

Lerwick New Town Conservation Area

Character Appraisal



August 2010

Front cover (L – R): Town Hall and St Olaf Street from King Harald Street, 1920s, *Shetland Museum and Archives*; The Islands of Shetland, H. Moll, 1745, *National Library of Scotland*; King Harald Street and St Olaf Street from the Town Hall, *Austin Taylor Photography*



Prepared for Shetland Islands Council by the Scottish Civic Trust.

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1 Introduction, Purpose and Justification

1.1 Date and reason for designation

The Shetland Islands area has 3 conservation areas; 2 in Lerwick (Lerwick Lanes and Lerwick New Town) and 1 in Scalloway. The Lerwick New Town Conservation Area was designated in 1986 in recognition of its gridiron layout and its buildings worthy of preservation.

1.2 What does conservation area status mean?

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas “are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

The main regulatory instrument afforded by conservation status is the control of demolition of unlisted buildings and structures through the mechanism of “conservation area consent” (CAC). This was introduced in 1971 in recognition of the importance that even relatively minor buildings can play to the overall character or appearance of a conservation area (in general terms, the demolition of a structure unless it is a listed building is deemed for the purposes of the Planning Acts not to involve the development of land

Conservation area status also brings the following works under planning control:

- Removal of, or work to, trees;
- Development involving small house extensions, roof alterations, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior.

Conservation area designation enables planning authorities to implement stronger development management control via Article 4 Directions, which would otherwise not be possible. These can play a particularly important role in protecting unifying features (e.g. doors, windows and shop-fronts) and in arresting the incremental erosion of character and appearance by small-scale alterations that in themselves may not be significant but collectively and over time might have a negative impact.

It is recognised that the successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support and input from stakeholders, and in particular local residents and property owners.

1.3 Purpose of appraisal

Planning Authorities have a duty to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, although there is no imposed timeframe for doing so. The Act of 1997 also indicates that planning authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated area.

A more considered and careful approach is therefore needed in considering development proposals in a conservation area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this appraisal document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. The appraisal conforms to Scottish Government guidance as set out in *Planning Advice Note 71: Conservation Area Management* (December 2004). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within *Scottish Planning Policy* (February 2010), in *Scottish Historic Environment Policy* (July 2009), and in a series of Historic Scotland guidance notes *Managing Change in the Historic Environment*.

This document therefore seeks to:

- 1 define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues that threaten the special qualities of the conservation area;
- 2 provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement;
- 3 provide Shetland Islands Council as planning authority with a valuable tool with which to inform its planning practice and policies for the area.

“Preserve or Enhance”

It should be noted that the phrase “preserve or enhance” found in the relevant statute has been the subject of debate over the years, and is one of the few areas of historic environment legislation that has been subjected to legal tests. A landmark case, now known as the Steinberg principle (from *Steinberg & another v. Secretary of State for Environment*, 1988) together with further refinements of other cases (notably *South Lakeland District Council v SofS for the Environment*, 1992) defined the statutory objective of preserving and enhancing as one that achieved by positive contribution to preserve or by development which leaves the character or appearance unharmed. This is now largely considered to be the principle of “do no harm”. This assessment should be done against the whole of the conservation area, unless it can be shown that there are distinct areas of character contained within the whole of the conservation area.

1.4 Planning policy context

This appraisal provides useful advice to assist in the submission of, and subsequent assessment of, applications for development within the conservation area. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by Shetland Islands Council.

The Development Plan for Shetland Islands comprises:

The Shetland Structure Plan, 2000 establishes a development strategy for land use planning in the islands until 2015 and adds a regional dimension to national guidance. In doing so it provides a spatial framework for other Shetland strategies including Local Plans. The following policy is especially relevant:

Chapter 3: Built and Natural Environment

Policy SP BE1 – Built Heritage

The Shetland Local Plan, adopted in 2004, translates the wider aims of the Structure Plan into the detailed framework needed by communities, developers, public agencies and the Council itself if land use decisions are to be soundly based. It helps to co-ordinate future development and promotes improvement and enhancement of every part of Shetland. In addition the Local Plan also sets out the criteria by which all planning applications are considered. The following sections are particularly relevant:

Chapter 3: Natural and Built Environment

Policy LP NE10 - Development and the Environment

Policy LP NE15 - Protection of Trees

Policy LP BE4 - Preservation and Re-use of Disused Buildings

Policy LP BE5 - Protection and Enhancement of Buildings

Policy LP BE6 - Listed Buildings

Policy LP BE7 - Conservation Grants

Policy LP BE8 - Development in Conservation Areas

Policy LP BE9 - Demolition in the Conservation Areas

Policy LP BE10 - Shopfronts in Conservation Areas

Policy LP BE11 - Advertisements and Signs

Policy LP BE13 – Design

Appendix C – Shopfront Design Guide

Appendix F – Siting & Design Guidance and Principles

2 Location and landscape

2.1 Regional context & relationship to surroundings

Lerwick is the capital and administrative centre of the Shetland Islands with a population of approximately 7000 and provides services for a large surrounding area. Lerwick is the most northerly town in Britain being located more than 100 miles (160 km) north of mainland Great Britain on the east coast of the Shetland Mainland. Lerwick is about 210 miles (340 km) north of Aberdeen, and 230 miles (370 km) west of Bergen in Norway.

Lerwick has strong ties with Scandinavian countries, particularly Norway. This is reflected in the street names of Lerwick (e.g. King Harald Street, King Haakon Street). In 2007 Lerwick had a population of 7070; a third of Shetland's total population. The discovery of oil in the North Sea in the 1970s led to the building of the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal, and Shetland is now a major transit point to the North Sea oil rigs.

Ferries from Aberdeen arrive at the Holmsgarth terminal a mile north of the old harbour. There is also a roll on-roll off ferry service to Bressay and Out Skerries from a terminal to the east of the conservation area. Island bus services start and end at the Viking Bus Station, to the north-east of the conservation area.

The Lerwick New Town Conservation Area encompasses the majority of the 19th and early 20th century extension of the town westwards. The conservation area extends from the Scalloway Road at the south to Harbour Street and King Haakon Street in the north and from Hillhead to Burgh Road. The eastern boundary of the New Town Conservation Area is formed by Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area that encompasses most of the historic core of the town to the east. The main routes into the conservation area are along Scalloway Road or Commercial Road. King Harald Street forms the main thoroughfare through the area.

There is a relationship between the New Town Conservation Area and its immediate neighbour, the Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area. Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area was designated in 1975. Hillhead was considered an important part of the conservation area, rather than simply the boundary between the old and new towns. Consequently the boundary included a few buildings on the western side of Hillhead in order to protect the setting of Hillhead. Lerwick New Town Conservation Area was designated in 1986. The existing western boundary of the Lanes Conservation Area was accepted as the eastern boundary of the New Town Conservation Area. This boundary line would benefit from some rationalisation to include buildings which were previously part of the Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area in the New Town Conservation Area, which is a better match for their character. The New Town Conservation Area was later extended to include the houses on the eastern side of Burgh Road and on the southern side of Scalloway Road.

2.2 Geology

Shetland's geology is similar to that found in the north-west Highlands of Scotland's mainland. On Shetland there is mainly hard and acidic rock, which gives soil poor in nutrients

and prone to waterlogging. Under such conditions plant remains cannot decay, and accumulate to form deep deposits of peat. This is exacerbated by leaching in the cool, damp climate and the loss of the scrubby woodland that once covered much of Shetland. The waterlogged, nutrient-deficient land supports 'blanket bog' vegetation and naturally fertile soils occur only where banks of limestone lie close to the surface or where shell sand provides the calcium necessary to 'sweeten' the soil. Shetland's blanket bogs are distinctive within Scotland.

Lerwick and its surrounding area is mostly made up of sandstones with some beds of conglomerates (rock made up of water-worn cobbles) to the north of the town.

2.3 Topography

Lerwick town radiates from the harbour area, which hosts the winding arterial thoroughfare of Commercial Street.

The New Town occupies the flat area to west of the 'lanes'. The New Town is situated 'up and over' the hill of the lanes section of the town. There is then a further incline from King Harald Street to Burgh Road. The flatter land west of Hillhead was attractive to the wealthy nineteenth century merchants and it became the fashionable place to build a residence.

2.4 Planned landscapes

Historic Scotland has responsibility for the compilation and maintenance of the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, which records those sites of regional and national importance. There are no Inventory entries in the Lerwick New Town Conservation Area.

3 **Historical Development**

Shetlanders have been making a living from the land for 5000 years. The remains that the successive residents left behind are amongst the most complete in the country telling us much about the ancient history of Scotland. The many Iron-Age brochs that are still evident in the coastal landscape show that defences were as important at one time on Shetland as they were in the rest of Scotland. Clickimin on the edge of Lerwick, a Scheduled Monument managed by Historic Scotland, provides an example of these uniquely Scottish structures. The Pictish traditions of the rest of Scotland are found on Shetland in the physical remains of settlements and field systems, carved stones and silver objects.

In Norse times (around 1000 AD), the islands were a stepping stone between Norway and its more southerly outposts - Dublin, Orkney, the Hebrides, Iceland and Isle of Man. Mentioned in the Norse saga 'Orkneyinga Saga', written by an Icelandic historian in the late 12th century, Shetland appears to have been a stable farming community at that time. The influence of the Norse settlers on Shetland is still felt to this day; with place-names and cultural traditions as evidence of this. For example, the Norse word 'voe', meaning sea inlet, is used frequently in place-names across Shetland and the Norse fire festival of Up-Helly-Aa, although only introduced when Norse history was rediscovered by the Victorians, is celebrated every January in Lerwick. The New Town Conservation Area is central to the Up Helly Aa celebrations, with King George V Playing Field providing the venue for the burning of the galley, and its streets being the main processional routes for the festival.

Shetland was originally part of the Norse Earldom of Orkney but reverted to direct rule from Norway after 1194. By the 14th century the Norwegians had lost the southerly islands of Man and the Hebrides and had been taken over by Danish rulers. The marriage treaty of Margaret, Princess of Denmark to James III of Scotland involved a dowry of 10,000 florins. Part-payment of this dowry involved pawning of the Shetland Islands to Scotland on condition that when Denmark paid the debt, she would revert back to Danish rule. Attempts by the Danes to take Shetland back in the following centuries were unsuccessful. Scottish landowners moved into the islands and the law, language, economy and religion of Scotland prevailed in Shetland. The bishopric of Orkney and Shetland was transferred to the see of St Andrew's in 1472.

Fishing and fish processing is still the biggest industry on Shetland and has been for many centuries. Finnie¹ describes the typical Shetlander as, 'a fisherman with a croft'. The trade grew through Bergen in Norway which was a trading port of the Hanseatic League; a confederacy of trading cities across northern Europe during the late Medieval and Early Modern period. In return for cod and ling, the islanders would receive cash, grain, cloth, beer and other goods.

A passage of text on Moll's 1745 Map of the Shetland Isles states that the export of herring to the Dutch provided employment for all the people and that fishing and the export of other Shetland products provided 'a considerable sum of money yearly'.

¹ 'Shetland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide', Mike Finnie, 1990, p.4



The Islands of Shetland, H. Moll, 1745, National Library of Scotland

Herring became the dominant catch of the fishing trade during the late nineteenth century replacing the earlier cod. Lerwick's docks grew and the processing of fish was the mainstay of the islands until the 1970's when oil was discovered and brought ashore. This resulted in a prosperous boom for the islands as building works, transport links and mariners were in demand for supply and maintenance of the new technology needed for the oil terminal at Sullom Voe. The terminal has forged a sensitive approach and managed to avoid large-scale pollution whilst pumping millions of pounds into the local economy and allowing the population to grow on the islands.

Lerwick's name comes from the Old Norse for muddy bay, *Leirvick*². Lerwick became the Shetland Isles' capital in the seventeenth century, relatively late in Shetland's history, mostly due to its new-found importance as a port. The Dutch herring industry allowed the port to become an important export site. The collection of huts on the western shore of the Bressay sound was what Lerwick consisted of at the beginning of the seventeenth century³. Sir John Buchanan, Sheriff Principal of Orkney and Shetland, ordered the houses of Lerwick to be demolished in 1625 due to the outrageous behaviour of those who traded with and supplied the Dutch⁴.

The town grew through the 18th century and became its own parish, separate from Tingwall. The distinctive lanes spread out from Commercial Street with gables to the street, narrow spaces providing shelter from the wind and between 1799 and 1815 the population grew from 900 to over 2000⁵.

² 'Lerwick' leaflet, Shetland Amenity Trust, 1999.

³ 'Central Lerwick: An Area for Conservation', Zetland County Council, 1975.

⁴ 'Lerwick' leaflet, Shetland Amenity Trust, 1999.

⁵ Finnie, p.8.

In the nineteenth century the docks of Lerwick began to increase in size and capability. Hay's Dock was completed by 1825 for the curing, boatyards and warehouses of the herring trade, which reached its peak at the turn of the 20th century. In 1905 Lerwick was Britain's busiest herring port⁶.

New Town

By 1862 it was clear that the crowded conditions in the lanes meant that there was very little space available for building. The Feuars and Heritors were the organisation that really controlled Lerwick and it was clear that the only space for new building was in the 'town parks' i.e. the ground from Hillhead to Burgh Road and from Breiwick Bay to Freefield. The herring trade financed the growth of the town during the late nineteenth century. Expansion to the east resulted in the gridiron formation of a New Town. Regular squares of development were formed and these exhibited the symbols of civic pride such as the Town Hall and the County Buildings⁷.

At a meeting of the Feuars and Heritors in 1862 it was decided to arrange for a layout plan of the town parks area. Roderick Coyne prepared a preliminary layout of the parks in 1862 for the formation of the New Town, and J.W. Hepburn produced a revised layout plan in 1878. The Shetland Museum and Archives now hold both of these maps. Gifford describes the development as comprising substantial villas and a string of churches⁸.



Indicative maps showing the laying out of the New Town of Lerwick.

⁶ Finnie, p.8.

⁷ 'Lerwick' leaflet, Shetland Amenity Trust, 1999.

⁸ 'The Buildings of Scotland: Highlands and Islands', J. Gifford, 1992.

From analysis of the historic maps, it would appear that Burgh Road is beginning to become an important thoroughfare with residences built along it before 1872. This area was the focus of early building in the new town so that in 1875 we find the new residents asking to have the east side of Burgh Road paved. However, Gilbertson Park and the Jubilee Parks are yet to be formed and the gridiron system of streets is not yet imposed on the area. High Street curves across the area to meet Hillhead and Harbour Street has not been extended westwards yet.



The dense and crowded lanes area led to the building of Lerwick's New Town.

Shetland Museum and Archives

In 1880 a contributor to the *Shetland Times* newspaper commented on the new houses springing up in the new town. The days had gone, he said, when merchants and others were prepared to live in houses all alike, little more than square boxes with everything given over to utility. Now there was more than one villa, said the article, and already they were making a great improvement to the appearance of the town. 1887 saw continuous work on paving and installing drainage in the new town.

The Jubilee Parks (also known as George V Playing Fields) area was certainly divided into potential feus on the layout plan of the new town of 1878.

However, no building was carried out in this area for the next 50 years or so. In 1935, when the council was under pressure to build more housing, the Feuars

and Heritors were asked to allocate the parks for housing. The Feuars offered to sell the parks to the council on condition that the Council should 'recondition' them and maintain them as open spaces

for the entire town. They came to be known as the Jubilee Parks for King George V's Silver Jubilee.

By 1901 [*see OS Map 1901*] there are more houses stretching up and down Burgh Road on both sides and around the southern part of the conservation area. Gilbertson Park has been formed. The grid of streets that shows the late nineteenth century affection for Norse history through street names such as King Harald Street and King Erik Street has now been built. Harbour Street has been extended westwards by this stage, the Town Hall has been erected at Hillhead but High Street has yet to be truncated to make way for St Olaf Street. Two very prominent New Town buildings; Isleburgh House and the former Public School are built during the early years of the twentieth century and these add character to the New Town along with the residential developments.

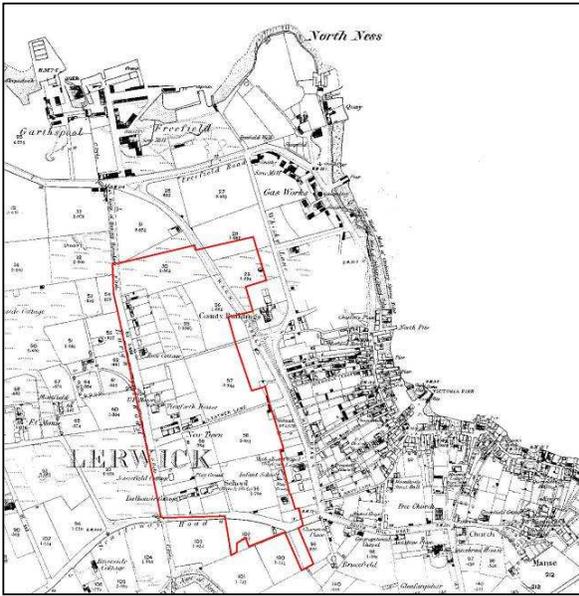


Looking west towards King Harald Street, Islesburgh House and Central School, c.1920s

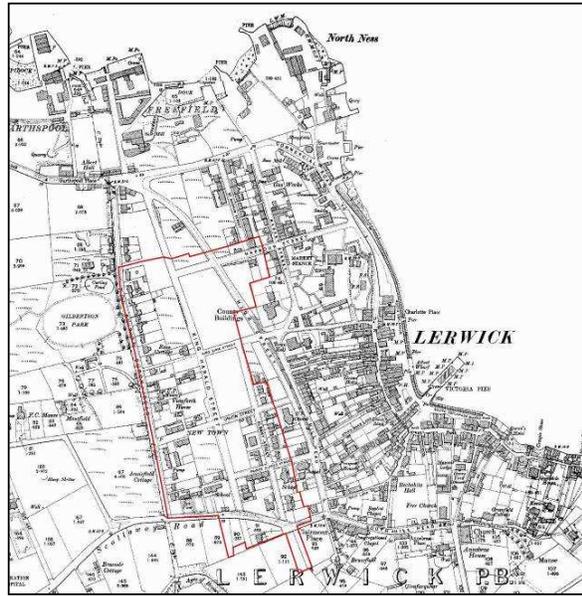


Town Hall and St. Olaf Street from King Harald Street, 1920s

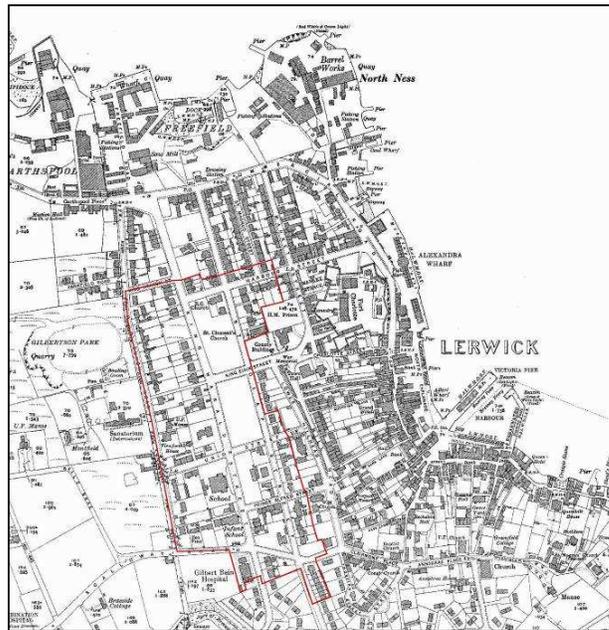
In 1930 [see OS Map 1930] we can see that the lower portion of the conservation area has now been built. The Old Gilbert Bain Hospital and the residential developments of Burgh Road, St Olaf Street and King Harald Street have been completed. The open area that becomes George V Playing Fields is still vacant and perhaps was used as an informal parkland area before the death of the King in 1936.



OS Map Lerwick 1880 (approx CA boundary in red)



OS Map Lerwick 1901 (approx CA boundary in red)



OS Map Lerwick 1930 (approx CA boundary in red)

4 **Character and Appearance**

4.1 **Spatial Analysis**

4.1.1 *Activities/Uses*

Lerwick is a busy and prosperous commercial centre. It is the main town of the Shetland Islands, serving a large hinterland with outside commodities and with social and business services.

Lerwick New Town Conservation Area is generally a residential area to the west of the town centre. A library, two churches, a community centre and youth hostel, a funeral parlour, several guesthouses, the Old Infant School (housing several businesses), Council offices, and a residential care home can all be found within the conservation area.

The conservation area also contains the Jubilee Parks. The parks comprise formal gardens, a tennis court, bowling green and a pavilion to the southerly area of the park between Union Street and King Erik Street. The portion north of King Erik Street contains a playground. The northern playing field off King Erik Street is also the final point in the procession for Lerwick's annual Up-Helly-Aa fire festival.



St Maraaret's Church



Playground in Jubilee Parks

4.1.2 *Street pattern*

The street pattern in Lerwick New Town was a response to the cramped conditions in the town centre lanes in the 19th century. In contrast to the dense and narrow lanes, the new town was laid out in a grid of wide, airy streets with houses in generous plots.

Lerwick New Town Conservation Area encompasses the area of development to the west of the town centre from Hillhead to Burgh Road. St Olaf Street, King Harald Street and Burgh Road all run north-south with King Haakon Street, Harbour Street, King Erik Street, Prince Alfred Street and Union Street forming the cross streets. Scalloway Road forms part of the southern boundary of the conservation area and runs westwards from the town centre.

Cockatoo Brae connects Burgh Road to King Erik Street but is more a lane than a street and is inaccessible to vehicles.



View of Cockatoo Brae

The oldest roads in the conservation area are Burgh Road, Scalloway Road and Union Street, which was earlier known as Leather Lane. The Feuars and Heritors later laid out the grid of streets to accommodate development within the area bounded by Burgh Road, Scalloway Road and Hillhead. Until this time Hillhead split at the point where the War Memorial now stands to form High Street and Whiskey Lane, which ran north either side

of the County Buildings. Whiskey Lane later became Market Street while the diagonal of High Street was rationalised to form the northern part of St Olaf Street.

4.1.3 Plot pattern

Feus in the conservation area were formally laid out according to a plan drawn up for the Feuars and Heritors of Lerwick in 1878. Feus were generally consistent in width although varying slightly. The length of the plot varied according to the position of the proposed roads and the size of the parcel of land being divided.



Buildings are generally set back from the street, behind boundary walls and small front gardens.

The plots within the conservation area vary in size depending on the relative status of the property concerned. The existing plot sizes generally accord with the feus laid out by the Feuars and Heritors. The feus were forced to vary slightly where there were existing buildings along Burgh Road. It is clear that in some cases more than one house was built on a single feu, for example the terrace of four houses at 80-86 King Harald Street appears to take up two feus, meaning each

plot is half the usual size. In other places one building takes up two feus. Larger plots are found where the building type changes, for example, the Isleburgh Community Centre, built in 1902 as the Central Public School.

The new town was developed in response to the increasingly crowded conditions in Lerwick's lanes and so the plots are usually generous with detached, semi-detached or terraced properties in large gardens. Properties are frequently set back slightly from the roadside with a boundary wall and small garden to the front and a larger garden to the rear.

A substantial area in the centre of the conservation area was left empty of buildings, and now forms the playing fields to the north and south of King Erik Street. Modern infill has mostly been on the existing pattern either as a result of demolition or plot subdivision.

4.1.4 *Circulation & permeability*

The grid layout creates a formal hierarchy of streets with the three long streets King Harald Street, Burgh Road and St. Olaf Street transversed by Prince Alfred, Union, King Erik and Harbour Streets. The streets and pavements are generally of a consistent width although King Harald Street is slightly wider and with its prominent position in the conservation area forms the major thoroughfare in the conservation area. Cockatoo Brae is much narrower with no pavements and consequently has the feeling of a pedestrian lane. There is a narrow lane between the back gardens of St. Olaf Street and King Harald Street running north from Harbour Street. This provides pedestrian access to the back gardens.

4.1.5 *Open spaces, trees and landscape*

Although Jubilee Park and King George V Park were dedicated after the death of King George V in 1936, they weren't formally opened until the Duke of Edinburgh's visit in 1953. The name King George V Park first appears on Ordnance Survey maps in around 1966. Prior to this the park area appeared on maps as open ground.

Richard Gibson Architects carried out a recent civic design project involving the Jubilee Park Pavilion for Shetlands Islands Council. Built in Jubilee Park, the new building occupies the site of two smaller buildings that had fallen into disrepair. The pavilion provides a viewing room for public use, bowler's facilities, a park games hire outlet, park keeper's stores and mess room, and public toilets. The project received a Shetland Environmental Award.



Pavilion in Jubilee Park



Trees on Union Street

Shetland's lack of trees is well known. However, the new town has a surprisingly leafy character. The gardens of the dwellings often contain trees and greenery, which enliven the street scene. Boundary walls are often combined with hedges that add to the leafy character. Trees around the parks also make an important contribution to the conservation area. Trees within the conservation area are protected and require consent before any lopping or felling can take place.

4.1.6 Views, landmarks & focal points

Views within the conservation area vary. The long, wide streets provide some good vistas and good views of the new town can be gained from just outside the conservation area boundary at Hillhead. The Jubilee Parks allow views within the conservation area, and provide a green, airy feeling. To the north and south of the conservation area views outwards are most significant; both looking towards the waterfront.

Views of special note are:

The view along King Erik Street from the War Memorial;

Views over the parks;

The view along King Harald Street;

Views north and south out of the conservation area.

Landmark buildings in the conservation area tend to be the larger non-domestic buildings – notably Isleburgh House and Isleburgh Community Centre. The incline westwards from King Harald Street means that the properties here tend to sit higher than road level, making them even more prominent in views over the parks.



The parks allow views across the conservation area.

4.2 Buildings and Townscape

4.2.1 Building types

The most prevalent building type in the conservation area is the house, either detached, semi-detached or terraced, and usually between 1 and 3 storeys. The domestic buildings in the conservation area are most commonly semi-detached or detached stone-built houses with 2-2 ½ storeys often with bay windows and dormers. The building at 92 St Olaf Street, known as the House of David, is unusual in being of in situ mass concrete construction.

To the north and south of the conservation area houses are generally smaller and there are several short terraces. Grander detached buildings are found on the more prominent sites opposite the parks. Several of the larger properties are now used as guesthouses. Many of the properties now have mid 20th century garages built in the garden to provide off street parking space. These garages tend to be rather functional in appearance and in many cases detract from the otherwise attractive street scene. An example of this is found at No. 88 St Olaf Street, where the garage to the front of the house is very prominent and functional in appearance, detracting from the street scene and from the character of the house itself.



The garage at 88 St Olaf Street.

The conservation area also includes two churches and several non-domestic buildings, which are generally built in a similar style to the dwellings, although on a grander scale.

4.2.2 Scheduled monuments

A scheduled monument is a monument of national importance that Scottish Ministers have given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Lerwick New Town Conservation Area.

4.2.3 Key listed and unlisted buildings

The conservation area contains 7 Listed Building entries. Each list entry may consist of more than one building. A full list of listed buildings in the conservation area can be found in Appendix 1.

The listing system in Scotland operates under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. The Act places a duty on Scottish Ministers to compile or approve lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Once included on the lists the building – both exterior and interior – has statutory protection under the provisions of the 1997 Act. Listing is intended to safeguard the character of Scotland’s built heritage and to guard against unnecessary loss or damage. A listing applies to any building within the curtilage of the subject of listing that was erected on or before 1 July 1948. This could include many ancillary structures such as boundary walls, garages or estate buildings.

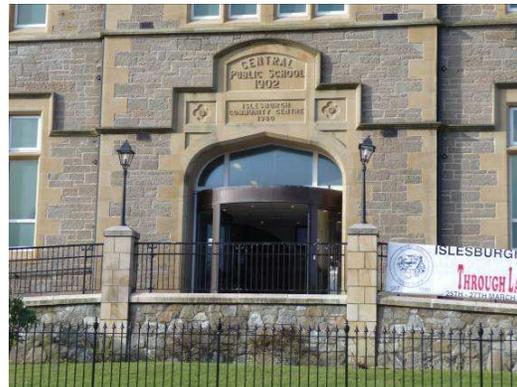
Any work that affects the character of a listed building or structure will require listed building consent (LBC). Any work carried out to a listed building without consent and that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest is an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

Significant listed buildings include:

Islesburgh Community Centre was designed by John Aitken and built in 1903 with additions in 1933. It is a symmetrical Scots Baronial former school comprising a 3-storey, 3-bay principal block with lower 3-storey, 2-bay wings flanking to the north and south. The walls are snecked sandstone with polished ashlar details. Aitken's obituary of 1923 stated "there is no finer Public School in the north of Scotland - either as to internal arrangements or architectural beauty". The building is B listed. After closure of the school, the building was converted to use as a community centre in 1978-80.



Islesburgh Community Centre



Doorway detail at Islesburgh Community Centre

Islesburgh House was built for Andrew Smith, a prominent Lerwick merchant. It was designed by Alexander Campbell and built in 1907. The name was taken from the area of that name in Northmavine that was the property of the original Smith family. Islesburgh House remained in the family until being requisitioned in the Second World War and was then bought by Zetland Education Committee in 1945 and has operated as a community

centre and youth hostel since. It is now B listed. The building is a 3-bay symmetrical Scots Baronial town house with 2 storeys and an attic and a 2-storey wing projecting to the rear giving a T-shaped plan. The front elevation is built from bull-faced pink sandstone, with polished ashlar detailing. It was modernised and extended to the west around 1990. Campbell's distinctive broad canted bays with crowstepped dormerheads can also be seen at the Brentham Place tenement building at the foot of Harbour Street.



Isleburgh House, King Harald Street

St Margaret's Parish Church was designed by James Malcolm Baikie of Kirkwall and built in 1911. The church is Gothic in style with a rectangular plan and gabled entrance porches on the north and south elevations, and an apsed chancel projecting from the west elevation. The walling is bull-faced Bressay freestone with polished Eday sandstone ashlar details. The sandstone boundary wall is topped with Art Nouveau influenced cast-iron railings to Harbour and St Olaf

Streets. The adjacent presbytery is also listed.

25 Burgh Road is one of the earlier houses to be built in the conservation area. Although described in the list description as early 19th century, it appears to have been built between 1880 and 1900 and certainly appears on the 1901 OS map. The building is a simple 2-storey, 3-bay symmetrical house of rectangular plan with harl-pointed stugged sandstone walls. There is a modern glazed timber porch in the centre bay, with regular fenestration to either side and at 1st floor. The windows are timber sash and case, with 12-panes to the principal elevation and 4-panes to the rear. The roof is purple-grey slate with cement-rendered skewes. The building sits back from the roadside, as many do in the new town, with a cement rendered wall and decorative iron railings to Burgh Road.



25 Burgh Road



32-36 King Harald Street

32-36 King Harald Street is listed at category C(S) under a single list entry. It is a 6 bay terrace of 2 symmetrical houses to the left and a slightly larger house to the right with a

large double height canted bay. This larger house, No. 32 is known as Summerside House and was local architect John Aitken's own house. The south elevation is asymmetrical with 3 bays and a modern conservatory to the left. The initials 'JMA' and the date appear in a florid cartouche on the end gable.

The conservation area also contains a large number of *unlisted* buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. These are identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'positive buildings'.

Buildings identified as being *positive* will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the street or landscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. National policy guidance indicates that there is a presumption for the retention of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area (Scottish Planning Policy 23: Planning and the historic environment).

Significant unlisted buildings include:

The Old Infant School on the corner of Scalloway Road and King Harald Street was built in 1909 to replace an earlier school building. It has a one-storey 3 gabled frontage of dressed coursed sandstone and with a slate roof. There are many fine details such as a bell tower, finials and crow stepped dormers. The classrooms have large timber windows with 9 panes to the upper sash and 6 panes to the lower.



Old Infant School, Scalloway Road



55 & 57 King Harald Street

Many of the properties within the conservation area are grand 2 storey detached or semi detached stone villas. Good examples are found on King Harald Street. 55 and 57 King Harald Street are semi-detached, each with 2 bays and 2 storeys and an attic. Steps lead up to the front door over a basement. Double height bay windows form the outer bays with coursed sandstone walling and ashlar quoins and margins. Windows are timber sash and case. The roof is slated with dormer windows. No. 57 has a garage building in the front garden.

92 St Olaf Street is an interesting landmark building built in 1905 and named House of David after its builder David Sutherland. It has 3 storeys of white-painted in situ concrete with a variety of detailing and fenestration patterns and a stair tower emerging curved at the top of the building.

No's 80-86 King Harald Street form a short early 20th century terrace with each house consisting of 2 bays and 2 storeys with an attic. A double height bay window forms one bay of each house with dry-dash render walls and smooth cement quoins and margins. Roofs are slated with a dormer above each bay window. To the front is a low boundary wall with decorative cast iron railings.



House of David, 92 St Olaf Street



80-86 King Harald Street

4.2.4 *Materials & local details*

In Lerwick New Town the most important materials are buff-grey sandstone or similar local stone, and natural slate. Traditionally, roofs are pitched with skews and, in many cases, dormers.

For walls a buff or grey sandstone is most popular. Slaister or harl pointing is also common although the most prestigious houses mostly have squared coursed stone. Some of the more modern buildings use a dry-dash; however this is not considered an appropriate finish within the conservation area. Stone is generally left bare and so applied colours within the conservation area are limited to details such as windows and doors.

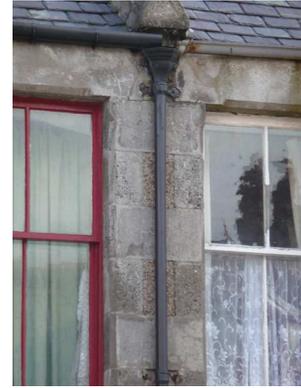
Apart from the roofs and walls, the historic buildings in the conservation area are enlivened by the use of timber windows and doors, the design of which varies according to the status of the building. Windows are traditionally vertically proportioned timber sash and case, traditionally painted white, with a variety of glazing patterns. Stained frames are also common in the conservation area. Bay windows are a feature of the conservation area, often rising through two storeys. Doors are generally timber with either 4 or 6 panels. Many of the houses have traditional outer storm doors leading to recessed entrance areas. Doors are generally painted a strong colour. Properties in Lerwick New Town Conservation Area have suffered from the loss of many of the original windows and doors. While Article 4 directions have helped to ensure that replacement features are often sympathetic, a historic building starts to lose its authenticity as soon as any part of its original fabric is replaced. Traditional windows can be upgraded to modern standards in a number of simple and



Windows are traditionally timber sash and case, painted white.



A traditional timber storm door on Harbour Street.



Cast iron rainwater goods on King Harald Street.

cost-effective ways and so replacement should always be a last resort. Rainwater goods are generally cast-iron and often have decorative hoppers.

The buildings in the conservation area are generally set slightly back from the roadside, with small front gardens. Where boundaries exist they are usually marked by stone walls from 0.5metres to 2metres high and often with railings or hedges. Railings are often very decorative and are usually painted a dark colour. Iron gates are also common. Stone gate piers are also found at many properties.

4.2.5 Public realm

The suburban character of the new town is reinforced by the wide streets and greenery found in private gardens. Road surfaces are tarmac with concrete flags forming the pavements.

Boundary walls are a key feature of the conservation area and range from around 0.5m metres to 2 metres and are generally rubble stone with stone copes and often with slaister pointing. They are often combined with railings or hedges and feature gate piers. Shetland was largely spared from the removal of iron railings during World War II and there are some fine examples in Lerwick New Town.



Railings on St Olaf Street.



Concrete flags form the pavements. Many properties feature gate piers.

There is generally little street furniture within the conservation area except for the standard unobtrusive street lighting and post boxes.

The parks and the generous private gardens make a significant contribution to the feeling of open space and greenery. Significant trees are marked on the *Townscape Appraisal Map*. Trees and landscapes in both public and private ownership must be carefully managed to protect this unusually leafy character.

4.2.6 *Condition*

One of the greatest threats to any heritage site is the loss of primary fabric through decay and damage, reducing the authenticity of the site. The vast majority of the buildings within the conservation area are well maintained. However, a significant threat to the historic fabric is inappropriate modern details and materials, such as replacement windows and doors.

St Clement's Hall has been identified as a Building at Risk, the building is currently vacant and without a viable new use.

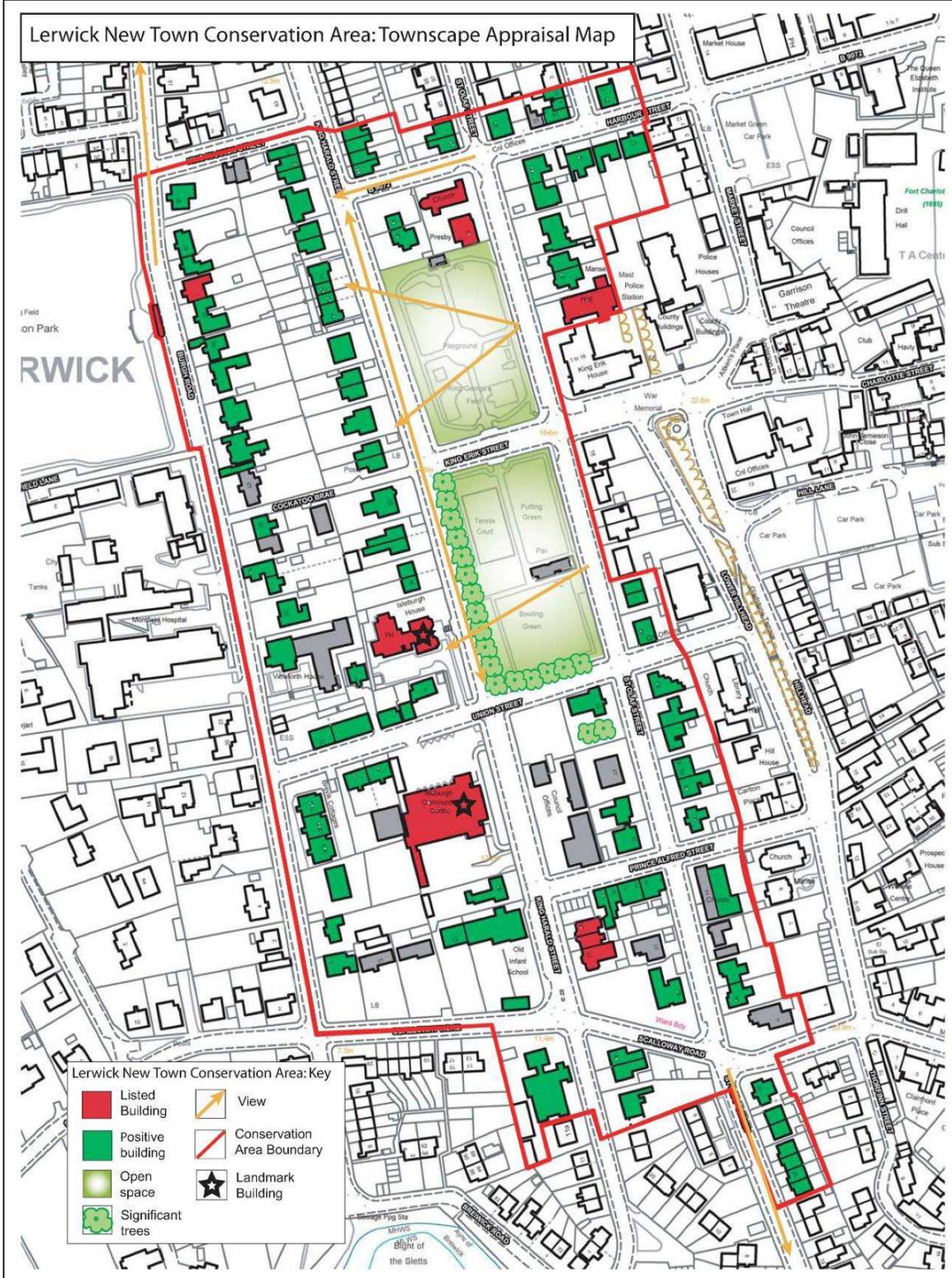
4.3 **Character Areas**

Although there are variations in character within the conservation area, the area as a whole is brought together by a similarity of massing and scale, plot sizes and materials. No individual character areas were identified.



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Lerwick New Town Conservation Area: Townscape Appraisal Map



Lerwick New Town Conservation Area: Key

 Listed Building	 View
 Positive building	 Conservation Area Boundary
 Open space	★ Landmark Building
 Significant trees	

5 **Key Features / Assessment of Significance**

Having carried out an assessment of the buildings and areas it is now possible to identify the key features that define the special architectural and historic character of the area.

- Late 19th century planned grid layout;
- Feeling of open space & greenery; in contrast with the dense Lerwick Lanes area;
- Many 2-storey detached, semi-detached and terraced stone villas set in generous gardens;
- Boundary walls and gates/railings make an important contribution;
- Bay windows are a significant feature;
- Materials include buff sandstone, slate, timber doors/windows;
- Park provides significant green space and allows views across the area.

6 **Negative Factors**

A number of negative factors have been identified and are listed below. These form the basis for the *Sensitivity Analysis* and the *Opportunities for Enhancement*.

- Loss of original details e.g. windows and doors;
- Small development in gardens e.g. garages and extensions which are out of character with the conservation area.

7 **Sensitivity Analysis**

7.1 *Loss of original architectural details and building materials*

Although the majority of the buildings in the conservation area are in good physical condition the area as a whole is at risk from small changes that can cumulatively dilute the special character of the area. Many of the buildings in the conservation area have been adversely affected by the replacement of original timber windows or doors with inappropriate materials such as uPVC or unsympathetic designs or methods of opening, the replacement of natural roof slates or the painting of walls. An example of this is found at No. 42 St Olaf Street where the windows have been replaced with inappropriate stock-pattern frames which appear to open outwards rather than sliding vertically, and the masonry walls have been painted a pink colour, both of which are out of character with the rest of the conservation area. The cumulative effect of these changes in detailing and the loss of original features can spoil the external appearance of a building and the local streetscape.



42 St Olaf Street- the windows have been replaced and the masonry painted.

7.2 *Quality of new development, alterations and extensions*

There is little modern infill due to the limited number of gap sites and the protection against demolition that conservation area designation gives. However where more recent developments have occurred they are not always sympathetic to the local details that have provided the group value of the conservation area. There are several examples of garage buildings that are poorly sited in prominent locations in front gardens and which suffer from low quality design and materials, detracting from the conservation area as a whole. It is important that even small garden developments are assessed carefully for their potential impact on the associated building and the entire conservation area.



Recent development is not always sympathetic to the character of the conservation area.

7.4 *Protection of trees and landscape*

Trees make an important contribution to the landscape and enhance the setting of historic buildings. A small number are found in the public parks but most are in private ownership.

Hedges also make a major contribution and similarly need to be retained. Measures to ensure that both trees and hedgerows are properly managed and protected are required. Works to a tree in the conservation area require to be notified to the Council to allow it the opportunity to consider whether it wishes to make the trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.



Hedges and trees should be protected where they exist.

8 Opportunities for Preservation & Enhancement

8.1 Article 4 Directions

The Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development)(Scotland) Order 1992 (known as the GPDO) sets out certain types of development that do not require planning permission, known as permitted development rights. In line with guidance, it has been common practice among planning authorities to extend control within Conservation Areas by way of an Article 4 Direction. Essentially, this requires planning permission to be sought for certain specified types of development where this would not normally be required.

The existing Article 4 Direction in Lerwick New Town Conservation Area was served in 1986. The types of work which are controlled include: alterations to a dwelling, such as new windows and doors, porches, boundaries and painting. These additional controls appear to be working reasonably well but there are examples of poor quality detailing and inappropriate replacement windows.

The existing Article 4 Direction should be relaunched to increase awareness and consideration given to providing further detailed guidance on the importance of design and detailing in the conservation area and the issues a householder may need to consider. A full photographic survey of the properties that are affected by the Direction should be carried out to enable enforcement, when resources allow.

8.2 The control of unlisted buildings

As part of the appraisal process unlisted but “positive” buildings have been identified. Generally, these are individual or groups of buildings that retain all or a high proportion of their original architectural detailing and which add interest and vitality to the appearance of the conservation area.

As with listed buildings, there is a general presumption in favour of their retention. Any application for the demolition of a building which is deemed to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area will therefore need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification as to why the building cannot be retained, similar to that required for a listed building.

It must be demonstrated by inclusion of evidence to the Planning Authority that the building

- has been actively marketed at a reasonable price and for a suitable period depending on its location, condition and possible viable use without finding a purchaser; or
- Is incapable of physical repair and re-use through the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report.
- or the demolition of the building is essential to delivering significant benefits to economic growth or the wider community.

In line with Local Plan Policy BE8 – Development in Conservation Areas, the Council will consider applications for change to ‘positive’ buildings extremely carefully and will refuse any that adversely affect their character, architectural or historic interest.

8.3 *Building maintenance & repair*

It is important that historic buildings are adequately maintained and repaired using traditional materials and techniques. Such repairs can be costly due to the additional expense of materials and employing skilled craftsmen. The Council may provide grants to owners to ensure that eligible works are undertaken to a high standard. The Conservation Section can provide advice on traditional repairs. Shetland Islands Council should encourage owners of historic buildings to use traditional materials and repair techniques through advice, publications and ensure that the availability of relevant grant funding is well publicised.

8.4 *Buildings at Risk*

There are buildings within the Lerwick New Town Conservation Area that have been identified as being without a viable use or vacant. There is a concern that if left unused these buildings will be at risk from decay due to neglect.



St Clement's Hall, St Olaf Street is on the Buildings at Risk Register.

The Scottish Civic Trust maintains a list of buildings which are at risk from deterioration due to neglect or vandalism. This is updated as necessary and the Council has powers to protect all listed buildings and also, in certain instances, unlisted buildings in a conservation area, where they make a positive contribution to the area's special character.

Where the condition of an historic building deteriorates to a point where it is considered vulnerable and detrimental to the character of the area then Shetland Islands Council in conjunction with the Scottish Ministers will consider appropriate action to enable its return to a reasonable state of repair. The Council will encourage the reuse of existing vacant buildings over new build construction where possible. Local Plan Policy BE4 supports this.

St Clement's Hall is empty, in need of a new use, and 'at risk'. Development opportunities include St Clement's Hall and the site on King Harald Street opposite Islesburgh Community Centre.

8.5 *Quality of new developments, building alterations and extensions*

There are examples of sensitive modern developments in Lerwick New Town; however some new developments have been out of keeping with the character of the conservation area.

In assessing planning applications within the Lerwick New Town Conservation Area and in line with Local Plan Policy BE8 – Development in Conservation Areas, the Council shall pay particular attention to the following:

- New development should follow existing plot ratios, with properties in spacious plots;
- New development should be in accord with the prevailing form of historic development, including the scale and massing of buildings;
- New development should not impinge on the setting of existing buildings;
- New development should use materials that are traditional to the conservation area and of high quality (the use of UPVC, aluminium, concrete tiles or other non traditional materials are not considered appropriate);
- New development should protect important trees, hedges and other established boundaries;
- New boundary treatments should use traditional materials and be of appropriate design to suit locality or in the case of hedgerows, use ones of an appropriate species for the local climate and the site.
- The Council will require applications for new development in the Conservation Area to be accompanied by a Design Statement. The Design statement should explain and illustrate the principles and concept behind the design and layout of the proposed development and demonstrate how the proposals relate both to the site and its wider context. Applicants may use this Character Appraisal to assist them in the preparation of Design Statements.

8.6 *Landscape management*

Trees and hedges make an important contribution to the landscape and enhance the setting of historic buildings. The designation of a conservation area is a reflection of the character of the overall area. In Shetland where trees are scarce they can have an even more significant impact. It is necessary for residents to notify the Council of their intention to carry out tree works at least six weeks in advance. The Council will encourage owners to retain and manage trees and hedges and to replace in appropriate species as and when necessary.

9 **Monitoring and Review**

Shetland Islands Council should review this document every 5 years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging Development Plan and government policy generally. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in Section 8 of this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues that need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

It is possible that the local community (under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the Council) could carry out this review. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement.

Appendix 1 - Listed Buildings

Address	Category of Listing
Isleburgh House, King Harald Street, inc boundary walls, gatepiers and steps	B
Isleburgh Community Centre, King Harald St, inc playshelters, boundary walls, railings, gates and gatepiers	B
32-36 King Harald Street, inc boundary walls, railings, gates and gatepiers	C(s)
25 Burgh Road, inc boundary wall and gates	C(s)
Parish Church of St Margaret, inc 87 St Olaf Street boundary walls, gate and gate piers	C(s)
St Clements Hall, St Olaf Street inc steps, pedestals, boundary walls and gatepiers	C(s)

Appendix 2 - Further guidance

The following documents provide further detailed guidance on national and local planning policies and design guidance. All are available online.

The Shetland Local Plan, Shetland Islands Council, 2004 – (particularly Chapter 3)

The Shetland Structure Plan, Shetland Islands Council, 2000 – (particularly Chapter 3)

Advice Note 2: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, Shetland Islands Council

Advice Note 8: Advertisements, Shetland Islands Council

Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), Historic Scotland, July 2009

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), The Scottish Government, February 2010

Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance notes series, Historic Scotland

INFORM (Information for Historic Building Owners) guides, Historic Scotland