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Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

St Clears Conservation Area



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## Executive Summary

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St Clears Conservation Area was designated in 1970. A review of this designation is now required to reassess the significance of the area and consider if the boundaries remain appropriate. The aim of the review, and this resulting document, is to provide a robust appraisal that will inform the future management, conservation, and enhancement of the area.

This area of St Clears has a rich heritage resulting from its strategic position at the confluence of tidal rivers which border the site. The location historically provided both defensive and maritime trading opportunities. With changing modes of transport and communication, the focus and commercial centre of the town has since moved north, leaving behind a legacy of architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The following are key significant characteristics of the area:

1. Strategic position at the confluence of the Taf and Cynin rivers.
2. Lowest crossing point of the river Taf and upper limit of navigation.
3. The Norman Castle and Medieval Priory Church as two highly significant historically structures.
4. Evident medieval street layout and defensive circuit layout.

It is concluded that the area's conservation area status should remain, but that an alteration should be made to the boundary to consolidate and include previously overlooked yet significant areas.

The next step is to find out what people think of this analysis and the proposals to alter the conservation area boundary.



Bridge Street north to High Street



Semi-rural setting of St Mary Magdalene



## 1.0 Introduction

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### 1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Report

This report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates (Insall) in response to a brief from Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) for the preparation of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Ct Clears Conservation Area, made possible by grant funding from the Community Renewal Fund. The aim of the project is to study and assess the existing Conservation Area to understand and articulate what makes it special, consider whether the existing boundaries are appropriate and to produce a robust appraisal document which will guide the future management, maintenance, and development of the area. This document is intended for use by building owners who wish to undertake work on their properties, by architects and developers when considering change to existing buildings and by Local Authority staff to aid them in making decisions.

The report is set out in 4 parts:

1. Understanding the area: This consists of a summary of the area, its historic development and significance.
2. Site appraisal: This sets out key elements of the Conservation Area (CA) and how they contribute to its character, appearance, and significance.
3. Issues, threats, and management: The report continues with observations around specific issues and threats and sets out a series of principles to help guide future development whilst ensuring that the special interest of the area is preserved and where possible enhanced.

4. Opportunities: This section elaborates on opportunities that have been identified to inform the concluding section.

### 1.2 Defining Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'

CA's are distinct parts of the historic environment designated by Local Planning Authorities because of their special architectural or historic interest. Architectural interest could include a good example of a particular type of settlement, town planning, or a group of buildings of distinctive regional or local style or of high architectural quality. Historic interest is associated the historic evolution of a place, a particular period or with social, economic, or cultural movements such as early industrial housing and areas where archaeological, architectural, or topographical evidence of the origins and main periods of development have survived particularly well. Character is expressed through such things as building styles, materials, street layouts, land use and periods of development.

Within the planning system, applications for change within a CA are assessed to understand the effect that the development might have on significance. Significance is one of the guiding principles running through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'. This may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic and it may derive not only from a physical presence but also from its setting.

Additional regulatory controls are placed upon certain works within CAs, including demolition, works to trees and advertisements. All planning decisions are required to be assessed against the significance of the area to ensure it is maintained and where possible enhanced. This document sets out the significance and character of the area to aid those applying for change or making decisions can understand where proposals may impact upon this and determine whether this is a positive or negative change.

### 1.3 Summary of Related Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

The key provisions for conservation area designation and management are set out in legislation, government planning policy and guidance. This includes:

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Planning Policy Wales February 2021

Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, 2017

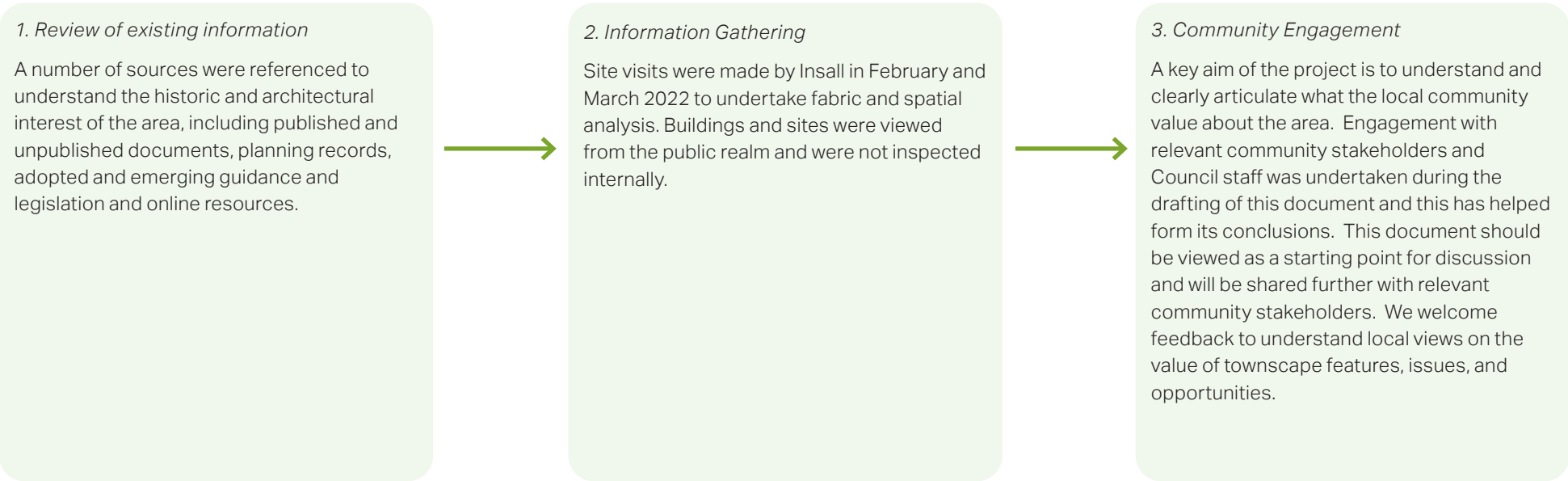
Managing Conservation Areas in Wales, Cadw, 2017

A summary and links to these documents can be found in an appendix to this document.



1.4 Method Statement

The following has been undertaken through the preparation of this report:









## 2.0 Understanding the Site

### 2.1 Summary of Significance and Character

The key characteristics of the area and items of significance are summarised below (a more expansive list can be found in section 7).

- Legible medieval street pattern, divisions, and enclosure
- Strategic location with evidence of historic defensive layout
- Maritime links to navigable rivers and lowest crossing point of river Taf
- River trading history with evidence of past industry
- Scheduled monuments of St Clears Castle and St Clears Priory claustral buildings
- High archaeological potential
- Significant views to, from and through the area due to the topography
- Local and regional buildings of significance
- A strong sense of enclosure along the narrow High Street with glimpsed, wider views
- Illustrative of the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century evolution of the town with changing modes of transport

### 2.2 Location

St Clears CA lies to the south of the present commercial town centre from which it is physically separated by a cutting containing the A40 trunk road. The town is 8 miles west of the county town of Carmarthen. The CA is tightly contained by the rivers Cynin and Taf and rising ground to the northwest. A bridge, providing the lowest crossing point of the river Taf, marks the southern end of the main thoroughfare which runs from south to north with buildings fronting both sides of the street. The mound of the Norman castle rises immediately to the east of the route, positioned strategically at the confluence of the rivers.

### 2.3 Topography and setting

The CA is generally low lying, and the surrounding rivers remain navigable to small craft as far as St Clears. To the south, there are far-reaching views down the river Taf towards the estuary at Laugharne. The tall castle motte allows panoramic views of wide river valleys and the surrounding landscape. From the river crossing, beyond the southern edge of the CA, Bridge Street rises slowly into High Street on a gently meandering south-north line. The narrow principal street is tightly defined by buildings on both sides but, to the north of the castle, occasional breaks allow glimpses of rising land to the west, whilst to the east the land slopes down to the river Cynin and landscape views beyond.



### 3.0 Historic Development

#### *Summary of the Historic Development of St Clears*

##### **The Middle Ages**

Medieval St Clears was strategically positioned at the confluence of the Taf and Cynin rivers, in a low lying and naturally well-defended location, with only the north and northwest sides not bounded by water. A motte and bailey castle was founded by the Anglo-Normans at St Clears in the early twelfth century during their conquest of southwest Wales. From this a small settlement, protected by earth and timber defences, developed outside the castle gates. The settlement spread either side of the road running north towards the priory.

The castle saw conflict and was captured by Welsh princes in 1153, 1189 and 1215. In 1188, twelve archers from the castle murdered a young Welsh noble and were ordered to go on crusade as punishment. It is probable that William Marshal the Younger, who joined the barons against King John but would later switch sides and who became Earl of Pembroke and Lord Marshal of England in 1219, introduced stone defensive walls to replace the earth and timber in 1230. William Marshal the Younger died in 1231 with the Marshal Earls of Pembroke succession coming to an end completely in 1245. After this the inheritance was partitioned to various relatives. The castle then fell into decay from the mid-to-late 13<sup>th</sup> Century. The castle was surrendered to Owain Glyndwr in 1405 but abandoned shortly afterwards.

The Priory Church of St. Mary Magdalene was founded at St Clears between 1147 and 1184 as an alien cell of St Martin des Champs, Paris, when the pre-existing church was granted to the monastic community. The use of

the church was shared by the monks and the secular community. The priory is not mentioned in Pope Lucius II's confirmation to the monks of St Martin's in 1147 but it is included in Eugenius IV's of 1184. It remained a cell for a prior and one or two monk companions. In 1291 it was recorded that the site had only twelve acres of arable land. The priory itself was dissolved in 1414.

St Clears has a long maritime history since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The navigable river Taf, to the south, facilitated a thriving trading port with easy access to the Bristol Channel.

A town charter was granted in 1393.

The bridge just south of the conservation area and Bridge Street follow the original medieval layout of the town and the plots of St Clears along Bridge Street today are still largely enclosed within the line of the former defensive circuit.

##### **17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Ships and merchants of St. Clears were mentioned in medieval documents and from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, St. Clears enjoyed expanding coastal and foreign trade. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, imports included stone, coal and timber (from Baltic ports). Many domestic goods such as cloth and clothes, pots and pans, soap, candles, glassware, knives, ironmongery and haberdashery were brought in by sea, mostly from Bristol. In return, St. Clears exports were mainly agricultural - corn butter and cheese. Eighteenth-century exports included lead ore from the Llanfyrnach mines.



Suspected plan of the town in the 14<sup>th</sup> century



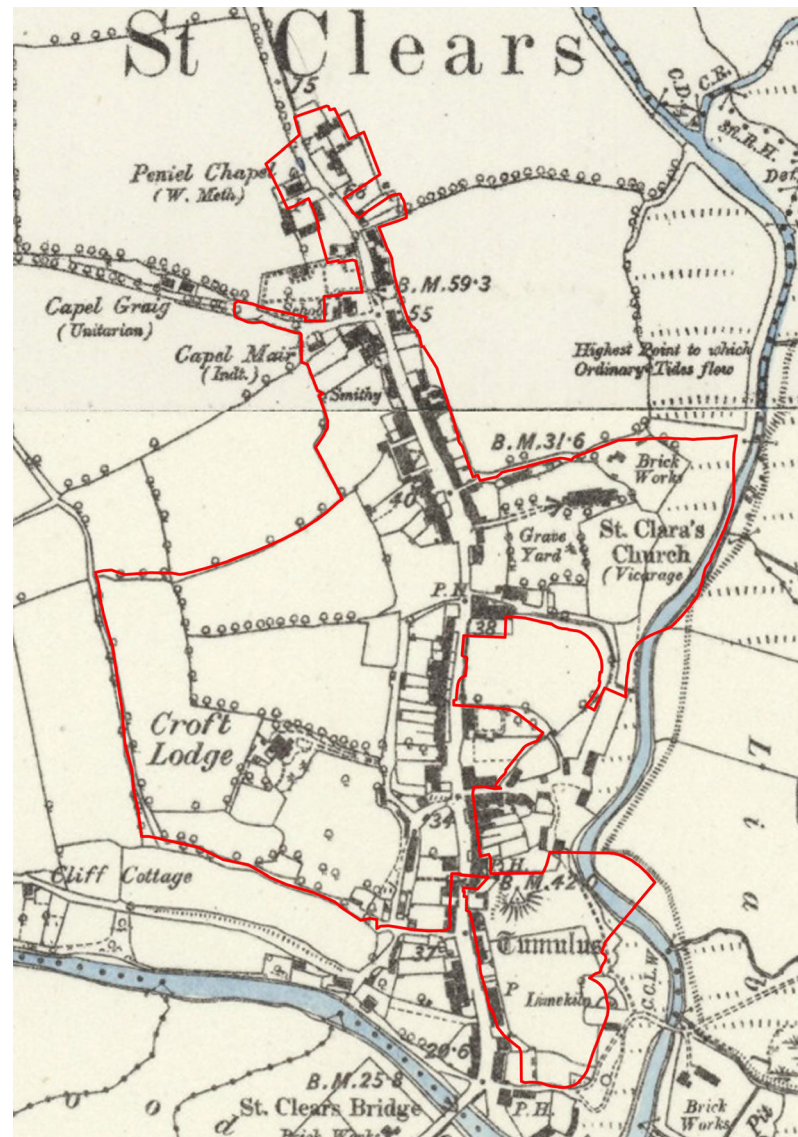
By 1763 the establishment of a turnpike trust to upgrade the road from Carmarthen to St Clears and on to a Tavernspite, shifted the focus of the town a mile northward from its medieval core around the castle and church.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vessels of up to 250 tons came upriver on spring tides, and boats conveyed passengers to Bristol once a fortnight. Wharves and quays extended northwards on the banks of the Cynin. 19<sup>th</sup> Century maps document numerous brick and tile works, limekilns, coal yards and sawmills. Until the later 19<sup>th</sup> Century the commercial life of St. Clears was heavily dependent on links to the sea. Road improvements and the construction of the South Wales Railway in 1853 led to a gradual decline of the port and a shifting of the commercial focus to 'upper' St Clears.

The 1889 Ordnance Survey map charts the continuing expansion of 19<sup>th</sup> Century St Clears when compared with the 1842 Tithe map. Most buildings that now line Bridge Street and High Street were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, following the medieval street pattern.

In 1848, a Town Hall was formed on the High Street by conversion of the Cross storehouse by the son of William Rogers of St Clears. The church of St Mary Magdalene was restored in 1853-5 and in 1883-4 with a new stained-glass window added in 1929. Today it retains most of its medieval form. It is considered to have the best surviving Norman stone carving in Carmarthenshire. Several chapels were built within what is now the CA during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Grade II listed



St Clears Historic Boundary Overlay 1888  
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

Capel Mair, Welsh Independent Chapel, originally built in 1820, but then rebuilt 1827 and 1862 still stands; nearby Capel-y-Craig, Unitarian, was built 1826 but closed in 1901 and two houses were built on the site; and the Welsh Methodist, Capel Penuei, of c.1885, at the northern extremity of the CA has since been converted to residential use.

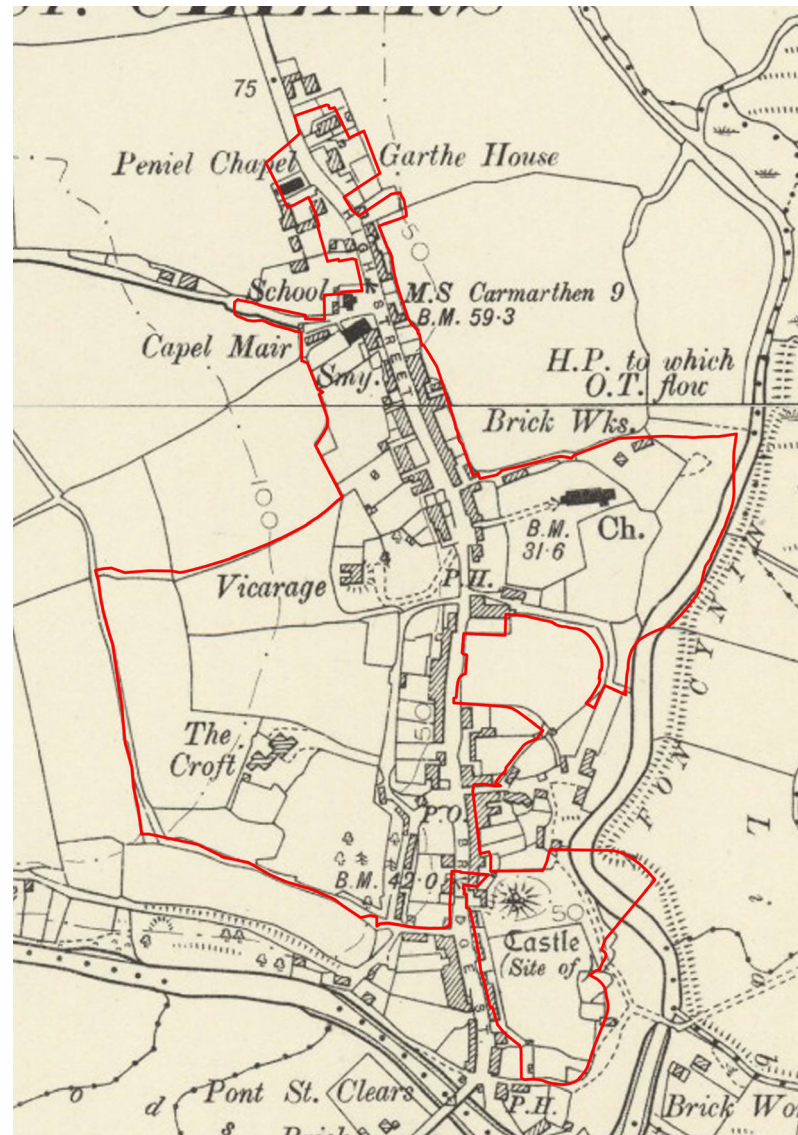
St Clears is associated with the Rebecca Riots, an uprising between 1839 and 1843 in West and Mid Wales by tenant farmers, protesting against the payment of tolls to use the roads. There is a sculpture in upper St Clears depicting the destruction of the tollgate at its original location.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Some seaborne trade continued until the late 1920's. Small boats could provide river access as far as 'upper' St Clears. The stone quay on the Taf is still evident, although the associated warehouses were demolished in the 1970's and the site redeveloped for housing.

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the castle bailey area was levelled, leaving the motte and embankments. No visible stonework remains from the castle although underground masonry has been detected.

Numerous public houses, schools and commercial enterprises continue to feature on 20<sup>th</sup> Century maps of 'lower' St Clears within the current CA.

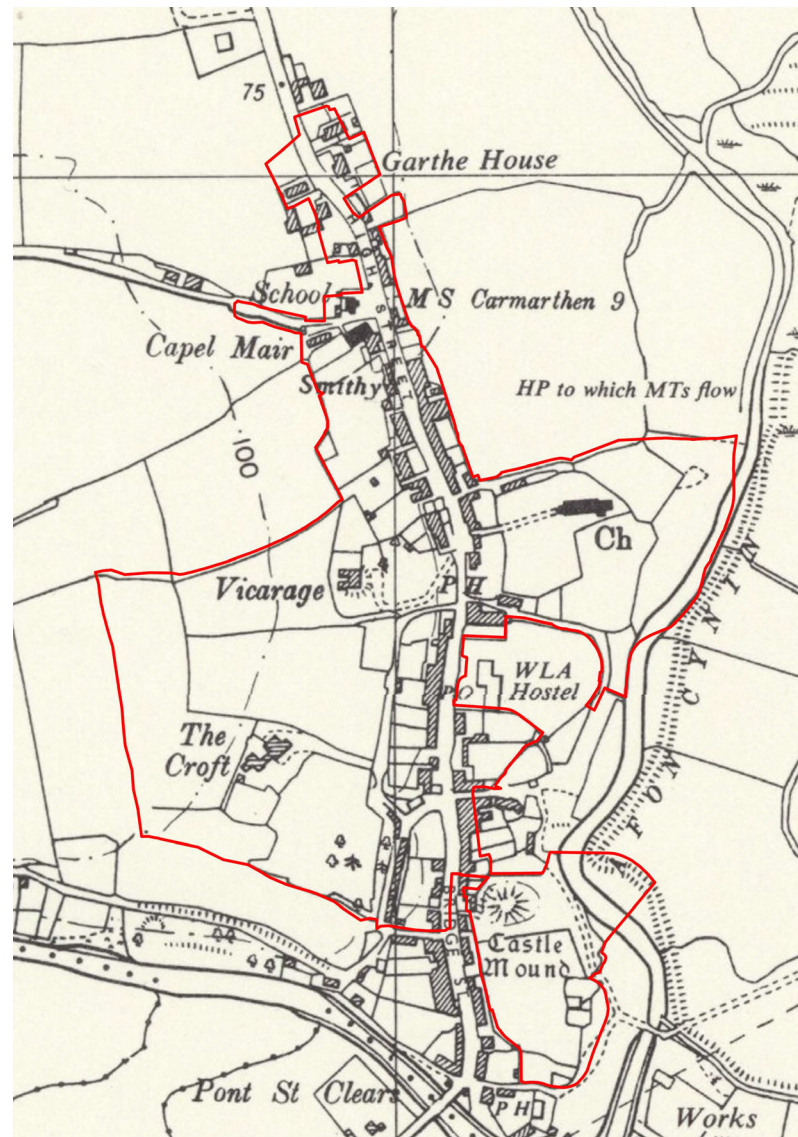


St Clears Historic Boundary Overlay 1907  
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)



## Present day St Clears

The origins and layout of the historic settlement remain evident, with the castle mound and church sustaining their relationship with the underlying topography of the CA. Most other buildings are 19<sup>th</sup> Century in origin although often much altered, but there is a sprinkling of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century infill with business and residential properties having been added along the main thoroughfare. On the eastern edge of the CA, bordering the river, the housing on Lon-y-Prior and Manor Daf Gardens has further diluted the setting and coherence of the CA. Much of the commercial activity now takes place further north in 'upper' St Clears, closer to the arterial road network and railway. There is a boating club alongside the river but little sign of past maritime trade other than the remains of the stone wharf alongside the Taf, to the east of the bridge. There are few remaining facilities to support the residential community within the CA. Through traffic on High Street and Bridge Street, which provide the principal route to and from Laugharne to the south, is an unfortunate and very immediate blight on the narrow residential roads of the CA.



St Clears Historic Boundary Overlay 1964  
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

## 4.0 Spatial Analysis

### 4.1 Views into, within and from the CA

The impact of proposed developments should include consideration of views into, within and from the CA. The following are noted without excluding other viewpoints and can be seen on the following map.

#### *Surrounding Landscape and open spaces*

Approaching St Clears from the south, the strategic setting of the Castle mound is at its most obvious, despite the late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing along the riverside. The low, wide river valleys allow an open view of the surrounding topography and the linear nature of the town, with ridgelines progressively stepping up the main thoroughfare from the river crossing.

From within the conservation area, unsurprisingly, the top of castle mound affords unsurpassed panoramic views across the CA, town and surrounding landscape. Looking southwards from the mound, the levelled bailey area extends towards confluence of the rivers with perimeter vegetation screening the housing below and the Taf valley continuing in the background towards Carmarthen Bay.



Southern approach



Bridge Street north to High Street



Panoramic views to south from Castle Mound



### *Street views*

St Clears Castle is otherwise well hidden from within the CA, making only a brief appearance through an unimpressive gap between some nondescript properties lining the east side of Bridge Street. The castle mound rises almost immediately behind the park entrance gates, but elsewhere is screened by the low, but largely uninterrupted, line of terraced properties on the narrow street.

The gently curvilinear form of Bridge Street and High Street, and predominantly terraced properties on the street edge, create a narrow and intimate street with a strong sense of enclosure; the view and orientation changes subtly but there little sense of having arrived at any point along the route. The tall, angled façade of Capel Mair is the most dramatic interruption. There are occasional oblique glimpses through gaps in the building line. Lanes and gateways to the west provide short views into the rising ground of adjacent countryside and farmland. To the east, land slopes down to the river Cynin allowing longer views of the surrounding countryside across the valley. Approaching St Mary Magdalene through the lychgate on High Street, the large churchyard viewed in conjunction with the background landscape of the surrounding countryside to the east, gives the church an almost rural setting.



Bridge Street north to High Street



Glimpsed view west from High Street



Semi-rural setting of St Mary Magdalene



River Cynin looking south

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Street views of note, without excluding others are noted below:

Castle Mound from Bridge Street

Top of High Street southwards to Capel Mair

High Street at Town Hall and lychgate

*Terminated and enclosed views*

Although many of the views within the CA are dominated by a few major thoroughfares, the glimpsed views along back lanes and between buildings are also an integral and important part of the character of the area and there are a number of such paths which loop off High Street and Bridge Street. These offer an interesting, if perhaps not entirely a visually appealing view of the more informal elevations and the remnants of the burgage plots which were once characteristic of the area.



Castle Mound from Bridge Street



High Street at Town Hall and lychgate



High Street southwards to Capel Mair



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## 4.2 Main Landmarks and key buildings

### Listed Buildings and Structures

#### *St Mary Magdalene*

Situated within a cemetery behind the street and reached via a lych-gate opposite the Town Hall, the church is of 12<sup>th</sup> century origin, but much altered in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The original chancel arch is the best Norman work in the county. External walls are of rubble stone with Bath stone dressings, with concrete tiles to nave roof and slates to chancel. The tall 15<sup>th</sup> century tower has a battered plinth with massive quoins and a corbelled embattled parapet. The simple yet imposing exterior is largely hidden from the narrow High Street. Heavily restored in several phases in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the building is listed grade II\* as a restored medieval church.

Immediately to the south of the church are the medieval remains of the Claustral buildings of the Cluniac Priory at St Clears, which was founded between 1147-84. It shows as a rectangular platform in a small paddock and is one of only two Cluniac cells founded in Wales. The church was shared by the parish and the Priory until its dissolution in 1414.



#### *St Clears Castle*

Also known as Banc y Beili, this scheduled monument comprises the remains of a motte and bailey castle built during the late 11<sup>th</sup> century to defend the strategic location at the confluence of the rivers Taf and Cynin. The earthen motte is substantial and well preserved measuring 8m tall. The level platform on top of the motte is thought to have supported a masonry structure. The large bailey is roughly rectangular in shape and extends to the south of the motte but the area has been levelled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, concealing the ditch around the motte, and the bank and ditch around the bailey.

The monument enhances knowledge of medieval defensive organisation and forms an important element within the wider medieval context of the CA. The structure itself may be expected to contain archaeological information relating to chronology, building techniques and functional detail.





### *Green Park House*

Approximately mid-way between the Castle and church, on the west side of the High Street, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Green Park House sits behind a small, railed forecourt. This late Georgian town house with original detail and distinctive timber porch looks now looks across High Street to Lon-y-Prior, which is at least aligned on axis with the frontage. Maps indicate that the original aspect would previously have been towards an open green space.



### *Lychgate*

Situated at the entrance to the churchyard off High Street, this good early 20<sup>th</sup> century timber lychgate design signals the presence of the church and has group value in the closely built-up street. The rubble stone wall to left of lychgate incorporates a fragment of an older stone cross.



### *The Town Hall*

The Town Hall, created in 1848 by repurposing an early 19<sup>th</sup> century marine storehouse, faces the lychgate across High Street. The larger storey heights and wide, three bay façade provide some scale and formality befitting the conversion. The upper floor is reached by a flight of stone steps at the south end of the building, leading up to a lean-to porch. Openings within the rubble stone elevation have brick heads. A plaque on the upper storey depicts the wild boar of the Mabinogion legend, around which is the painted inscription "Corporation of St. Clears. Prif Cufeillach Trwy'r Byd" surmounted by a crest bearing the inscription "1848. Town Hall". The building has seen multiple uses; there was an infants' classroom on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor from the 1960's and then a carpenter's workshop in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately the building appears to have since fallen out of use and is deteriorating.



### *Cross House Stores*

On east side of High Street, immediately north of the lychgate, Cross House Stores is a lonely local survival of a traditional shop with projecting, timber shop-front, raised end pilasters and brackets carrying a projecting fascia. The north gable has an elaborate, decorative scrolled bargeboard. The building dates from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the shopfront slightly later, but with numerous subsequent alterations such as the modern garage door to south bay. Currently unoccupied.



### *Cross House*

Cross House, adjoining the Stores, is a small, double-fronted, rendered residence of two parallel ranges, dating from early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The entrance has a six panel door set in painted timber doorcase with console brackets under open pediment. The upper half-storey has sashes breaking the eaves under timber gablets with bargeboards. Currently unoccupied.



### *The Butcher's Arms*

Continuing northwards on the east side of the High Street, the Butcher's Arms is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century house in terraced row, which was an inn from at least 1868. The traditional low two storey terrace of painted roughcast has a raised painted plinth, stucco first floor sill band and door surround, with slated roof. The property has reverted to residential use although the Felinfoel Brewery dragon remains displayed on the much-altered first floor frontage of the adjoining property to the north.





### *Kieffe House*

On rising ground and opposite the former Butcher's Arms, Kieffe House is another early 19<sup>th</sup> century house built as a pair with The Kieffe which adjoins to the north, but is altered. The semi-detached town houses are set back from the street behind a raised grassed forecourt. Finished in painted roughcast with plain stucco surrounds to ground floor openings and a slate roof, Kieffe House retains some of the traditional character and detail now missing on the neighbouring property.



### *Newton Villa*

Immediately north of the Kieffe, Newton Villa is another well-preserved traditional early 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced house, of characteristic regional type. The end of terrace house is of roughcast with stucco dressings and a slate roof and stands at back of pavement on this tightly defined section of the High Street within the CA.



### *Capel Mair*

South of the junction with Heol Goi, this Independent chapel has a striking presence amongst the smaller scale terraced housing that predominates in the CA along the High Street. This 1862 rebuild to designs by the Rev. Thomas Thomas of Landore, Swansea, was founded as a branch of Bethlehem, Pwll-trap, and became independent in 1891. The gable facade is of three bays, articulated by giant pilasters with plain moulded capitals carrying an entablature each side of a rusticated central arch with plaque below. The side elevations have tall, narrow, arched-headed windows, similar to those on the façade, but recessed and lacking moulded surrounds. Capel Mair is set back from the general building line within a railed, grassed forecourt and represents a complete example of the work of one of the leading Welsh chapel architects.





### *Gothic Villa*

Towards the northern end of the CA, Gothic Villa is a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century property in a simple Gothic style for which there is a strong tradition in southwest Wales. The two-storey detached house is of painted roughcast with corner pilaster strips, plinth and first floor sill band. Pointed recessed Gothic window sashes have intersecting glazing bars to both floors and the gabled timber porch has pierced sides in Gothic style fretwork. Similarly themed details help make this a distinctive building in the CA.



### *Water Pumps*

There are three late 19<sup>th</sup> century cast-iron water-pumps that remain in place at regular intervals along the main thoroughfare. They are of similar pattern and of interest as well-preserved pieces of cast-iron street furniture in this virtually urban context.



### *Telephone Box*

There is a K6 pattern telephone kiosk to the standard design of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott at the junction of Hugh Street and Lon-y-Prior which is listed a grade II as a piece of street furniture contributing to the character of the Conservation Area.



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## Unlisted Buildings and Structures of note

The following buildings are not statutorily listed but reinforce the character of the area or are a part of St Clears' heritage due to architectural, historic, or archaeological significance, and are recognised as heritage assets that contribute to the CA. As such, we propose their inclusion on a local list of buildings of merit; this would not grant a building statutory protection nor would works to a locally listed building require listed building consent, but the special interest of the building would be a material consideration in the planning application process.

### *Property to rear of Santa Clara Inn*

Behind and attached to rear of the Santa Clara Inn, there is a large three storey warehouse of six bays, to the south of the narrow lane leading down to the river Cynin. Rubble stone walls have regular openings with brick heads and a slate roof and the property has been converted into housing with level access to the first floor from the south. The origins of this building appear to be late 19<sup>th</sup> century and presumably relate to past commercial or industrial activity associated with river trade along the Cynin, as evidenced by the crane attached to the east gable wall. Little evidence from this period of St Clears' evolution survives and the building provides valuable insight into the area's maritime past.



### *Peniel Villa*

At the northern limit of the CA, Peniel Villa still provides tell-tale signs of its origins as a chapel. Much of the exterior detail of the building has been lost in the conversion to residential use, but its setting and orientation relative to the High Street convey something of its heritage. Peniel Methodist Chapel was built in 1810 and was transferred to the English circuit or sold to another denomination in 1885. The original boundary wall, piers and gate remain, although the associated railings have been removed and the wall adapted. The basic form of the chapel exterior is legible.





### 4.3 Important Green and Natural Spaces

There is extensive green space within the CA, as behind the ribbon development fronting High Street boundaries rapidly break down into private gardens, farmland or open landscape. Adjoining and distant landscape areas can be glimpsed visible through gateways, gaps and side lanes leading off the High Street. Key features and spaces include;

- Churchyard to St Mary Magdalene and site of Clastral buildings to former Priory
- St Clears Castle, public park and children's play area
- Wooded grounds and driveway to 'Rivendell' (former Vicarage to St Mary)

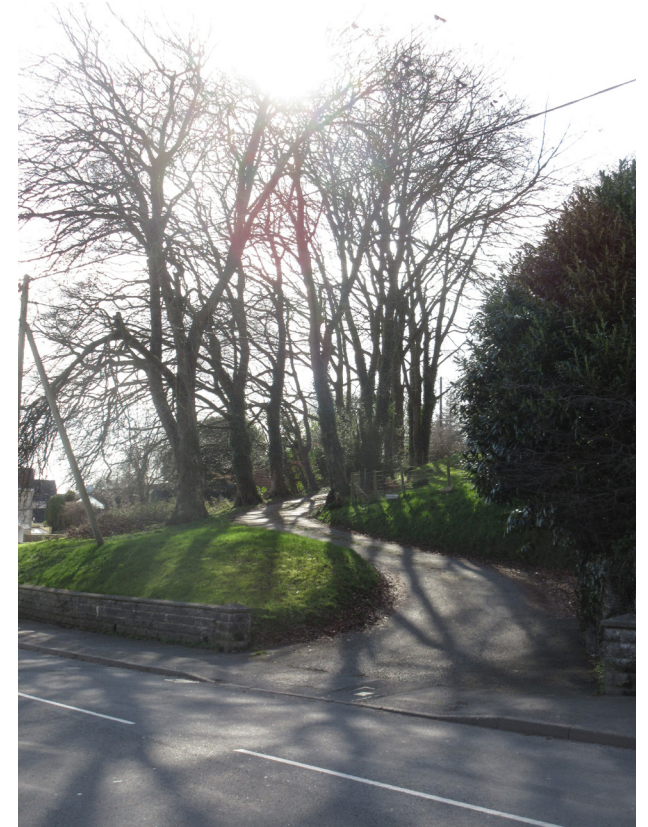
Green spaces are shown on the following map.



Churchyard to St Mary Magdalene and site of Clastral buildings to former Priory



St Clears Castle, public park and children's play area



Wooded grounds and driveway to 'Rivendell'





Lane west of High Street behind Santa Clara Inn



Open landscape behind ribbon development



Lane east of High Street behind Cross House

## 5.0 Character and Appearance

This section describes the character and appearance of the area as it exists at the time of this study.

### 5.1 Townscape Features

The CA is distributed along the gently curving thoroughfare that steadily rises up from the bridge crossing the river Taf, with buildings set on, or back from, the street edge, and occasional narrow lanes leading off to east and west. The character is linear with views contained and focussed by the street frontages which provide a sense of enclosure.

The character of the CA changes subtly moving northwards. The layout of the southern area of the CA is dominated by the underlying topography of the castle and the imprint of its defensive circuits and burgage plots. Past the Santa Clara public house, the street briefly opens up into a greener area around the medieval church and former priory, wrapping around the north and west sides of the medieval settlement. Further northwards, the closely built up continuation of the High Street steadily climbs towards 'upper' St Clears. Traffic dominates the main route through the CA and extensive on-street parking impacts on pedestrian and vehicular movement along the narrow thoroughfare. There is scant provision or opportunity for off-street parking as side roads are mostly single track lanes. The impact is exacerbated by the modest scale and immediacy of the properties along High Street and Bridge Street.

There is a consistency to much of the building which is predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> century, modest in scale and simply detailed, however the differing layout and density alters

the way the areas are experienced and viewed. Late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'improvements' have eroded the quality and character of many properties.

Surprisingly, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century bridge over the river Taf, and the low lying banks of the Taf and Cynin as they wrap encircle the castle, fall outside the CA.



Modest scale properties forming street frontage



Gently curving Bridge Street



More open area of High Street to south of the Church and former Priory



Moving north along Bridge Street, a relatively wide gap on the east side, between unremarkable buildings, provides gated access to the levelled bailey of St Clears castle and a welcome glimpse of the castle mound, which is otherwise well hidden from within the CA. From Bridge Street, narrow lanes loop around the rear of the residential properties following what is likely to have been the line of the medieval defensive enclosures. Further up Bridge Street, the slightly more upscale Green Park House stands out opposite the junction with Lon-y-Prior, a modern cul-de-sac that takes a bite out of the conservation area.

Beyond the Santa Clara public house, the mature wooded driveway below Rivendell spills down to meet the west side of High Street and relieve the urban street scene. To the east, gaps allow numerous glimpses towards the large churchyard sloping down to the river Cynin. The land is more open and lies outside the defensive line of the medieval settlement.

Around the lychgate and Town Hall, buildings are set back slightly from the edge of the High Street creating an area which is less linear in nature. Unfortunately the shop and Town Hall have fallen into disuse so the church is now the sole focus of any activity in this potentially sociable setting. There is a similar break in the street pattern around the prominent Capel Mair, and the former school building on the opposite corner of Heol Goi, but again little in the way of activity as the Chapel appears closed and the school now converted to residential use. Movement through the CA is almost entirely vehicular.

At the top of the High Street, larger properties are set back within private grounds. Rubble stone boundary walls continue the narrow curvilinear character of the thoroughfare and this is reinforced by garden vegetation above the walls.

Pavements, where present in the conservation area, are generally very narrow, and in some cases set below the level of the highway behind a raised concrete kerb. Tarmac surfaces and concrete kerbs cover the High Street and Bridge Street public realm with few exceptions such as the paving around the three water pumps. Lanes leading off the thoroughfare to the west are pleasantly rural in character with grass verges, banks or rubble retaining walls cut into the rising ground and rapidly leading to countryside; to the east, the side lanes lead down to a handful of commercial premises and vestigial remains of the former port industries alongside the river Cynin.



Narrow curvilinear High Street with sense of enclosure

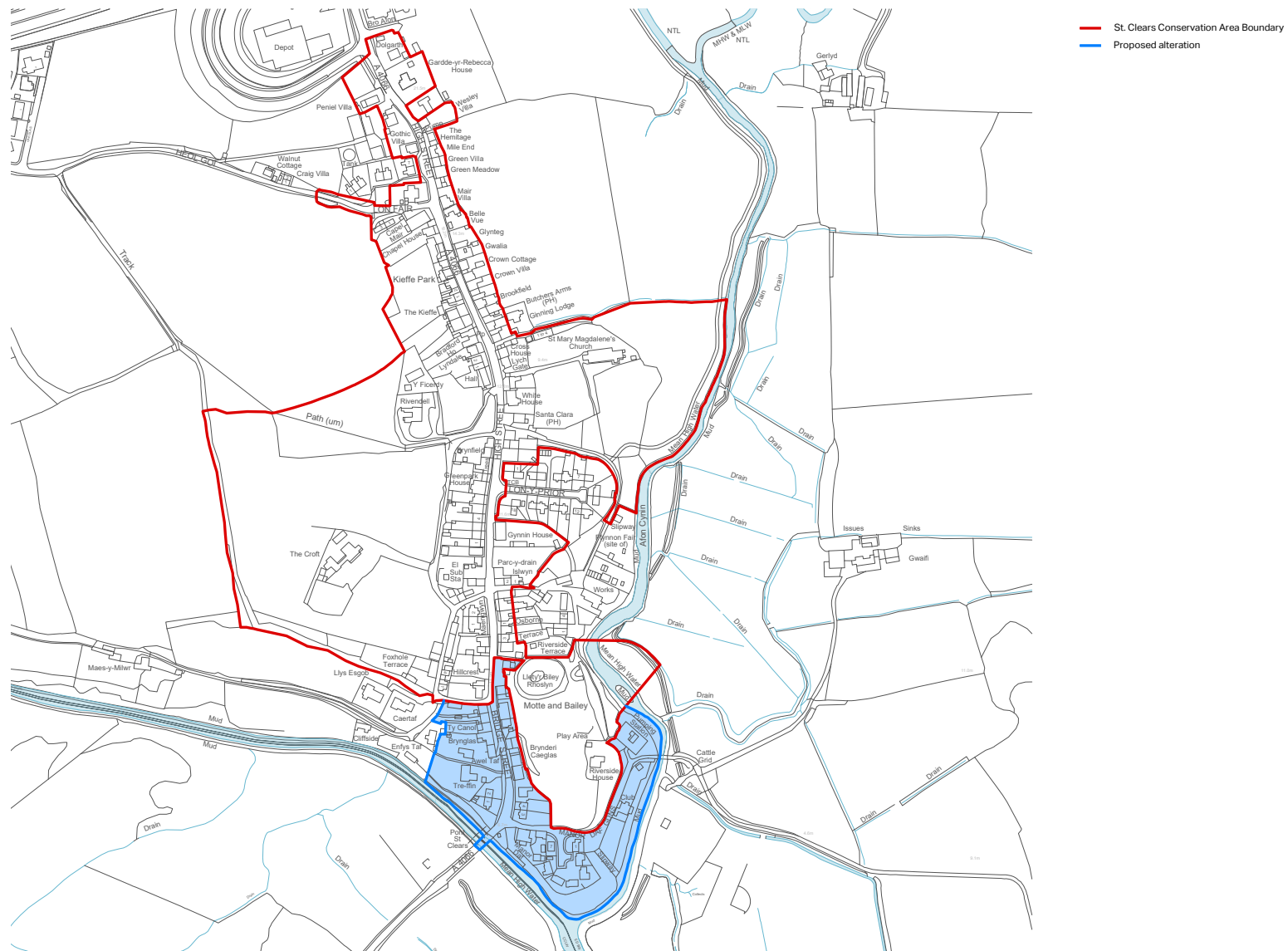


Capel Mair and former school set back from general building line



Larger properties at top of the High Street set back within private grounds





## 5.2 Building materials

The following images and list provide examples of the materials used within the CA which either enhance or preserve the characteristics of the area.

### *Traditional Materials*

Rubble stone

Roughcast render

Stucco

Snecked Pennant stone

Brick dressings

Stone dressings

Slate roof coverings

Leadwork

Painted joinery

Cast iron rainwater goods

### *Boundary treatment*

Rubble stone

Cast or wrought ironwork gates and railings





### 5.3 Building heights and relationships to plots

Buildings are typically terraced, 1½ to 2 storeys and with low storey heights creating a tight and intimate scale in the narrow streetscape. There are occasional larger, detached properties, but these are mostly of a later date and often set back from the general roadside building line, in more generous plots such as Gardde-yr-Rebecca House (late C19) at the north end of High Street and Rivendell (early C20), behind the Town Hall. The more notable historic structures of St Mary Magdalene and the Castle Mound are relatively hidden from prominent views by smaller buildings lining the narrow main thoroughfare.

The typically terraced properties are mostly situated directly on the street edge, or behind a shallow forecourt enclosed by low wall or railings. Duo pitched slate roofs, with ridges running parallel to the street, are punctuated by brick chimney stacks. Private gardens and numerous rear extensions stretch behind the terrace in regular strips which may in some cases relate to the medieval settlement pattern. Rear boundaries in the southern part of the conservation area are likely to coincide with the line of former castle defensive circuits. The settlement has not expanded greatly beyond these rear boundaries and countryside lies beyond.



Consistent building line and scale on Bridge Street



2 storey terraced properties on Bridge Street



Shallow forecourts along Bridge Street

There are a number of later developments that interrupt the 19<sup>th</sup> century building pattern and consequently are at odds with the surrounding context. Within the CA, 'Lyndale' (opposite Cross House) is a detached bungalow which is thankfully set back from the prevailing building line; 'Dre Twt' occupies a rather prominent utilitarian shed in one of the more open and green areas of the High Street; semi-detached bungalows at 1 & 2 'Maengwyn'. Further semi-detached, late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments border the conservation area, whilst ignoring its character, at Lon-y-Prior and immediately south of 'Gothic Villa'.



Terraced properties directly on the street edge



Varying storey heights on High Street



#### 5.4 Typical or significant details

*Typical details throughout the CA*

Timber sash windows

Stucco quoins, bands, window and door surrounds

Pitched slate roofs with flush eaves

Brick chimneys

Rubble stone boundary walls

Decorative ironwork railings and gates



## 5.5 Public realm; surfacing, street furniture and signage

There appears to have been very little recent investment in the public realm within the CA.

Surfacing materials for roads and intermittent pavements are uniformly of tarmac, with precast or in-situ concrete kerbs. The northern entry point to High Street has a red surface coating and solid white line on both sides to discourage parking. (The finish is repeated on the bridge over the Taf, beyond the southern end of the CA, but appears to have worn away or has been removed). Elsewhere in the conservation area vehicular traffic and parking is very intrusive and makes pedestrian movement awkward and uncomfortable. Ubiquitous tarmac often extends across private forecourts and building aprons, blurring the distinction between public and private space.

At the Bridge Street gateway to St Clears Castle, a small area of concrete pavers has been introduced to break up the monotony, behind a row of bollards that prevent further parking. A substantial bench and interpretation panel are positioned alongside, reflecting at least some appreciation of the heritage significance of the site. Otherwise, this is a depressingly uninspiring entrance to the monument.

The CA is only partially covered by the St Clears Town Heritage Trail. The route starts in the 'upper' town and follows the west bank of the river Cynin down to St Mary Magdalene before linking up with the High Street at the Town Hall, and heading south past the Castle, to finish at the old town quay at the junction of the Taf and Cynin rivers. Further interpretation panels are provided at key



Coloured tarmac at top of High St, concrete kerbs, intermittent pavement



Tarmac, bollards and pavements at Castle entrance



sites to supplement the panel at the castle. Apart from this trail, signage and street furniture throughout the CA is quite sparing, modern and utilitarian. Numerous modern steel lamp posts and overhead power lines add to the visual clutter.

The three late 19<sup>th</sup> century water pumps along High Street and Bridge Street are an interesting survival which is very much in keeping with the character of the area. The redundant K6 phone box on the corner of Lon-y-Prior has acquired multiple planting boxes and neighbouring junction box, salt bin and refuse bin. The back lanes and riverside paths around the edge of the built-up area rapidly become semi-rural in character. Benches are scarce other than in the children's play area within the castle bailey; outside the CA, there is some more seating on the riverside, with wide views to the surrounding countryside across the Taf.



Poor provision for pedestrians



Steel lamp posts and overhead power lines



Clutter around listed phone box



Tarmac, concrete and overhead cables



## 5.6 Boundary materials and treatments

Many of the building frontages form the boundary on the street edge. Where properties are set back, the forecourts are generally enclosed by a low rubble stone or render wall, sometimes with metal railings over. At the back, there is very little consistency to the enclosure of the rear gardens or yards and much has been replaced with modern brick, block, fencing or steel sheeting and gates to provide privacy; these are mostly out of character with the CA.

Occasional vehicle hardstandings have also been introduced at the front and rear of properties, further eroding historic boundary treatments. This detracts from the CA, removing definition from the street edge and confusing plot layouts.



Inconsistent rear boundary treatment



Rubble stone boundary walls on Bridge Street



Loss of boundary adjacent Green Park House



Tarmac hardstandings opposite Town Hall



Although much appears to have been lost or altered in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are elements of note within the CA, including:

- Coursed rubble wall, piers and gate to former 'Capel Penuel' (now Peniel Villa)
- Rubble stone retaining wall along High Street flanking 'Brynheulog'
- Snecked stone wall, piers, gate and railings to Capel Mair
- Rubble stone retaining wall to raised forecourts of 'Kieffe House' and 'The Kieffe'
- Metal railings to Green Park House



Coursed rubble wall, piers and gate to former 'Capel Penuel'



Rubble stone retaining wall at top of High Street



Snecked stone wall, piers, gate and railings to Capel Mair



Rubble stone retaining wall to raised forecourts of 'Kieffe House' and 'The Kieffe'





## 7.0 Significance

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One of the guiding principles to managing change within the historic environment is an understanding of the significance of that asset, be it a building, place, or something more intangible. Best practice suggests assessing significance against a series of values which are set out below:

**Evidential Value;** The physical remains and surviving fabric which still exists in the area

**Historical Value;** How the area can inform us of past people, events or aspects of life

**Aesthetic Value;** Whether the area is pleasing to walk around and experience

**Communal Value;** The value it has to the people who live, work and visit the area

Each of these values might exist in varying levels from low to high and this is also important to understand. It is also important to recognise those items which may fall outside of these categories or fall within multiple categories to differing levels. This can particularly be the case when considering those characteristics which create a sense of place.

The following summary sets out the key items of significance for the Conservation Area. This is followed by a more detailed examination of each item and is concluded by indicating how each relates to evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal values and to what level.

- The strategic site of the castle from which the town developed
- Legible medieval street pattern, divisions, and enclosure
- St Mary Magdalene, parish and former priory church
- Scheduled monuments of St Clears Castle and St Clears Priory Claustral buildings with high archaeological potential
- Maritime trading history with evidence of past industry
- Significant views to, from and through the area due to the topography
- Local and regional buildings of significance
- A strong sense of enclosure along the narrow High Street with glimpsed, distant views
- Illustrative of the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century evolution of the town with changing modes of transport

### *Strategic Defensive Site*

Located at the highest navigable section of the rivers, the strategic importance of the site was recognised by the building of the Anglo-Norman castle at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the town of St Clears grew from it as a series of burgage plots. In conjunction with the foundation of the priory to the north, this is the point from which the origins of the present town can be traced, although the commercial centre has now relocated further north to meet the later arterial road and railway network.

### *Medieval Layout*

The plan of the southern section of the CA is strongly influenced by the layout of the castle's defensive circuits which are visible in the alignment of the rear lanes, paths and boundaries, suggesting that medieval St Clears grew organically around it. The long curvilinear alignment of Bridge Street and High Street climb from the crossing point of bridge over the river Taf, up to the area around the former Priory which was to the north of the medieval town outside its defences. The layout is still largely intact and continues to inform development and the way one moves through and experiences the area.

### *St Mary Magdalene*

The medieval church, generous landscape setting and shared historical background as a priory church, make this one of the most significant heritage assets in the CA. There is archaeological potential in the site of the Claustral buildings.

### *Scheduled monuments with high archaeological potential*

St Clears has been identified as having archaeological potential for further research of the medieval and post-medieval periods. Small-scale excavations in the historic core of the town have shown that deposits from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards may be found around the CA. The town defences also warrant further investigation on the east and west sides of the CA, as does the area around St Mary Magdalene Church.

### Maritime Trade

The town's connection with maritime trade dates back to its foundation and is central to understand the origins and development of the settlement. The most obvious remaining links of the encircling rivers and former quays, all lay outside the CA and are hidden from within it by the topography. However, there are some remaining warehouses and storage buildings in the CA which provide an indication of these past activities and could help inform historical understanding of the town's evolution.

### Significant views

The surrounding topography and resultant strategic location the town create a series of significant views to, from and through the CA, including gently curvilinear street views with snatched glimpses of the wider landscape beyond. Each of these views provides a different perspective of the area, how it has developed and alter the way one moves and experiences each part

### Local and regional buildings of significance

There are buildings and structures in the CA which are listed due to their architectural quality and historic interest. As such these not only present a high-quality aesthetic but also help explain past activities, traditions and events. Where there is surviving historic fabric, this can also guide the reinstatement of lost details and inspire future development, reinforcing the distinctive character of the area.

### Enclosure and views out

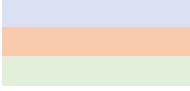
Bridge Street and High Street are lined predominantly with low terraced properties on the street edge, creating a narrow and intimate street with few interruptions. There are occasional gaps in the building line at lanes and gateways, allowing framed glimpses of countryside and farmland behind. This creates variety and interest and encourages exploration and discovery.

### 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century evolution

The decline of maritime trade, and associated 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of road and rail transport, has had a profound effect on the activities and uses within the CA, with the commercial centre having moved a mile north. The CA is now predominantly residential and has largely lost its civic and commercial role, with numerous related properties having being repurposed or unoccupied.

	Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
Strategic defensive site				
Medieval layout				
St Mary Magdalene				
Scheduled monuments & archaeological potential				
Maritime Trade				
Significant views				
Local and regional buildings of significance				
Enclosure and views out				
19th & early 20th century evolution				

Low Value  
Medium Value  
High Value





## 8.0 Issues, Threats, and their Management

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### *Strategic overview*

A conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. As such, Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) is required to ensure that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area' (Section 72). CCC has a duty 'from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas' (Section 71).

The following table summarises the key issues and threats which have been identified through the preparation of the Character Area Appraisal for St Clears. Accompanying each item are recommendations for its management. This list is not comprehensive and does not exclude additional items which may present themselves either currently or within the future development of the CA.

Issues relate to those items which are currently causing harm to the appearance and or the character of the area. Threats are those items which do not currently cause harm but which through insensitive alteration may. Those items which are identified as issues should also be considered as those posing continual threat. Alongside each is a management recommendation intended to ensure the character, appearance of the conservation area, its significance and special architectural and historic interest, is preserved and enhanced. These historic environment

recommendations could inform the production of a wider and more detailed policy document for the management of the area, to be produced by Carmarthenshire County Council.



The issues have been identified through site visits, as well as consultation with stakeholders, County Council officers and members of the public. They relate primarily to the historic built environment, both in the conservation of existing historic fabric and the impact of new development on the character and appearance of the CA. This includes those identified as affecting the public realm.

Examples have also been provided to illustrate both good and bad examples of the management of these items to offer additional guidance when considering development within the area. It is important that the following is read in association with all relevant guidance and policy documents, including the CCC's Local Development Plan 2018 – 2033 and supplementary planning guidance.

Item	Issue	Management
<b>1.0 Views and setting</b>		
1.1	Side lanes, flank and rear elevations and boundaries of buildings, are a characterful part of the CA, offering glimpsed views away from the main thoroughfare. Due to a perceived lack of visibility these areas can suffer from a lack of general maintenance in both the public realm and boundary treatments, which erode the character of the CA areas.	Development proposals should be carefully assessed to understand the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of side streets and of rear buildings, as well as key views and main thoroughfares. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the conservation area and there will be a presumption against development which is considered to cause harm. New development within the conservation area or its setting should not obscure or detract from important views within, towards or from the conservation area. Important views and landmarks have been highlighted within the appraisal, however more may be identified by others.
1.2	Views into and out of the CA can be difficult to protect, since those buildings and sites which have the potential to affect key views can be outside of protected areas such as a CA; their impact is sometimes apparent only after construction. Development may affect the foreground or background of important views. For example the introduction of contemporary housing on the riverside has impacted views into the CA affecting the setting of the castle.	<p>Development within the conservation area's setting should be carefully assessed to understand the impact of the proposals on the significance of the conservation area. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the conservation area and there will be a presumption against development which is considered harmful.</p> <p>New development within the conservation area or its setting should not obscure or detract from important views within, towards or from the conservation area. Important views and landmarks have been highlighted within the appraisal, however more may be identified by others.</p> <p>Proposals which have the potential to affect and fall within important views which contribute to the significance of the conservation area, and the heritage assets within it, should be assessed carefully. Verified computer generated views showing the potential impacts of proposals may be required to demonstrate the effect on the character and appearance of the area or its setting.</p>





Item	Issue	Management	
<b>2.0 Demolition of buildings or boundary enclosure</b>			
2.1	The loss of buildings or boundary walls and railings can break down the sense of enclosure, increase the dominance of traffic and associated hard landscaping, and result in blank gable end elevations.	There are many listed buildings and unlisted buildings of merit which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and there is a strong presumption that these buildings and their features are retained. Applications for consent to demolish must be made to the local planning authority. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the conservation area and there will be a presumption against the creation of modern gaps which would disrupt long elevational views of established street lines.	
<b>3.0 Redevelopment</b>			
3.1	The use of modern materials which are not complementary or appropriate to the existing palette of materials can erode the historic character and significance of the CA. Whilst a building should be of its time, some deference to the CA's original palette of materials will ensure continuity. Similarly, buildings of poor design have caused harm to the CA; the original characteristics of 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century design must be respected to prevent further harm.	Development proposals should respond to and respect the unique character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting, and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition and detailed design. Any new development in the conservation area should be of high quality, in terms of design and materials used. Generally, all work to historic buildings, alterations and extensions, should positively respond to the original architectural style of the building, its setting and should enhance its traditional appearance. In considering any proposals reference should be made to the Placemaking Guide 2020.	

Item	Issue	Management
3.2	The pressure for modern housing has led to infilling of plots on High Street and Bridge Street, often with insensitive designs which do not respond to the character of the CA.	Development proposals should respond to and respect the unique character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting, and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition and detailed design. Any new development in the conservation area should be of high quality, in terms of design and materials used.



#### 4.0 Inappropriate alterations and loss of original features

4.1	The topography of the area means that roofs can impact significantly on views and the insertion of items such as aerials and satellite dishes to the roofscape can erode character, particularly in buildings of a uniform style.	The wider use of Article 4 Directions could be considered so that planning permission is required for such alterations.
4.2	Seemingly minor alterations can have a cumulative effect on the building as a whole and the setting of the CA. This includes the following: Pebble dash or hard cement renders, replacement PVC windows/doors, new external services prominently positioned, satellite dishes, loss of cast iron rainwater goods, replacement of slate with concrete tiles, loss of decorative ridge tiles, loss of decorative fascia or barge boards, loss of historic boundaries such as railings and rubble stone walls	Detailed design guidance should be developed to include information on the typical architectural details such as windows, and materials found in the area to assist homeowners wishing to improve their property in ways which are beneficial to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Design guidance should also include advice on retrofitting existing buildings, to improve their thermal performance and the installation of renewable energy sources, without harming the character and appearance of the conservation area. The wider use of Article 4 Directions could be considered so that planning permission is required for alterations listed where appropriate.



Item	Issue	Management
4.3	Unauthorised works to buildings appears to be a common problem, including works such as the replacement of historic features such as windows and doors. This has led to a steady erosion of the character of some parts of the CA. Where unauthorised works have occurred, this can encourage other property owners to undertake similar works and can result in a cumulative effect on a larger scale.	Where appropriate the council should seek enforcement action to remediate unauthorised works. Detailed design guidance should be developed including information on the typical colours, architectural details such as windows, and materials found in the area to assist homeowners wishing to improve their property in ways which are beneficial to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Design guidance should also include advice on retrofitting existing buildings, to improve their thermal performance and the installation of renewable energy sources, without harming the character and appearance of the conservation area. The wider use of Article 4 Directions could be considered so that planning permission is required for alterations which at present do not require permission.
4.4	The repair and maintenance of buildings appears to have suffered throughout the CA with a number of buildings in a poor condition. Due to the nature of the CA this has a significant impact on views and can lead to the partial or total loss of significant heritage assets.	Publish guidance on appropriate maintenance and repair of buildings and structures within the Conservation Area.

## 5.0 Street furniture, signage, roads

5.1	Increased traffic density and poorly managed parking can have a detrimental impact on the overall character of the area, causing a loss of pedestrian amenity, and absence of spaces which would otherwise allow for moments of reflection and appreciation. Absent or narrow pavements also create problems for pedestrian movement, while inhibiting appreciation of buildings due to the density of traffic obscuring lower storeys. This is an issue throughout the CA.	Produce and implement a strategy for opportunities for increased pedestrianisation and improved road layouts. The Council will encourage and support proposals for improved cycle and pedestrian connectivity and which incorporate public space.
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Item	Issue	Management
5.2	What little street furniture exists in the CA could be easily improved. Modern lamp posts and chaotic overhead power cables are a constant and unwelcome presence. The few street signs, bollards, barriers and bins, are inconsistent and make scant provision for pedestrians.	Publish design guidance on the design of streets and public spaces to encourage co-ordinated approach to lighting, materials, boundary treatments and furniture. Prioritise a series of renewals to enhance the appearance of streets including decluttering, maintenance of paintwork and introduction of appropriate surface materials and street furniture.
5.3	Roads and pavements are uniformly of modern materials that can detract from the setting of buildings and public realm. Much of the public realm is dominated by on and off-street parking with hardstandings that interrupt the line of historic boundaries and enclosure.	Publish design guidance on the design of streets and public spaces to encourage co-ordinated approach to lighting, materials, boundary treatments and furniture. Prioritise a series of renewals to enhance the appearance of streets including decluttering, maintenance of paintwork and introduction of appropriate surface materials and street furniture.
5.4	The Town Heritage Trail is a welcome exception that promotes the historical value of part of the CA and helps link the area to its wider context without relying entirely on vehicular transport. This initiative needs to be expanded alongside other public realm enhancements.	<p>Signage and furniture should be sensitively designed and integrated into the street scene. A coordinated approach would help to unify the character of the area and uplift the quality of the public realm. Further guidance could be produced on the design of signage and street furniture in the conservation area, to ensure a consistent and high-quality approach is achieved.</p> <p>There is scope for introducing more traditional streetlights, traditional paving materials, and greater street planting throughout the conservation area.</p>





Item	Issue	Management
<b>6.0 Boundary treatments and parking</b>		
6.1	The increase in demand for parking has led to the loss of historic boundary treatments to incorporate hard standings and parking spaces throughout the CA. This can dilute the hard street edge which is characteristic of the area and interrupt views through, in and out of the CA.	Reinstatement of traditional boundary walls should be supported. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the conservation area and there will be a presumption against the loss of historic boundary walls which make a positive contribution to the area. The wider use of Article 4 Directions could be considered so that planning permission is required for alterations to historic boundary walls, irrespective of height.
6.2	The introduction of modern materials to create new boundaries and hard landscaping, which are neither in keeping with the CA nor of sufficient quality, can dilute character and interrupt views.	Development proposals should respond to and respect the unique character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting, and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition and detailed design. Any new development in the conservation area should be of high quality, in terms of design and materials used. Detailed design guidance should be developed to include information on the typical architectural details such as windows, and materials found in the area to assist homeowners wishing to improve their property in ways which are beneficial to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Item	Threat	Management
<b>7.0 Views and setting</b>		
7.1	The existing green spaces and former quaysides to the rivers' edge require effective protection, to control views into the CA from the south and east.	Significant green spaces should be actively maintained, and management processes should be adopted which ensure their special interest, and their ecological value, is preserved and enhanced. There is scope for more tree and other planting to enhance the appearance of the conservation area and its potential for biodiversity and this should be encouraged. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the conservation area and there will be a presumption against the loss of trees or green spaces which make a positive contribution to the area.
<b>8.0 Demolition of buildings and structures</b>		
8.1	Partial or total demolition of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the CA can erode the architectural quality of the area. This can include whole buildings for redevelopment or partial areas such as chimneys, boundary walls and extensions.	There are many listed buildings and unlisted buildings of merit which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and there is a strong presumption that these buildings and their features are retained. Applications for consent to demolish must be made to the local planning authority.

Item	Threat	Management
8.2	The poor condition of buildings which have been out of use or have suffered from poor maintenance, can be used to put pressure on the Local Authority for demolition and redevelopment. This can lead to a misunderstanding that redevelopment is appropriate, when careful management of future alterations could reinstate the original character of these buildings, enhance the CA, and avoid the loss of embodied carbon already spent through its original construction.	Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision. There are many listed buildings and unlisted buildings of merit which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and there is a strong presumption that these are retained. If demolition is proposed, consideration should be given to the whole life carbon cycle, taking into account the embedded carbon of the existing building. It may be appropriate to retain and adapt the existing building rather than to replace it with a new building. The care and reuse of traditional and historic buildings in the area, in order to save energy and carbon dioxide, through better maintenance, management and energy efficiency measures, should be encouraged. Reinstatement of traditional features should be encouraged through the production of a design guide specific to the CA. Applications for consent to demolish must be made to the local planning authority.

## 9.0 Redevelopment

9.1	Consistent storey height, mass, material, architectural detailing, plot size and relationship to the street means that any deviation has dramatic impact. This can be positive or negative but requires careful consideration.	Development proposals should respond to and respect the unique character and appearance of the conservation area, its character areas and its setting, and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition and detailed design. Any new development in the conservation area should be of high quality, in terms of design and materials used. Generally, all work to historic buildings, alterations and extensions, should positively respond to the original architectural style of the building, its setting and should enhance its traditional appearance. In considering any proposals reference should be made to the Placemaking Guide 2020.
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Item	Threat	Management
<b>10.0 Inappropriate alterations and loss of original features</b>		
10.1	The loss of features such as joinery, door casings, canopies, stucco details etc. and the alteration of window proportions or introduction of dormers or garage doors, can fundamentally change the character of properties and have a detrimental impact on the CA.	<p>Detailed design guidance should be developed to include information on the architectural details such as windows, and materials found in the area to assist homeowners wishing to improve their property in ways which are beneficial to the character and appearance of the conservation area.</p> <p>The wider use of Article 4 Directions could be considered so that planning permission is required for alterations where appropriate. There will be a presumption against the loss of traditional features which contribute to the conservation area's character and appearance.</p>
<b>11.0 Landscaping</b>		
11.1	Green areas and trees provide important breaks in the built environment and help inform understanding of the layout and evolution of the town and their loss can substantially harm the character of the area.	<p>There is scope for more tree and other planting to enhance the appearance of the conservation area and its potential for biodiversity and this should be encouraged. The council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the conservation area and there will be a presumption against the loss of trees or green spaces which make a positive contribution to the area.</p>



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## 12.0 General

- |      |                             |  |
|------|-----------------------------|--|
| 12.1 | Archaeology                 | When considering any significant development proposal, the potential impact on archaeological remains should be professionally assessed and advice taken as to how they can be best preserved and protected.   |
| 12.2 | Climate Emergency           | <p>Retrofit proposals to improve energy efficiency should be carefully considered to ensure compatibility with traditional building materials, functionality and significance.</p> <p>If demolition is proposed, consideration should be given to the whole life carbon cycle, taking into account the embedded carbon of the existing building. It may be appropriate to retain and adapt the existing building rather than to replace it with a new building. The care and reuse of traditional and historic buildings in the area, in order to save energy and carbon dioxide, through better maintenance, management and energy efficiency measures, should be encouraged.</p> |
| 12.3 | Implementation and Review   | All the statutory duties under the Planning Acts resulting from conservation area designation need to be adhered to. The Council should adopt the recommendations made here and formulate a formal management plan (it is intended that this report will form the basis of this) which is reviewed regularly to ensure the policies remain useful and relevant. The Council should seek to undertake other relevant studies and produce further guidance as identified here, where the resources for this are available.   |
| 12.4 | Heritage Impact Assessments | A heritage impact assessment should be provided by applicants, where a proposal is considered to affect the conservation area (either within the boundary or its setting) or a heritage asset within it.   |

## 9.0 Opportunities

The following opportunities refer to identified possibilities for undoing harm, enhancing the area and the appreciation of it, or managing development. These have been identified through the preparation of this document and the proceeding issues, threats, and management section.

1. The significant listed buildings in key positions along High Street such as the Town Hall, Cross House and the adjacent Stores, and Capel Mair, appear neglected and largely redundant, reducing their potential contribution to the character and activity in the CA. These buildings are set back from the general building line and provide respite from the narrow, linear nature of the main throughfare. Careful repair and enhancement of the buildings and their settings could encourage appreciation and enjoyment of the CA, acting as a catalyst to wider improvements.
2. St Clears Castle is largely hidden from the CA and the utilitarian gated entrance along Bridge Road means that it is easily missed. Careful redesign of the entrance could stimulate exploration of this important centrepiece of the town's history and help reconnect the Castle to the public realm.

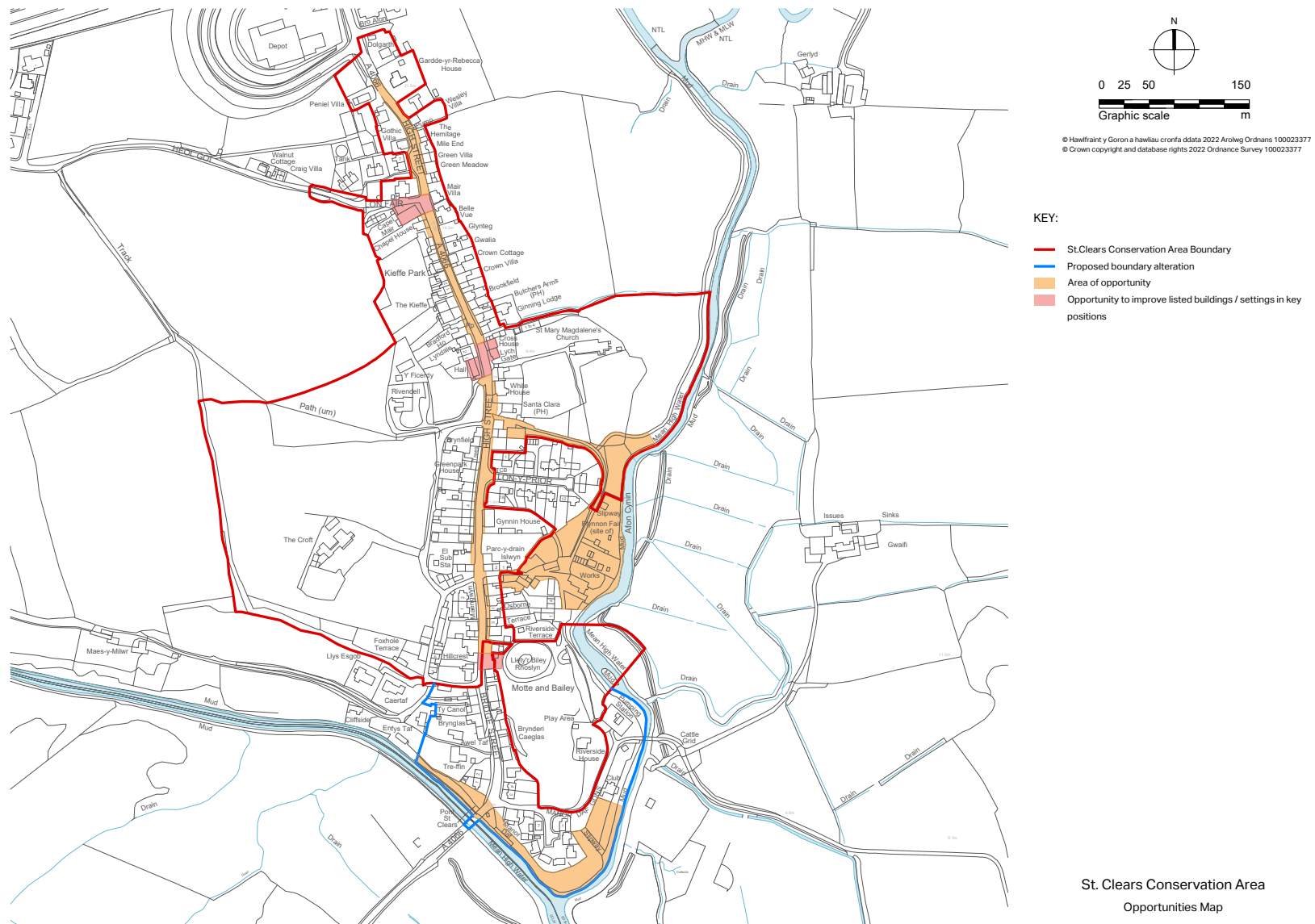




3. There is an opportunity to make more of the surviving features relating to the town's past industry and trading links as a river port and to better understand the origins and development of the settlement. The most obvious remaining links are the encircling rivers and former quays which currently lay outside the CA and are largely hidden from within it by the topography. However, there are some remaining warehouses and storage buildings in the CA which provide an indication of these past activities and could help inform historical understanding of the town's evolution.

4. The low quality of the public realm throughout the CA could be readily improved. As the opportunity arises, the introduction of high quality and consistent paving and boundary materials, wayfinding, lighting, and public realm furniture could increase the use of, and access to, key spaces and in turn promote better care and appreciation. This could also relieve the relentless expanse of tarmac and associated concrete kerbs, and alleviate the visual clutter of modern steel lamp posts and overhead power lines.











## Appendix I: Bibliography

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### Publications

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires:

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Planning Policy Wales February 2021

Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, 2017

Managing Conservation Areas in Wales, Cadw, 2017

Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales

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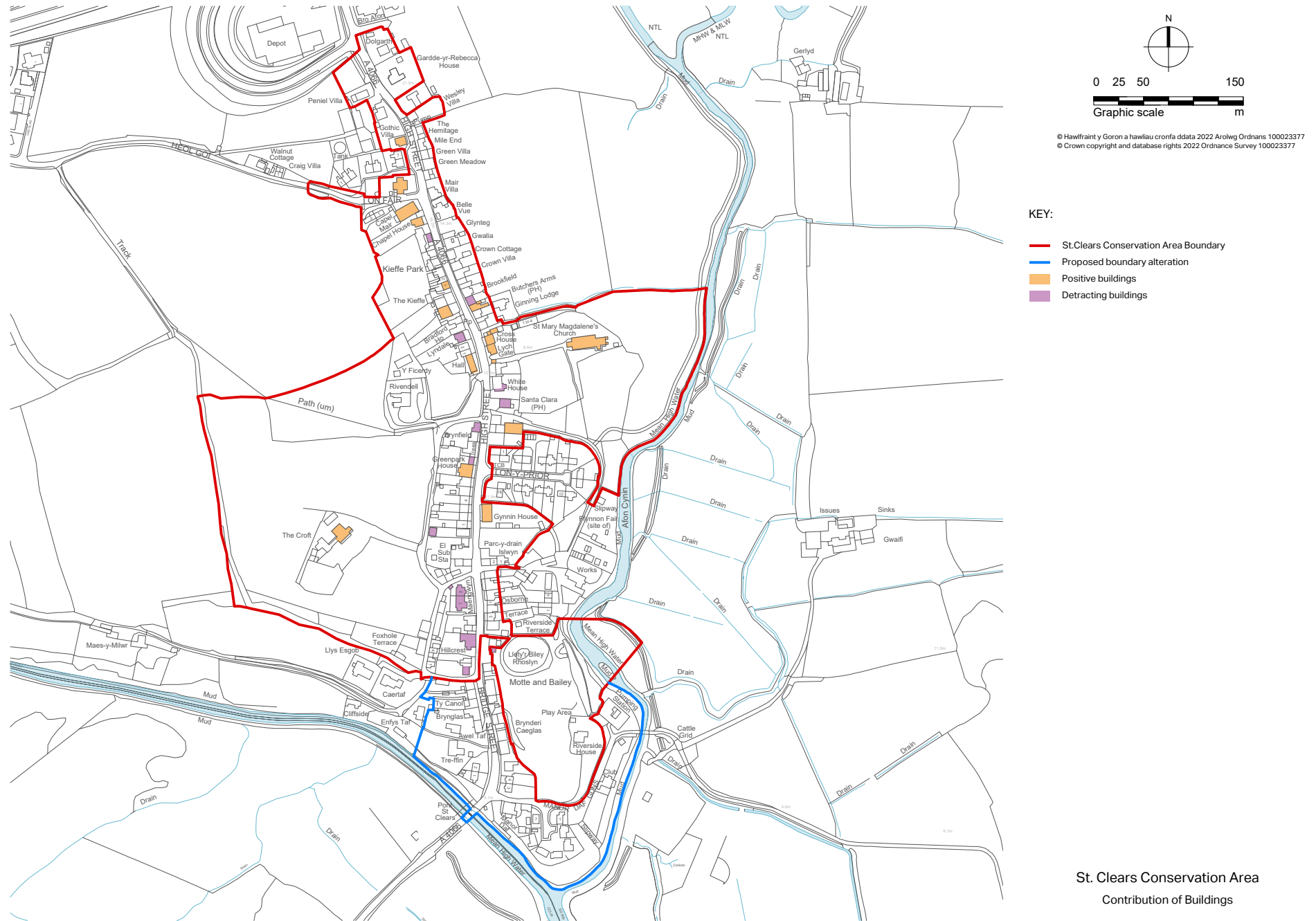
## Appendix II: Glossary

Abbreviation	Formal term	Definition	Abbreviation	Formal term	Definition
A4D	Article 4 Direction	A measure, instigated by a local authority, whereby issues of work which would normally be permitted under planning legislation General Development Orders are bought within the control of the planning department.	CCC	Carmarthenshire County Council	
			GDO	General Development Order	An order, under national planning legislation, which sets out the classes of development which are 'permitted development' and hence do not normally require the issue of formal planning consent
BAR	Building At Risk	A buildings register, maintained by local authorities (supported by Historic England) which includes buildings and structures which are at risk from decay, collapse or other loss. It usually sets out a degree of risk and indicates the type of action which is deemed necessary to remedy the problem.		Cadw	The organization responsible for the protection of historic buildings, structures, landscape and heritage sites in Wales
			LB	Listed Building	A building of architectural and/ or historic interest which is protected by inclusion on a list of such buildings maintained by Cadw. The building will be graded – grade 1 for the most important, Grade 2* for the next most important or grade 2 for the remainder which comprises about 95% of the total
CA	Conservation Area	An area, designated by the local authority, the character of which it is desirable to preserve of enhance			
CAA	Conservation Area Appraisal	A report which assesses the character and effectiveness of the CA at a particular time			
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order	A legal instrument for the compulsory purchase of land by a local authority of government agency for a defined purpose and at a fair rate		Burgage Plot	A burgage plot is usually characterised as a long walled plot, garden or yard, behind a building, the front of which faces one of the older streets in a town or city with medieval origins
	Fascia	The space in which a sign is displayed, typically above a shop			

Abbreviation	Formal term	Definition	Abbreviation	Formal term	Definition
LBC	Listed Building Consent	An approval for the carrying out of works to a listed building (which would otherwise constitute a criminal offence) issued by the local authority and following consultation with a set list of national and local amenity bodies and organisations	Sn215	Section 215 Notice	A notice under the planning acts which a local authority can issue to owners or occupiers for the tidying up of land or buildings which are deemed to be harmful to the amenity of an area
LP	Local Plan	A document prepared by or on behalf of the local authority setting out its planning policy for a forthcoming fixed period; it will include policy concerning the natural environment, conservation, highways, building development among a wide range of other topics.	SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance	A document which sets out a particular policy specific to a site or area which can be used as material evidence in determining any relevant planning application. The content of the document will have been prepared with this specific intent and will require to be formally adopted as one of its suite of planning documents by the authority concerned
PPW	Planning Policy Wales	National policy outlining guidance for making planning decisions	TPO	Tree Preservation Order	An order made by a local planning authority in Wales to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodland in the interest of amenity. An order prohibits the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, wilful damage and wilful destruction of trees without local authority's written consent
P(LBCA) Act 1990	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	A consolidating act which brought together previous diverse pieces of legislation into one Act of Parliament			
	Repairs Notice	A notice issued under sections 47 and 48 of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 requiring owners or occupiers to carry out urgent repairs to listed buildings			



## Appendix III: Maps

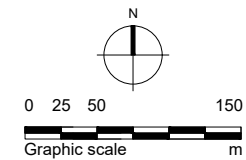
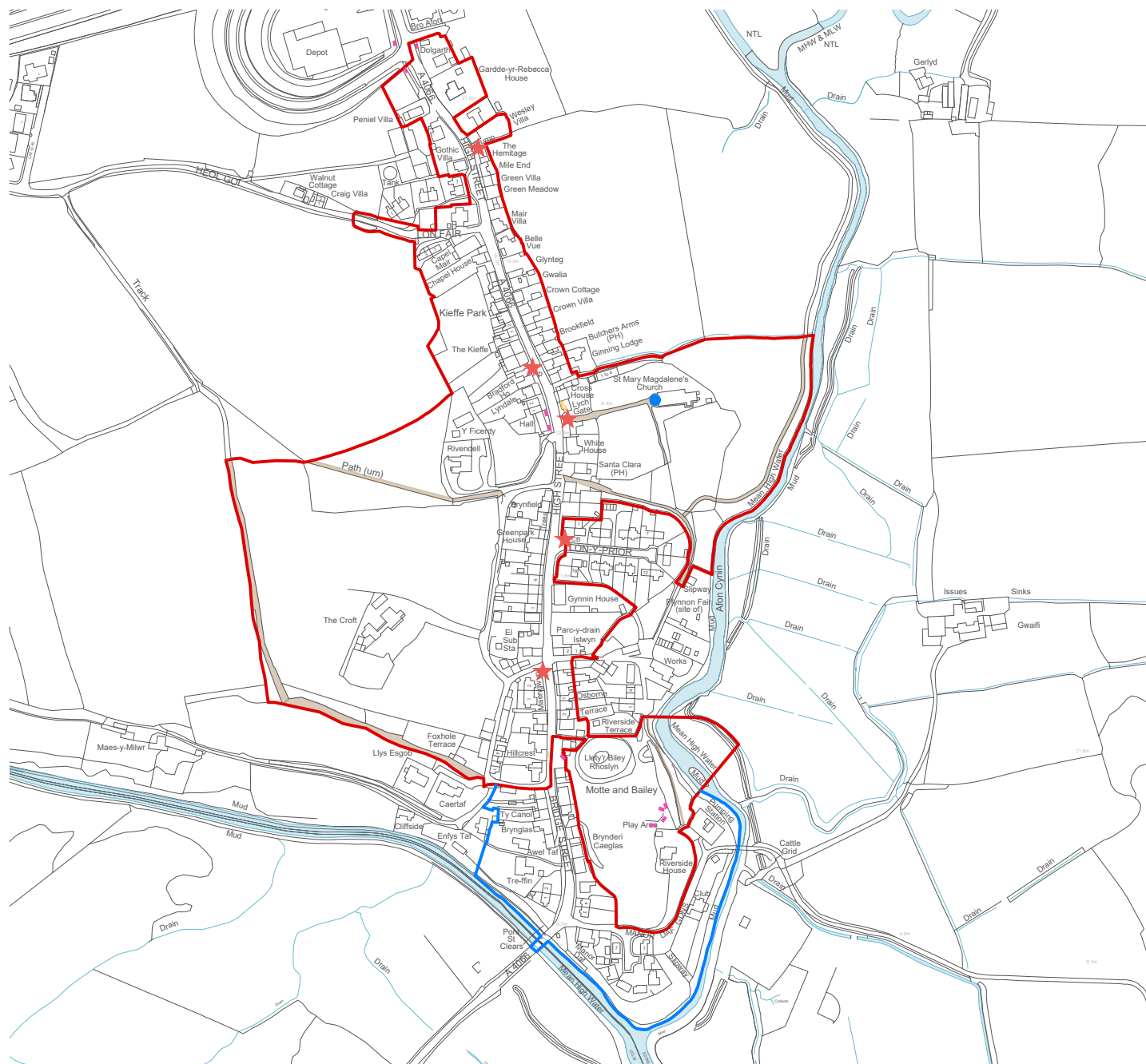










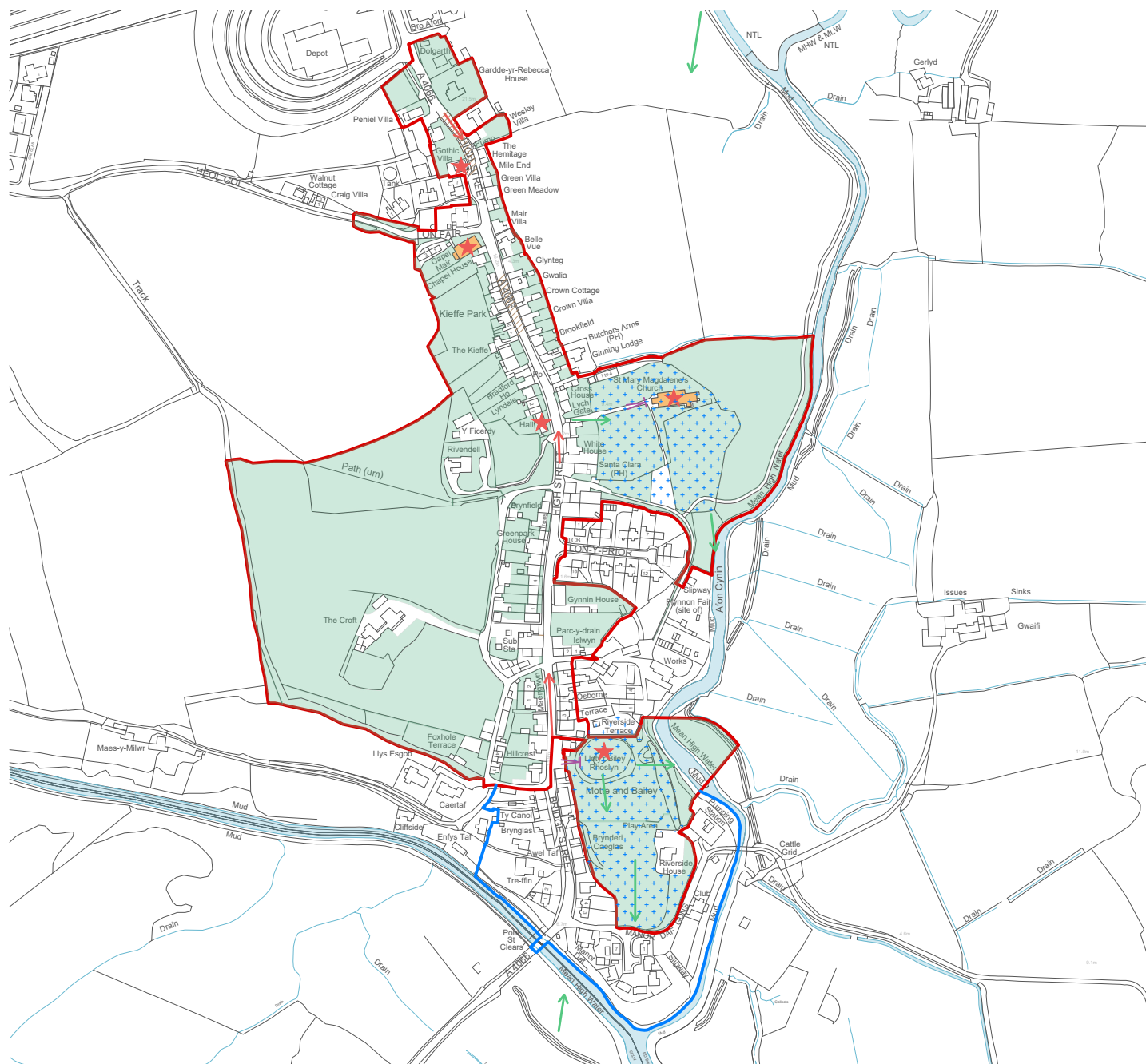


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**KEY:**

- St. Clears Conservation Area Boundary
- Proposed boundary alteration
- Pedestrian routes / paths
- Historic shopfront
- ★ Townscape feature
- Tower
- Street furniture

St. Clears Conservation Area  
 Public Realm



# KEY:

- St.Clears Conservation Area Boundary
- Proposed boundary alteration
- Areas which offer a sense of place
- /// Areas which offer a sense of enclosure
- Positive green areas / landscaping / trees
- Significant roofscapes
- ★ Main landmark / key buildings
- Important landscape views
- Important street views
- └ Terminated views



## Appendix IV: Boundary Review

As part of the preparation of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, a review of the Conservation Area boundary has been undertaken to understand the rationale for designating the area, and whether development since its initial designation means that this boundary should now be redrawn. This review has been undertaken through a series of site surveys, as well as desk-top research and consultation with the Local Authority, stakeholders, and the public.

There is one suggested alteration proposed to the St Clears CA which can be identified on the following map. The location and reasons for this alteration is set out below:

### **Area - Bridge Street, Manor Daf Gardens and Quayside**

Continuation of Bridge Street, addition of Manor Daf Gardens, and former quayside on rivers Taf and Cynin.

St Clears Bridge and past maritime trading links and industries, are key aspects of the evolution of the town in this location and could enhance understanding of the CA. The stone quay, bridge over the Taf and slipway to the river Cynin also form an important part of the setting of the CA, and particularly that of the castle, from the southern approach to the town. There is the high archaeological potential as quays and jetties dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century may survive as waterlogged deposits on the tidal river banks. The town heritage trail already recognises this heritage value and any changes or development should be carefully considered as an intrinsic part of the CA.



## Appendix V: Summary of Related Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

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The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires:

- Local planning authorities to determine areas where it is desirable to preserve and enhance, and designate them as conservation areas (section 69 [1])
- Local planning authorities to review their past activities in this area, including existing conservation areas, and to add more conservation areas (section 69 [2])
- Local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and consult the public in the area in question, taking account of views expressed (section 71 [1 and 2])
- In the exercise by local planning authorities of planning functions within the conservation area 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area' (section 72 [1])

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty of well-being on public bodies, which must set out and publish well-being objectives designed to maximise their contribution to achieving each of the seven well-being goals. One of these goals is a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, described as 'a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language'. There are clear synergies between the specific duty to preserve or enhance conservation areas, as required by the 1990 Act,<sup>7</sup> and the general duty to promote and protect

heritage, as set out in the 2015 Act. Properly protected and enhanced conservation areas can improve the quality of life and well-being for everyone.

Planning Policy Wales February 2021

- The historic environment is made up of individual historic features which are collectively known as historic assets. Conservation areas are considered historic assets.
- Paragraph 6.1.6 states that the Welsh Government's specific objectives for the historic environment seek to: [...] preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, whilst the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous.
- Paragraph 6.1.14 notes that there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas or their settings. Positive management of conservation areas is necessary if their character or appearance are to be preserved or enhanced and their heritage value is to be fully realised. Planning authorities should establish their own criteria against which existing and/or new conservation areas and their boundaries should be reviewed. The preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans can assist planning authorities in the exercise of their development management functions.
- Paragraph 6.1.15 notes that there is a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission for developments, including advertisements, which damage the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting to an unacceptable level. In exceptional cases, the presumption may be overridden in favour of development considered desirable on public

interest grounds.

- Paragraph 6.1.16 notes that preservation or enhancement of a conservation area can be achieved by a development which either makes a positive contribution to an area's character or appearance or leaves them unharmed. Mitigation measures can also be considered which could result in an overall neutral or positive impact of a proposed development in a conservation area.
- Paragraph 6.1.17 notes that conservation area designation introduces control over the total or substantial demolition of unlisted buildings within these areas, but partial demolition does not require conservation area consent. Procedures are essentially the same as for listed building consent. When considering an application for conservation area consent, account should be taken of the wider effects of demolition on the building's surroundings and on the architectural, archaeological or historic interest of the conservation area as a whole. Consideration should also be given to replacement structures. Proposals should be tested against conservation area appraisals, where they are available.
- Paragraph 6.1.29 notes that development plans should consider the inclusion of locally specific policies relevant to the historic environment. These must be distinctive and only cover those elements deemed as important considerations from a local planning perspective. They might include locally specific policies relating to:
- Listed buildings and conservation areas – development plans may include locally specific policies for the conservation of the built historic environment, including the protection or enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas and their settings. They may also include



policies relating to re-use or new development that affect particular historic areas and/or buildings, which may assist in achieving urban and rural regeneration. Development plans should not include policies for the designation of new conservation areas or extensions to existing conservation areas, nor should they include detailed statements or proposals for existing conservation areas. The process of assessment, detailed definition or revision of boundaries and formulation of proposals for individual conservation areas should be pursued separately from the development plan.

- Paragraph 1.36 notes that the Welsh Ministers have reserve powers to make their own Revocation/Modification or Discontinuance Orders, but only after consultation with the planning authority. Such intervention would overturn a planning authority's judgement on a matter which is, in the first place, its responsibility and may only be justified in exceptional circumstances. The general principle is that such action should be considered only where the original decision is judged to be grossly wrong, so that damage would be done to the wider public interest. This policy also applies to the use of the Welsh Ministers' default powers in respect of listed buildings and conservation area consent.

Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, 2017

This document sets out that:

- Local planning authorities are responsible for designating conservation areas and they hold the definitive information on their boundaries.
- Supplementary Planning Guidance may be developed and adopted by a local planning authority to assist them in delivering policies in the local

development plan. Specific guidance relating to the historic environment might include topics such as:

- Conservation area management plans.

- 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 should review their areas from time to time to consider whether further designations or revisions are called for. The Welsh Ministers also have powers to designate conservation areas after consultation with the local planning authority. This is a reserved power that is used in exceptional cases, for instance, where an area is of more than local interest.

6.2 Conservation area designation provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest: this might include the pattern of settlement and the organisation of space and routes as well as the style and type of building, and the use of materials and detail. Green infrastructure may also be important, but conservation area designation is not likely to be an appropriate means of protecting landscape features, except where they form an integral part of the historic built environment.

6.3 Local planning authorities must from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in a management plan. In accordance with best practice, this should be every five to ten years. It is good practice for local planning authorities to adopt the management plan as supplementary

planning guidance. They must also give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas when taking planning decisions. In exceptional circumstances where part or the whole of a conservation area no longer possesses the special interest which led to its designation, the designation may be amended or cancelled.

6.4 A conservation area appraisal is the foundation for any proposals for preservation and enhancement. It provides a detailed picture of the special interest of an area and identifies opportunities and priorities for action which can provide the basis for a more detailed management plan. It should include an analysis of the policy and management needs of the area, including an assessment of the effectiveness of current planning controls, the need for supplementary protection and the identification of ways in which special character can be preserved or enhanced. Local development plan policies and development management decisions which relate to conservation areas will have a sounder basis and make more positive contributions to long-term aims if the character of each conservation area is defined and policies for its preservation and enhancement are set out in detail in a management plan. Consideration can also be given to whether to introduce Article 4 Directions in these areas.

6.5 By their very nature, conservation areas have multiple stakeholders and management arrangements should provide opportunities for participation and engagement in plan and



decision making. Proposals for preservation and enhancement will also be most effective when all council departments understand the significance of designation and work together. A development team approach that recognises the contribution of other departments, such as highways and housing, is therefore strongly recommended.

6.6 Local development plans may include locally specific policies for the protection or enhancement of conservation areas. In such circumstances, the local development plan should make clear that development proposals will be judged against their effect on the character or appearance of a conservation area as identified in the appraisal and management document. Certain development proposals within a conservation area, including the provision of one or more dwelling houses, the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space created by the development is 100 square metres or more, will require a design and access statement.

6.7 Many conservation areas include the commercial centres of towns and villages. Generally, there will be an emphasis on controlled and positive management of change that encourages economic vibrancy and social and cultural vitality, and accords with the area's special architectural and historic qualities. Many conservation areas include sites or buildings that make no positive contribution to, or indeed detract from the character or appearance of the area; their replacement should be a stimulus to imaginative, high-quality design and an opportunity to enhance the area.

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. It is reasonable to expect that the local planning authority's duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area will result, in practice, in more exacting standards when the authority considers whether to grant consent for a proposed advertisement in such an area.

6.9 In conservation areas it is important for local planning authorities to be flexible in their use of their powers under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992, because many areas include retail and commercial premises ranging from small corner shops to thriving commercial centres. Outdoor advertising is essential to commercial activity and the success of local businesses will usually help owners and tenants of commercial premises to maintain buildings in good repair and attractive in appearance.

6.11 The Welsh Ministers may direct that Conservation Area Consent is not required for certain descriptions of buildings and the Welsh Ministers have directed that Conservation Area consent is not required for certain works. These works include the demolition of a building with a total cubic content not exceeding 115 cubic metres and the demolition of a built boundary feature that is less than one metre high where abutting a highway, waterway or open space, or less than two metres

high in any other case. This means that many works which involve the destruction of the fabric of part of a building will not be works of demolition and will not require conservation area consent.

6.12 Applications for consent to demolish must be made to the local planning authority. Applications for Conservation Area Consent will require a heritage impact statement, which should explain why demolition is desirable or necessary alongside a broader assessment of the impact of the proposals on the character or appearance of the area.

6.13 There should be a general presumption in favour of retaining buildings, which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. Proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings (see 5.15). In cases where it is considered a building makes little or no contribution, the local planning authority will normally need to have full information about what is proposed for the site after demolition. Consent for demolition should not be given without acceptable and detailed plans for the reuse of the site unless redevelopment is itself undesirable. The local planning authority is entitled to consider the broad principles of a proposed development, such as its scale, size and massing, when determining whether consent should be given for the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area.

6.14 It may be appropriate to impose a condition on the grant of consent for demolition so that it does not take place until full planning permission has been granted and a contract for carrying out the development work has been made.

6.15 Local planning authorities have the power to protect trees and woodlands by making tree preservation orders. In addition, there is a special provision for trees in conservation areas which are not the subject of tree preservation orders. Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area is required to give the local planning authority six weeks notice, during which time the local planning authority can decide whether to protect that tree with a tree preservation order.

6.16 When considering whether to extend protection to trees in conservation areas, local planning authorities should always take into account the visual, historic and amenity contribution of trees. In some instances, new or re-plantings may be desirable where this would be consistent with the character or appearance of the area.

6.17 Enforcement has a key role to play in the protection of conservation areas and local planning authorities should consider a more proactive

approach, including monitoring development activity and ensuring compliance with the terms of regulatory controls, rather than just investigating when a formal complaint is made. A positive and active approach to enforcement will help to reduce the number of contraventions and secure sustained improvements in environmental quality.

6.18 An applicant has a right to appeal against certain decisions or failure to take a decision by the local planning authority on a conservation area consent. An appeal may be made in circumstances including the following: Where a local planning authority: • Refuses an application for conservation area consent; • Grants an application for conservation area consent subject to conditions; • Refuses an application for the variation or discharge of conditions attached to a conservation area consent; • Refuses an application for approval required by a condition imposed on the granting of conservation area consent; or • Fails to determine an application for consent within 8 weeks of its validation by the local planning authority.

6.19 An appeal is made to the Welsh Ministers on a form within six months of the applicant being notified of the local planning authority's decision.

Managing Conservation Areas in Wales, Cadw, 2017

Managing Conservation Areas in Wales supplements Planning Policy Wales<sup>1</sup> and Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment. Managing Conservation Areas in Wales 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. It should also help local planning authorities to take account of Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles) to achieve high-quality sensitive change.

