental health, housing and others.

10.1.3 Community engagement and mentoring can also achieve positive change within designated areas.

### 10.2 Aberystwyth

10.2.1 The conservation area is a busy environment that experiences very high volumes of traffic, certain roads are also used as 'rat runs' to shorten journey times and because of the one way system, and some parts can become very congested. This has a crucial influence on the physical environment and the area's character and appearance.



*Fig. 11 Some areas of the town can become very congested and experience high volumes of traffic*

- 10.2.2 The proliferation of standard traffic signs, posts, road markings, parking pay-points, and safety rails etc. in parts of the town inevitably introduces alien features and visual clutter, which detracts from the character or appearance of the designated area.
- 10.2.3 Across the conservation area street furniture including seating, refuse bins, cycle racks, bollards, road side railings, street lighting etc. is relatively coordinated, however, some items are out-dated, and others inappropriately positioned whilst others have been replaced with inappropriate new designs.
- 10.2.4 There is an ever increasing demand for rented accommodation within the town centre. This has resulted in many single-occupancy dwellings being converted into houses of multiple occupation (HMO's). There will be continued pressure for the change of use of buildings within the conservation area and some of the buildings may be suitable for conversion, others less so, and it is imperative that the growth and distribution of HMO's is carefully considered.
- 10.2.5 Changes of use can also negatively impact upon the surrounding physical environment and some harm has already occurred with long term to-let signs, refuse and recycling bins left out in the public realm, etc. which has a negative impact on the appearance and character of the street scene.
- 10.2.6 Within the conservation area a number of modern infill developments have occurred over time, some of which negatively impact on the historic character and do not blend in with the overall quality and architectural features and style of the town.
- 10.2.7 In the conservation area sections of historic streetscape survive which enhance the setting of the surrounding buildings and the overall quality of the public realm, but in places they are in a degrading condition as a result of age, general wear and tear and a lack of regular maintenance and insensitive repairs. New surfacing such as on the promenade would positively contribute to the character of this area but some of the new materials are already failing and patch repair has been carried out with inappropriate materials. The majority of the surfacing is standardised i.e. concrete pavements and tarmacadam roads and hard standing parking areas. In places, these are severely degrading with failing materials, cracking and unevenness and inappropriate repairs creating a patchwork appearance.

### 10.3 Recommendations

- 10.3.1 The Council's development management team must encourage good design for extensions and new development within conservation areas, particularly by using the pre-application



enquiry process and ensuring the current SPG is fit for purpose. The SPG may need revising and re-release with promotion especially within designated areas.



***Figs. 12 and 13 Areas of relatively newly resurfaced promenade are starting to fail, in places inappropriate repairs have been undertaken***

- 10.3.2 Ensure Enforcement Officers are trained in understanding the specific remit of conservation areas and designated buildings and sites and that resources are available for enforcement action if and when required.
- 10.3.3 If required, offer training for Highways Officers regarding good design in conservation areas. There are some excellent publications and guidelines available such as Historic England's 'Streets for All' (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/heag149-sfa-national/>).
- 10.3.4 In conjunction with Highways colleagues draw up a design code for each conservation area in Ceredigion and seek funding for implementation. Cover surfacing, safety railings, street furniture, lighting and highways road and safety features.
- 10.3.5 With the local community set up a conservation area advisory / enhancement community group which can carry out small tasks which would make a big difference such as litter picking, enhancing car parks, identifying signage for removal, etc. (see: <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/resources/How%20To%20Organise%20A%20Litter-Picking%20Event.pdf>). They could also comment on development proposals in conservation areas and bring any future issues within the conservation area to the Council's attention. Mentoring and training should be provided by the Council.

- 10.3.6 Future conversions to HMOs should seek to retain and emphasise features relating to the original function of the building and its special character, and external appearance and interest, otherwise the building loses its identity. Sufficient capacity / space for bins, storage etc. should be included within designs.
- 10.3.7 Redevelopment of modern infill development - Use development management tools to ensure good quality imaginative new design. In considering proposals for redevelopment of such sites, amongst the primary concerns should be the principle of the overall scale of any new building, the architectural concept and detailing and its relationship with its context. A good new building should be in positive contrast with, or complementary to, its neighbours having regard to the pattern, rhythm, details and materials of the surrounding built form.
- 10.3.8 Consider creating a parking strategy for the town bearing in mind the impact of on street parking and proliferation of cars within the town centre.
- 10.3.9 Liaise with letting and estate agents to remove letting and for sale signs after a certain period and ensure that the signs are of an appropriate design, appropriately located and in good condition at all times.

## **11. TREES, LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES**

### **11.1 Introduction**

- 11.1.1 Trees are an important component of the character and amenity of many conservation areas and — along with green open spaces, including private gardens — have a valuable role to play in ecosystem services. To complement the controls over trees in conservation areas, it is a good idea for local planning authorities to develop specific local policies for the protection and management of trees and other elements of the natural environment, such as hedgerows and verges.
- 11.1.2 A strategy for trees could include an assessment of their amenity and biodiversity value, and their contribution to ecosystem services before there is pressure to remove them. The protection and management of trees and open spaces could be integrated in a green infrastructure strategy.

### **11.2 Aberystwyth**

- 11.2.1 The trees, open spaces and landscape which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area have been identified within the appraisal.
- 11.2.2 In general the open spaces appear to be relatively well maintained.



*Fig. 14 In general open spaces within the conservation area are well maintained but there is always room for improvements and enhancement*

11.2.3 Some street trees are in need of maintenance and proper management and some trees have been lost.

11.2.4 Ceredigion County Council has an adopted Strategy for Greening Towns and a Green Infrastructure Assessment has been undertaken by consultants.

### **11.3 Recommendations**

11.3.1 Continue to follow the recommendations in the relevant and adopted green infrastructure strategic documents.

11.3.2 Ensure the green infrastructure assessment and the strategy for trees in each conservation area is kept up to date and regularly reviewed.

11.3.3 Consider commissioning a separate tree report and / or involve the local community in identifying and mapping trees and tree groups suitable for Tree Preservation Orders.

11.3.4 Protect important trees, open spaces and views within the conservation area and those which contribute to its setting through the LDP.

11.3.5 Ensure existing street trees are retained, replaced as necessary and suitably managed.

## **12. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

### **12.1 Introduction**

12.1.1 The legislation requires local planning authorities to review existing conservation areas 'from time to time' - best practice is generally considered to be every five to ten years.

12.1.2 The review should establish progress achieved since the previous appraisal and should confirm or redefine both special interest and critical issues. The review should also revise the management plan and provide new recommendations where appropriate.

12.1.3 Monitoring change is essential to be able to evaluate the impact of designation and the success of management strategies in preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

12.1.4 Cadw considers that the baseline for periodic review is a full photographic survey recording buildings from the street, as well as other components of character, including trees, gardens, boundaries and views. There is scope for involving local community groups in carrying out this work.

### **12.2 Aberystwyth**

12.2.1 As part of its urban characterisation studies series, in 2013 Cadw produced a very thorough assessment of Aberystwyth's urban character. This study goes beyond the boundary of the conservation area and whilst it is of some age it is still an extremely relevant document and should be referred to in addition to this appraisal.

12.2.2 A draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Aberystwyth has been in preparation for some time but unfortunately has not been finished or adopted.

12.2.3 The Council has recently appointed a new planning officer with responsibility for conservation.

### **12.3 Recommendations**

12.3.1 The Council should adopt this appraisal and management plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance and use it to inform decision making.

12.3.2 The Council should commit to review the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan at a suitable interval and at least within ten years.

12.3.3 The Council should continue to use the Cadw urban characterisation document to support decision making.

12.3.4 The Council should involve the local community with the monitoring and management of the area and future appraisal reviews, where possible.

12.3.5 The Council should ensure that, within budget constraints, Conservation and Heritage officers are politically supported and have sufficient resources.

12.3.6 The Council should continue to facilitate partnership working between local councils, departments, local businesses and communities to ensure their statutory duty with regards to conservation areas is carried out.



*Fig. 15 The Old Town area of Aberystwyth*

## APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION (FOR FULL EXPLANATION SEE MANAGEMENT PLAN)	RESPONSIBILITY / PARTNERS	PRIORITY
The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and used to guide decision making.	CCC - Heritage and Policy	High 0-1 years
Implement the proposed boundary extension.	CCC - Heritage and Policy Local community / TCC	High 0-1 years
Article 4 (1 or 2) Direction should be applied to Aberystwyth Conservation Area.	CCC - Heritage and Policy Local community / TCC	High 0-1 years
Designate an area of special advertisement control within the commercial / retail centre of Aberystwyth.	CCC - Heritage and Policy	High 0-1 years
Continue to use the Cadw urban characterisation document to support decision making.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Development Management	High 0-1 years Ongoing
The photographic survey produced as part of this conservation area appraisal should be used as baseline information for enforcement purposes.	CCC - Heritage, Planning Enforcement, Legal	High 0-1 years Ongoing
Make a commitment to follow best practice enforcement procedures within the conservation areas in Ceredigion (Enforcement charter or similar). Negotiate with owners regarding infringements. Serve Repairs Notices and use other enforcement tools as necessary. Ensure Enforcement Officers are trained in understanding the specific remit of conservation areas and designated buildings and sites. Enforcement for unauthorised signage and shop fascia.	CCC - Heritage, Planning Enforcement, Legal	High - 0-1 years Ongoing
Ensure that regeneration and other schemes utilise heritage based design principles to ensure the significance of these areas informs the development of any proposals. Draw up design briefs for potential development and infill sites within and in the setting of the conservation area. Encourage good design for extensions and new development within conservation areas. Draw up guidelines for HMOs to ensure consideration of the conservation area's characteristics are respected and sufficient bin storage etc.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Regeneration, Development Management TCC, local community	High 0-1 years Ongoing
Liaise with letting and estate agents to remove letting and for sale signs after a certain period and ensure that the signs are of an appropriate design, appropriately located and in good condition at all times.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Regeneration TCC, local community	High 0-1 years ongoing

<b>ACTION / RECOMMENDATION</b> (FOR FULL EXPLANATION SEE MANAGEMENT PLAN)	<b>RESPONSIBILITY / PARTNERS</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>
Continue to follow the recommendations in the relevant and adopted green infrastructure strategic documents. Ensure the green infrastructure assessment and the strategy for trees in each conservation area is kept up to date and regularly reviewed.	CCC - Ecology, Policy and Development Management Local community	<b>High - ongoing</b>
Protect important trees, open spaces and views within the conservation area and those which contribute to its setting through the LDP and development management. Identify trees suitable for Tree Preservation Orders.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Ecology and Development Management Local community	<b>High - ongoing</b>
Ensure that, within budget constraints, Conservation and Heritage officers are politically supported and have sufficient resources.	CCC	<b>High - ongoing</b>
Facilitate partnership working between departments, local businesses and communities to ensure their statutory duty with regards to conservation areas is carried out.	CCC	<b>High - ongoing</b>
Produce an Aberystwyth Conservation Area leaflet. Ensure all owners and occupiers are aware of their permitted development rights and any restrictions, particularly in relation to the Article 4 Direction.	CCC - Heritage, Ecology and Policy Local community	<b>Medium</b> <b>2-3 years</b>
Review the 2013 Aberystwyth shopfront guidance to cover good practice for shop fronts and signage in all conservation areas. Seek funding for a shop front and signage grant programme. Consider enforcement measures as necessary.	CCC - Policy and Heritage Other local authorities, the South Wales and Mid-Wales Conservation Officer Groups	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Set up an 'Historic Assets of Special Local Interest Project' for the whole county. Develop and adopt a relevant Local Development Plan policy.	CCC - Heritage and Policy Local community	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Seek funding for a variety of maintenance, repair, regeneration and training schemes (see 7.3.3 and 8.3.3). Possibly in conjunction with below.	CCC - Heritage and Policy, Regeneration	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Seek funding to buy and conserve a vacant listed building to set up a Conservation training establishment in partnership with other organisations.	CCC - Regeneration, Heritage Cadw, the University, RCAHMW, the Welsh Traditional Buildings Forum, Building Research Establishment (BRE), the Strata Florida Project, the Towy Centre, Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training (HCT), Adult Learning Wales Creative and Cultural Skills, etc	<b>Medium 2-3 years and ongoing</b>
Investigate the possibility of expanding on the use of pop-up shops in empty buildings within the conservation area.	CCC - Heritage and Policy, Regeneration TCC, local community (building owners)	<b>Medium 2-3 years and ongoing</b>

<b>ACTION / RECOMMENDATION</b> (FOR FULL EXPLANATION SEE MANAGEMENT PLAN)	<b>RESPONSIBILITY / PARTNERS</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>
Consider setting up a Heritage Tourism Group to produce a sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategy for Aberystwyth.	CCC - Policy, Regeneration	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Set up a county wide Buildings at Risk Strategy which would work with both Listed Buildings and those considered to positively contribute to the character or appearance of conservation areas.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Regeneration, Housing Local community	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Training for Highways Officers regarding good design in conservation areas.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Highways Consultants	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b>
Set up a conservation area advisory / enhancement community group which can carry out small tasks to enhance the conservation area and also comment on development proposals. Identify sites for environmental improvement.	CCC - Heritage, Policy TCC, local community	<b>Medium 2-3 years</b> <b>ongoing</b>
Develop and adopt guidance leaflets and information for conservation areas e.g. historic windows, micro generation, external wall insulation, sustainability and energy efficiency etc.	CCC - Heritage Other Local authorities, the South Wales and Mid-Wales Conservation Officer Groups, Cadw's Built Heritage Forum, IHBC, Tywi Centre	<b>Low 3-5 years</b>
Develop a colour design guide which would set out general guidelines and principles for appropriate colours and paint types to use within the conservation area.	CCC - Policy and Heritage Other local authorities, the South and Mid-Wales Conservation Officer Groups	<b>Low 3-5 years</b>
Consider setting up a friends of Aberystwyth Castle group and improve the interpretation at the Castle. Work with partners and the local community to provide additional interpretation regarding Aberystwyth's Medieval history.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Regeneration TCC, local community	<b>Low 3-5 years</b>
Highways - draw up a design code for each conservation area in Ceredigion and seek funding for implementation.	CCC - Heritage, Policy, Regeneration and Highways Welsh Government?	<b>Low 3-5 years</b>
Consider creating a parking strategy for the town to reduce the impact of traffic and parking on the character of the conservation area.	CCC - Highways, Regeneration, Policy, Heritage TCC, local community, Consultants?	<b>Low 3-5 years</b>
Commit to review the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan at a suitable interval and at least within ten years. Follow up photographic survey as part of next review. Involve the local community with the monitoring and management of the area and future appraisal reviews.	CCC - Policy and Heritage Consultants	<b>Low 5 -10 years</b>



## APPENDIX B: REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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