



Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area

Character Appraisal (Reviewed 2024)



Front cover (L – R): View of Commercial Street and harbour from Fort Charlotte, 1880s, Shetland Museum and Archives; The Islands of Shetland, H. Moll, 1745, National Library of Scotland; Lerwick waterfront, Austin Taylor Photography.

This Conservation Area Appraisal is a revised and updated version of the document prepared for Shetland Islands Council by the Scottish Civic Trust and adopted in 2010.

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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 and 1 in Scalloway. The Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area was designated in 1975 in recognition of its waterfront setting, its unusual town plan 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 1974 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.

This document therefore seeks to:

- define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues that threaten the special qualities of the conservation area;
- provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement;
- provide Shetland Islands Council as planning authority with a valuable tool with which to inform its planning practice and policies for the 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 in Shetland comprises the provisions of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Shetland Local Development Plan (2014) (SLDP). NPF4, which was adopted by the Scottish Ministers, provides the national planning policy context and agenda for the assessment of all planning applications.

Whilst NPF4 must be read as a whole the principal policy relating to development within conservation areas is Policy 7 – Historic Assets and Places which includes the following provisions in relation to conservation areas:

Development proposals in or affecting conservation areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced. Relevant considerations include the:

- i. architectural and historic character of the area;
- ii. existing density, built form and layout; and
- iii. context and siting, quality of design and suitable materials.

Development proposals in conservation areas will ensure that existing natural and built features which contribute to the character of the conservation area and its setting, including structures, boundary walls, railings, trees and hedges, are retained.

Demolition of buildings in a conservation area which make a positive contribution to its character will only be supported where it has been demonstrated that:

- i. reasonable efforts have been made to retain, repair and reuse the building;
- ii. the building is of little townscape value;
- iii. the structural condition of the building prevents its retention at a reasonable cost; or
- iv. the form or location of the building makes its reuse extremely difficult.

Where demolition within a conservation area is to be followed by redevelopment, consent to demolish will only be supported when an acceptable design, layout and materials are being used for the replacement development.

As with NPF4 the policies of the Shetland Local Development Plan (adopted 2014) must be read as a whole the principal policies relating to conservation areas are Policy HE1 – Historic Environment and Policy HE3 – Conservation Areas.

Policy HE1 states that the Council should presume in favour of the protection, conservation and enhancement of all elements of Shetland's historic environment, which includes buildings, monuments, landscapes and areas.

Policy HE3 requires that development within a conservation area or affecting its setting should preserve or enhance its character. The design, materials, scale, siting and use of any development should be appropriate to the character of the conservation area and its setting. Where an existing building contributes positively to the character of the conservation area, proposals for total or substantial demolition should only be supported where it can clearly be demonstrated that every effort has been made to retain it. The planning authority should preserve the amenity value of trees in conservation areas.

2 Location and landscape

2.1 Regional context and 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) off the north coast 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 within the conservation area. Island bus services start and end at the Viking Bus Station, just to the north of the conservation area.

The Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the town based around Commercial Street and the historic lanes, which run at right angles to it. The conservation area extends from the waterfront to the edge of the new town. The main route into and through the conservation area is the A969; Commercial Road in the north, Esplanade along the waterfront and South Road and Scalloway Road to the south-west.

There is a relationship between the Lanes Conservation Area and its immediate neighbour, the Lerwick New Town 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.

2.2 Topography

The built-up area of Lerwick mainly occupies a small peninsula that projects into Bressay Sound. Lerwick town radiates west from the harbour area, which hosts the winding arterial thoroughfare of Commercial Street. The Lanes area is sheltered to the north, south and west and the land slopes steeply upwards from the harbour basin. There is a natural incline towards Fort Charlotte, which was originally built on a cliff above the town. The south-east portion of the town which extends into the Sound of Bressay is generally more flat, tapering towards the coast, but the landform rises up again into sea cliffs at Twageos Road. The western side of the peninsula at the Knab also slopes upwards and there are more cliffs to the shore overlooking Brei Wick.

The steep landform of the central Lanes area as it slopes towards the shore is a strong feature of the townscape of the oldest part of Lerwick. The area from Commercial Street to the waterfront is built on land reclaimed in 1886.

3 Historical Development



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

17th century

Lerwick's name comes from the Old Norse for muddy bay, Leirvick¹. Lerwick became the Shetland Isles' capital in the 17th 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. A collection of huts on the western shore of the Bressay sound were what Lerwick consisted of at the beginning of the seventeenth century².

It is not known when the first permanent house was built in Lerwick. The name 'Leirwick' is used for the first time in 1644 in a sasine entry, which mentions Robert Sinclair of "the tenement of land and house newly built thereon in the bay or weik callit Leirwick or Brassaysoundsyd".

During the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the seventeenth century the ramparts of Fort Charlotte were built in 1665 for Cromwell's troops by John Mylne, Master Mason to the Crown. The fort was named after George III's queen. The building of the fort allowed for permanent settlement of Lerwick. The fort remains the most complete example of its type to survive.

¹ 'Lerwick' leaflet, Shetland Amenity Trust, 1999.

² 'Central Lerwick: An Area for Conservation', Zetland County Council, 1975.

18th and 19th centuries



The Tollbooth c. 1885. (*Shetland Museum and Archives*) and 2024

Scalloway was the ancient capital of Shetland and was the location of Shetland's annual parliament or 'Ting' until around 1700 when the law courts moved to Lerwick and the town's dominance in commerce and transport began. It is estimated that by 1701, when Lerwick became a parish separate from Tingwall, the population of the town was about 700. The Old Manse appeared before 1700 and Patrick Scollay's house – No.10 Commercial Street - was built around 1730. The Tollbooth was completed in 1770 and the Fort was remodelled and renamed in 1781.

The town grew through the 18th century and became its own parish. By the middle of the

18th century, Lerwick had grown into a prosperous trading centre. The years from 1790 to 1820 were the most important in Lerwick's urban history as the town expanded rapidly. Between 1799 and 1815 the population grew from 900 to over 2000³.

Commercial Street and the lanes are the heart of the town of Lerwick. The distinctive lanes spread out from Commercial Street with gables to the street and narrow spaces providing shelter from the wind. The street plan is from the earliest expansion of Lerwick during the 17th and 18th century although most of the buildings date from the 1800s. The buildings that line the route of Commercial Street are an essential part of the fabric and character of Commercial Street, displaying the traditional street pattern of this area with many being either B or C- listed. Unlike a traditional burgh plan with a linear marketplace and set rigs on either side; it is thought that the development in Lerwick was rather informal, as merchants built their large houses along the sea shore which at this point roughly followed the line of the present Commercial Street. The pattern of development is therefore a distinct response to local conditions. The houses were built with

³ Shetland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide', Mike Finnie, 1990,,p.8.

their gable ends towards the sea to protect them from the elements. Many of the lanes were originally known by the names of the early builders, but were renamed by the Commissioners of Police in 1845 to reflect personalities and themes of that time; Joseph Leask's Closs, Gilbert Tait's Closs and Sutherland's Closs thus became Pitt, Reform and Fox Lanes.



View of Commercial Street & harbour from Fort Charlotte, 1880s

Shetland Museum and Archives

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 Buildings⁴

The Harbour

In the nineteenth century the docks of Lerwick began to increase in size and capability. At the south end of the harbour Gillie's Pier was built in 1817 for James Copland and is now known as Copland's Pier. The harbour then developed northwards with many private piers and lodberries constructed up to Fort Charlotte. Simultaneously with this development Hay and Ogilvy were developing the Freefield site to the north of the main harbour area to become Hay's Docks; warehousing, curing and boat-building structures were included in this large site. 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.

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

Much of the land along the Esplanade was reclaimed in harbour works in 1886. This was at the time that new feus were being taken up in the New Town and a spirit of advancement was found in Lerwick. The foreshore was completely altered as a result of the works. Cockstool and Morrison's Pier were no more and numerous lodberries disappeared or were put to other uses.

Victoria Pier was built in the mid-nineteenth century and extended during 1883-6. Albert Wharf, located between Victoria Pier and Fort Charlotte, was also constructed during this later period. Alexandra Wharf, sited between Fort Charlotte and North Ness, was completed by 1908. There can be no doubt that the harbour works were of great economic importance to the development of Lerwick. In 1905 Lerwick was Britain's busiest herring port. A further smaller pier was constructed during 1913-15 to the south of Victoria Pier, which formed the Small Boat Harbour.



Looking north along the lodberries which now form the buildings on the esplanade, c.1870s *Shetland Museum and Archives*

The unique 'Lodberry' structures on the harbour were used for loading and unloading of goods from boats brought alongside them. The word comes from the Norse hlaoberg, meaning a flat stone or place where boats could be brought alongside. The picturesque grouping of Robertson's Lodberry at 20 Commercial Street is A-listed and a fine example of the complexes of buildings which made up Lerwick harbour. More recently it has found fame as the home of fictional detective Jimmy Perez in the television adaptation of the Shetland books by Anne Cleeve. It consists of a shop, house, sail-loft, curing shed, sea wall and Noost. The small private piers associated with these lodberries have mostly been lost due to reclamation of the land in later development of the waterfront. These complexes also allowed an illicit trade to be carried out and Lerwick had a reputation for being a hotbed of smuggling. The lodberries give the waterfront of Lerwick a unique and picturesque appearance, as they are all of slightly different size and design.

20th century

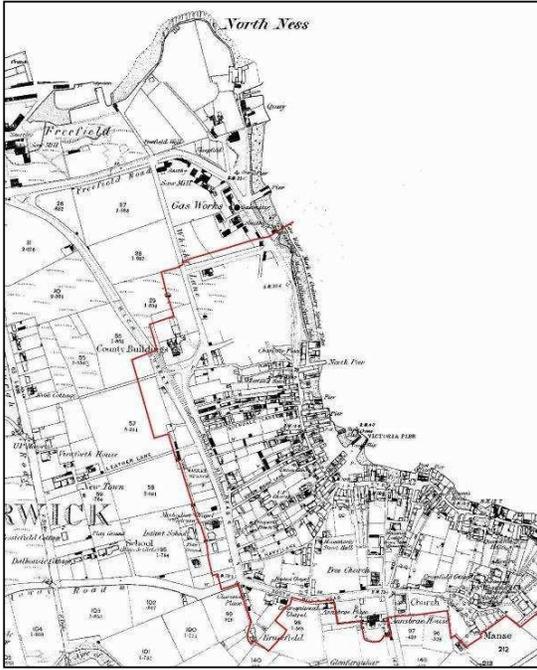
By the mid 20th century the area behind Commercial Street consisting of the tightly packed, steep and narrow lanes contained many derelict and decayed sites. Housing has long been a priority for the Council in Lerwick and in the post-war years permission for a modest amount of public housing was given. In the 1950s and 60s Richard Moira, an Edinburgh architect, designed a series of small infill housing schemes in the Lanes area, to turn run down backland sites into simple terraced housing with pedestrianised lanes and landscaped courts. The Heddell's Park and Annsbrae scheme between Mounthooly Street and Queen's Lane won a Saltire Society Housing Design Award in 1959. The rear of Burns Lane, Hill Lane and Fox Lane were demolished to allow a swimming pool to be built in the 1970's. This area is now a car park and has meant the sad loss of the distinctive lane-end gables on Hillhead.

The town expanded to the north and south during twentieth century, with much new housing constructed during the 1970s to accommodate the influx of residents working at Sullom Voe or as an indirect effect of the oil boom.

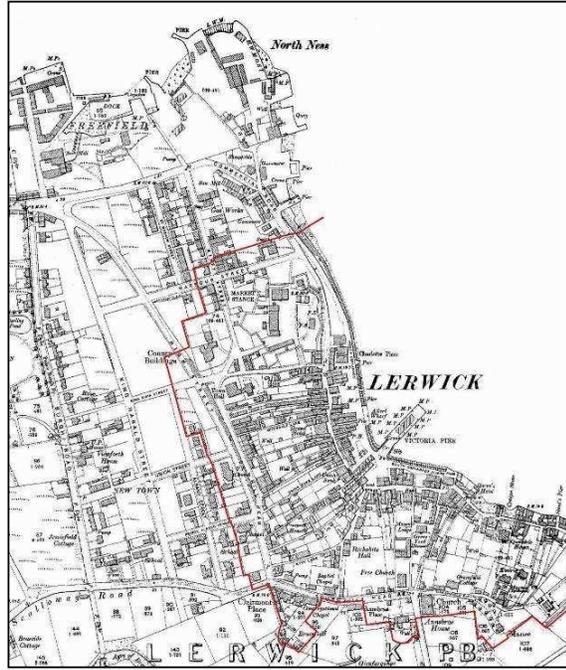
The designation of a conservation area in 1975 was hoped to allow sensitive redevelopment of the important and unique townscape, and to halt unsympathetic development such as the swimming pool.

The very recent past has seen a renaissance of the waterfront in Lerwick. The new Shetland Museum and Archives Building (opened in 2007) at Freefield is a bold and imaginative modern building and the project included the restoration of the historic dock and storehouse and neighbouring boat-building sheds that give Hay's Dock a sense of continuity. The Lerwick Waterfront Regeneration project recently won the national award at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning for 2008. A masterplanning exercise was carried out in 2024 by 7N Architects to explore options for future development within the old swimming pool car park and adjacent sites.

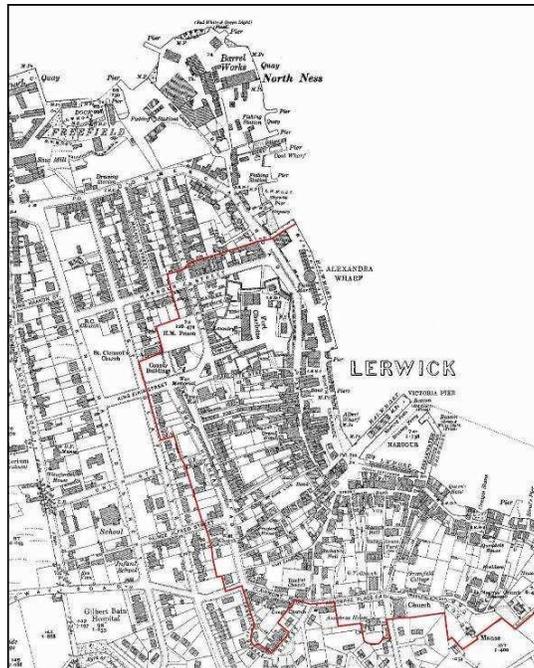
Below: Historic maps of Lerwick with the approximate conservation area boundary outlined in red.



OS Map 1880

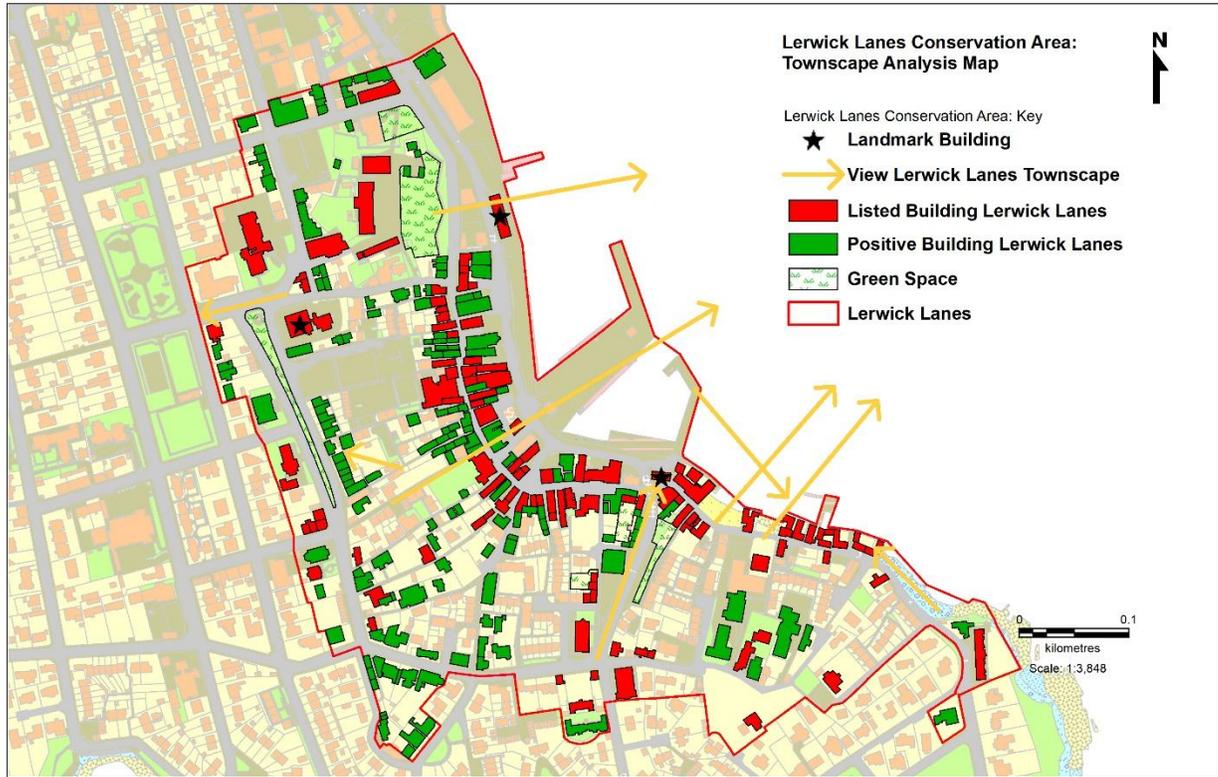


OS Map 1901



OS Map 1930

Townscape Analysis Map Note: The mapping of positive buildings is not exhaustive and other buildings, spaces and structures may make a positive contribution



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4 Character and Appearance

4.1 Spatial Analysis

4.1.1 Activities/Uses

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

From the narrow winding Commercial Street to the waterfront, building use is generally commercial and retail. Upper floors appear to be somewhat underused, although many are in residential use. A detailed survey of vacancy may prove useful in identifying potential enhancement opportunities through fuller use of buildings. The dense lanes are more predominantly residential. In the south end of Commercial Street, retail and commercial use of buildings is declining. This change of use must be managed carefully to ensure that the character of this part of the conservation area is not eroded. Public buildings such as the library, churches and the Town Hall and larger stone villas are generally found along Hillhead, on the edge of the New Town.



View across the harbour to Victoria Pier

The waterfront area accommodates many of the more functional uses such as the ferry terminal and the harbour as well as spaces where public assembly occurs both informally and as event spaces.

4.1.2 Street pattern

Commercial Street forms the historic core of the conservation area, in places narrow and winding, and opening out to greet larger buildings such as banks and the post office, and at the Market Cross. Narrow flagged lanes to the west rise steeply; whilst lanes and closes on the right offer glimpses of the waterfront. Commercial Street was the first street in the town, as houses were laid out along the waterfront. Dr Edmonston's account of the town in 1809 [see Section 3] notes that there were houses on both sides of the street, with the buildings on the seaward side projecting into the sea. These would have been the lodberries that provided each merchant with his own little pier and store.



Looking towards King Harald Street from Hillhead

Running approximately parallel to Commercial Street is the Esplanade, which was constructed in 1886 using reclaimed land and changed Lerwick's waterfront almost beyond recognition. Since that time the lodberries, which were once on the shoreline, have stood on dry land.

The southern part of Commercial Street opens out into the greatly enlarged Church Lane. There has been much 20th century housing development in this area, which has generally retained the historic pattern of the lanes.

Hillhead is built at two levels, separated by a well-tended grassy bank and marks the edge of the historic core and the beginning of Lerwick's New Town.

To the north the streets become more regularly laid out. Charlotte Street runs immediately south of Fort Charlotte, and despite its name retains the feeling of a lane. Market Street, once known as Whiskey Lane heads north from the junction of Charlotte Street and Hillhead past Fort Charlotte. Harbour Street runs east-west between the Esplanade and St Olaf Street in the New Town.

4.1.3 Plot pattern

The plots within the conservation area vary in size and shape depending on the area and the relative status of the house concerned. In the lanes area where development is dense, the plot sizes are fairly small. Early merchants' houses in Lerwick were built on the waterfront with gable ends towards the water and long narrow plots the width of the gable stretching out behind them. It appears that these plots were then built on gradually as the town developed, while the narrow gaps between them emerged as the lanes we see today. On the fringes of the lanes and around the Hillhead area, where more substantial stone villas are found, plot sizes increase correspondingly. Larger plots are associated with the larger properties, such as Annsbrae House or where the land is used for public buildings such as the Town Hall or the churches.



Densely packed development within the Lanes

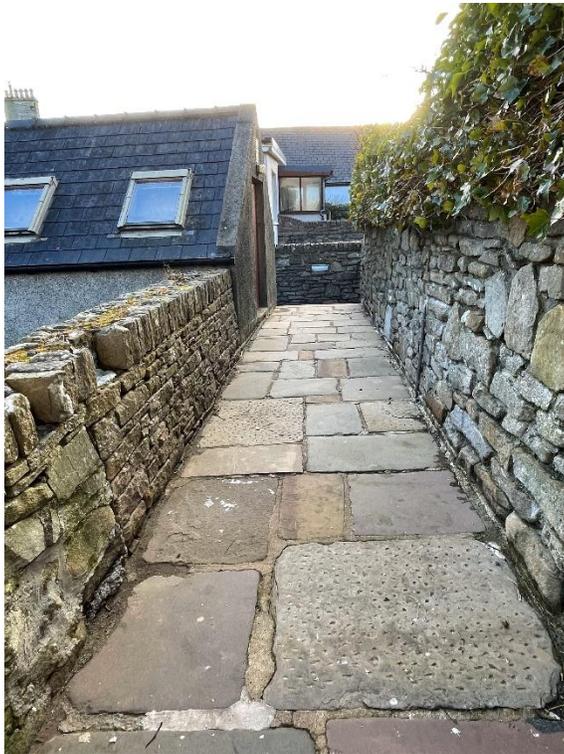
Modern infill has mostly been on the existing pattern either as a result of demolition or plot subdivision. A significant amount of development was carried out in the 1950s-70s when parts of the lanes area were redeveloped for housing. This housing works with the existing street

pattern, retaining the lanes as pedestrian routes through the area, while small common green areas are inserted.

4.1.4 Circulation and permeability

Commercial Street was historically the main thoroughfare through the town. It is now largely pedestrian as its winding and narrow character is not suited to modern traffic levels. The Esplanade, built on reclaimed land in 1886, is now the primary vehicular route through the conservation area. The wider roads such as Church Road and Hillhead also carry significant levels of traffic.

Commercial Street therefore is a pedestrian area more suited to the shopping activity generated in this area. There is no vehicular access to the lanes and the network of pathways and steep lanes invites pedestrian exploration. There are some cross lanes that connect adjacent lanes allowing further permeability. The lanes leading from Commercial Street to the Esplanade provide glimpses of the waterfront and allow easy pedestrian movement between these two main streets.



The network of pathways and lanes invites pedestrian exploration

The 20th century housing developments have retained the existing lanes, although the distinction between public and private space is not well defined in places.

4.1.5 Open spaces, trees and landscape

Most of the public open spaces within the conservation area are located along the Esplanade including Victoria Pier, Harrison Square and areas of seating facing the small boat harbour. This area hosts many of the public events which take place in Lerwick. Away from the Esplanade the densely developed nature of the conservation area means there is very little public open space.



Trees in private gardens

Some of the larger properties, particularly along Hillhead, have generous and mature gardens and the streets are wide, giving a feeling of open space. Otherwise, Commercial Street has a sense of enclosure, due to its narrowness and the small scale of any breaks in the buildings lining it. The mid 20th century housing developments between Hillhead and Church Road have small communal green spaces inserted into the pattern of lanes.

Shetland's lack of trees is well known and the majority within the conservation area are found on private land such as gardens. This is particularly the case around the Hillhead and Greenfield Place area where plot sizes are generally larger. Trees within the conservation area are

protected and require consent before any lopping or felling can take place. Tree Preservation Orders give additional protection to significant trees. There are presently no Tree Protection Orders in place within the conservation area however further details can be found at [tree-preservation-orders-shetland](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/tree-preservation-orders-shetland).

The appearance of a number of the small areas of open space has been improved since the appraisal was originally carried out however there are still areas which would benefit from clearing and landscaping improvements.



Area of open space in 2010 (left) and 2024 (right)

4.1.6 Views, landmarks and focal points

Views within the conservation area are varied, and make a significant contribution to its character and appearance. The harbour setting provides expansive views over the Bressay Sound towards landmark buildings on the island of Bressay. The high points provide good views from the lanes towards the waterfront and over the Bressay Sound. This higher ground also allows views of the roofscape of the lanes and Commercial Street. Within the lanes area views are more enclosed, framed by buildings and in places opening to give wider views. Level changes within the conservation area also allow for glimpses between buildings to areas of higher or lower ground and water.



View towards Bressay from Fort Charlotte

Views of special note are:

- Views from the waterfront over the Bressay Sound;
- Views over the lodberries and harbour from South Commercial Street above Leog Beach;
- Views from Fort Charlotte over the town;
- Views looking back at the town from Victoria Pier / Bressay Sound
- Glimpses between buildings and over changes in level in the lanes;
- Glimpsed views of the sea, framed between buildings
- Views of the New Town from Hillhead and Charlotte Street;
- The view of the Tolbooth terminating Church Road.

Landmark buildings in the conservation area tend to be the larger non-domestic buildings such as the churches, the Tollbooth, the Post Office, Fort Charlotte, the Town Hall, Bank of Scotland, the Grand Hotel and the Queen's Hotel. The Lodberrie has also attained landmark status following its new-found fame on screen.



Glimpsed view between buildings

4.2 Buildings and Townscape

4.2.1 Building types

Buildings range from 1 storey to 3 storeys bordering Commercial Street. The building pattern in the lanes and Commercial Street is very dense, while along Hillhead, buildings are generally larger and set in generous plots. There is a strong vertical emphasis as buildings were designed to make the most of smaller, narrow plots. The Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area has many 18th century buildings, dating from the period when Lerwick was expanding quickly into a prosperous trading centre. Commercial Street and the lanes also contain many 19th and early 20th century buildings that may have replaced earlier structures. An analysis of the approximate period of construction for buildings within the conservation can be found on the Building Analysis Map.



Looking towards Market Cross

Commercial Street and the Esplanade are the focus for most of the retail and commercial activity with shops, banks and cafes. Some of these buildings would once have been merchant's residences built directly on the waterfront.

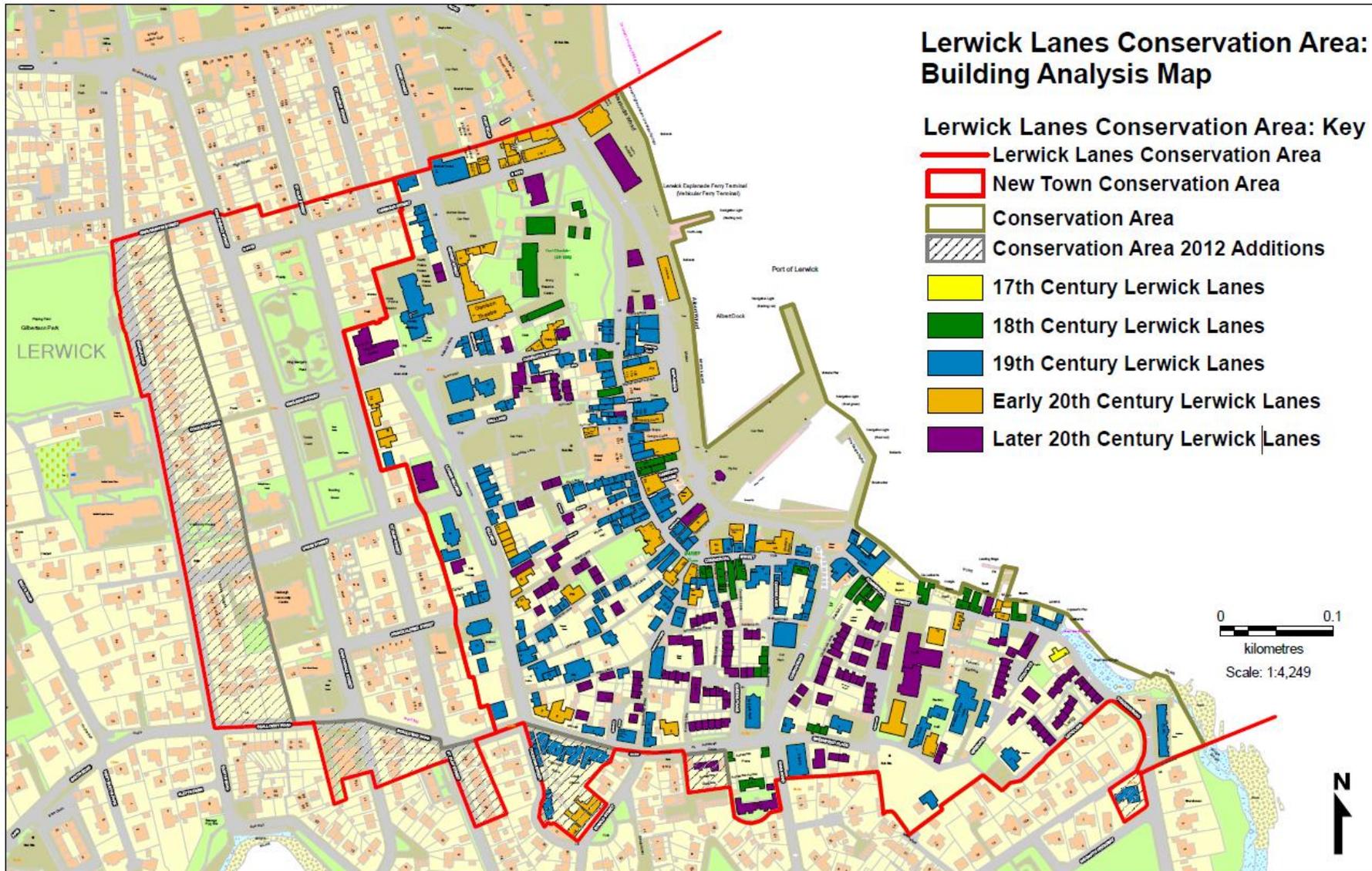
Many of the larger public buildings such as churches, the Town Hall and the County Buildings are found along the fringes of the conservation area, where development is less dense and plots are larger to allow for these grander buildings.

4.2.2 Scheduled monuments and archaeology

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. Fort Charlotte is the only designated Scheduled Monument within the conservation area. The area scheduled encompasses the area within the walls of the Fort, the walls themselves, and an area extending 2 metres in front of the walls on all sides.

Once a monument is scheduled, the prior written consent of Scottish Ministers is required for most works, including repairs. This is called scheduled monument consent (SMC). The presumption of scheduling is that any future works will be the minimum necessary consistent with the preservation of the monument.

Non-designated archaeological sites are recorded through the Shetland Sites and Monuments Record. These can be viewed through PastMap ([Welcome to Pastmap | Pastmap](#)).



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4.2.3 Key buildings

Significant listed buildings include:

'The Lodberrie', which was built in the late 18th century. It was formerly known as Robertson's Lodberry, after Bailie John Robertson who was joint agent with Charles Merrylees for the North of Scotland and Orkney and Shetland Steam Navigation Company, who owned the neighbouring

Although the (then ruinous) former shop to Commercial Street was rebuilt circa 1950 and there have been some minor changes to the fenestration, this complex remains a remarkably intact example of the commercial and domestic development of a lodberrie, which has led to it being listed at category A. The walls are of random rubble and the buildings are generally 2 storeys enclosing a small flagged courtyard. The Lodberrie is most famous for the picturesque quality of the grouping, and as such is reputed to be one of the most photographed buildings in Shetland.



The Lodberrie

The Old Manse is the oldest inhabited building in the conservation area. Built in 1690 and now B-listed it was purchased by the Heritors of the town from Mr Dick of Wornadale, to house the first minister, Mr Milne. His successor, Mr Waldie, bought the house from the Heritors who rented different houses for successive ministers pending the building of a new manse. The building is near symmetrical with 2 storeys and 3 bays. The

front elevation is random rubble with a central porch of circa 1900 and harled side and rear elevations.



The Old Manse

The Tolbooth was built circa 1767-70 on the site of a 17th century predecessor. The building is 2 storeys and 5 bays on a rectangular plan. The walls are harled with sandstone detailing. The building was restored in 2005 and the original clock tower reinstated. The Tolbooth served as Lerwick's Post Office from 1878 until 1910.

The Town Hall (B listed) was built in 1881-3 shortly after the new town was begun, illustrating the new corporate spirit of the burgh in the later 19th century. Before it opened, public meetings were held in a disused church, and Magistrates' Court and Town Council meetings in a room of the old Parish Kirk. The hall is a 2-storey, 5-bay symmetrical Gothic and Flemish Baronial town hall, with a square tower to the rear with flanking 2-storey gabled wings giving a square plan. The walls are built from Bressay stone with Eday sandstone ashlar dressings and details. It sits on the junction of Hillhead and Charlotte Street near the War memorial and really marks the boundary between the dense historic core of Lerwick and the spacious New Town.



The Town Hall

The Peerie Shop was built around 1735 as a storehouse on Grieg's Pier, or lodberry, which was originally on the waterfront until the esplanade was built in 1886. It was the lodberry of James Greig, merchant, and was also where Thomas Stove had his block making establishment. It is a rare survivor amongst the dense development built following construction of the Esplanade in 1886. The building is C listed and takes the form of a long single storey and attic, 7-bay rectangular building with gable to the street and closes to either side. The walls are of random rubble with sandstone dressings.

99 Commercial Street was built in the 18th century. It has 2 storeys and an attic and presents a 2 bay gable to Commercial Street with a 6 bay elevation to Gardie Lane. The walls are harl-pointed rubble with some cement rendering. A moulded doorway is stranded high up on the north elevation since the forestair has been lost. To Commercial Street there is a traditional painted shopfront at ground floor. The RCAHMS description of 18th March 1935 records; "Although unlikely to have been built until the second decade of the 18th century, this large tenement standing end-on to the W side of the street seems to be the oldest house in the burgh. The gable towards the street has been refaced, probably at the time when a shop with large windows to the east and north was formed within. On the north, a forestair with a good moulded cope and panelled pedestal, the latter ending in a spherical finial, rises from the street to a landing at 1st floor level, whence it is continued downward to a back court. From the landing, a central doorway gives access to the interior. The cornice and architrave of the doorway are moulded, the frieze being enriched with

flutes. The house has been modernised internally, but still contains some late Georgian panelling". The list description describes this building as the most interesting of its period in this part of Commercial Street.

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 as 'positive buildings' on the Townscape Appraisal Map.

Buildings identified as being positive will vary, but commonly their style, detailing and building materials provide the street or landscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. National and local policy guidance states that there is a presumption for the retention of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area.

No.179 Commercial Street is the central section of a 5 bay, 3 ½ storey terrace. The ground floor consists of retail premises, presumably with offices and residential space in the upper floors. The terrace was built between 1880 and 1900. The shopfront at No.179 is traditional in style with a central 2-leaf panelled storm door with fanlight and flanking windows. Over the door and windows is a painted sign for Smith & Robertson.

No.8 Claremont Place is typical of the larger stone dwellings found along Hillhead at the edge of the new town. The property was built in the early 20th century in rubble walling with stone dressings to the windows and doors. The building is set back from the roadside slightly behind a low stone boundary wall with black iron railings. The elevation onto Claremont Place has 3 bays and 2 storeys and an attic. The central door is flanked by paired sash windows and the slated roof features a central dormer window. The building turns the corner onto Hillhead where there is a 2-storey canted bay window and a further dormer window above. The building is currently in use as a guest house.

Gladstone Terrace, on Hillhead is a short row of 5 houses set slightly back from the road. Each house has two bays with paired sash windows on ground and first floor to one side and a door with single sash window above to the other side. The houses are very simple with snecked stone walling and chamfered detailing around the windows and door. Each house features a dormer window set in the pitched slate roof, and benefits from a small front garden with a boundary wall and railings to the road.

No.14 Reform Lane is a 19th century domestic building situated towards the top (western) end of Reform Lane (previously Gilbert Tait's Closs). It is typical of many of the buildings found in the lanes, demonstrating the traditional gable-to-harbour pattern of this area. The 3-bay house has 2 storeys and a 1metre high stone boundary wall separating it from the lane. The walls are of harl-pointed rubble and it has a pitched slate roof and a one-storey lean-to on the western gable.

4.2.4 Materials and local details

In Lerwick Lanes the most prevalent materials are buff-grey and yellow sandstone, harl, and natural slate. Traditionally, roofs are pitched and slated with dominant gables presented to the street. This focus on the gable-end gives the buildings a strong vertical emphasis. The roof pitches are generally around 45° with skews and prominent chimneys.

For walls buff sandstone is most popular, otherwise a traditional harl is often used, sometimes with window and door detailing. Walls are generally of rubble construction often with slaister (harl) pointed joints. The more prestigious buildings may feature coursed ashlar walling but stonework is most often irregularly coursed, known as snecked walling. Generally, applied colours within the conservation area are muted pastels or white, except on Commercial Street where some properties are painted very rich, bright colours.



Stone walls and flagstone surfaces on Pitt Lane

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 house. Windows are generally timber sash and case, vertically proportioned with a range of glazing patterns. Many windows have been replaced with top opening casements which do not replicate the traditional form or appearance of sash and case windows.

Doors within the conservation area are generally timber 6 panel doors or timber boarded doors in the lanes. The door styles found on Commercial St tend to relate to the building use, and timber doors with panes of glass are commonly found on commercial properties. The more substantial properties around the Hillhead area often have double timber storm doors, generally with 6 or 8 panels.

While removal of permitted development rights has helped to ensure that replacement features are generally 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 cost-effective ways and so replacement should always be a last resort.

Traditional shopfronts in the conservation area vary but the oldest shops have a domestic appearance, with a central door and flanking windows or just one window. Later properties will have a door flanked by much larger windows. Modern designs are rather formless with large areas of glazing and minimal framing and detailing.



Traditional shopfronts on Commercial Street

Traditional signage in the conservation area is a flat timber sign with painted lettering above the door or windows or painted directly onto a stone or rendered fascia. Several of the commercial properties along Commercial Street feature a decorative tiled floor in the doorway.

Boundaries are usually marked by stone or harled walls from ½m - 2m high. Along Hillhead walls are often combined with railings and stone gate piers. Railings are usually simple and elegant and painted a dark colour, often with iron gates. Shetland was largely spared from the removal of iron railings during World War II and there are some fine examples in Lerwick. Higher boundary walls are found to the higher status properties.

4.2.5 Public realm

The public realm in Lerwick varies greatly between areas. Commercial Street was re-flagged with Caithness stone as part of a Heritage Lottery Funded project in 1999 and the stone slabs complement the historic buildings. In places stone slabs have been replaced with areas of tarmac where works have been carried out, detracting significantly from the otherwise high quality public environment. Street lighting on Commercial Street is via traditionally styled iron hanging lamps fixed to the buildings.

Within the lanes, the public realm varies in quality. Stone slabs are found in many of the lanes with stone steps and metal handrails, which suit the intimate character here. However, in others, the ground surfaces are of lower quality and appear neglected. Lighting in the lanes is provided by traditional lamps fixed to the walls of the buildings, although there are a few modern 'security' type lights and a few free-standing street lights.



Public realm within the conservation area is generally high quality

In contrast, along the Esplanade, the character is much more functional and relates to the harbour uses. Here the road and pavement surfaces are generally simple tarmac and concrete. Metal bollards and low chunky metal railings reflect the marine character and the larger scale of this generally high quality area. Lighting along the Esplanade comes from very tall modern street lights – again reflecting the increase in scale along the waterfront.

Hillhead has areas of stone pavement slabs that complement the historic buildings. Low stone boundary walls are a particular feature in this area, often with railings and gate piers. Lighting is provided by standard unobtrusive modern streetlights, reflecting the more suburban character here.

Street name signs are generally traditional with raised black lettering on a white background. They often note the previous names of streets or lanes, adding another level of interest.

4.2.6 Condition

One of the greatest threats to any heritage site is the loss of historic materials 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 number of cases of stone erosion were noted due to the use of cement mortars and renders in the saline environment of the harbour. This type of damage can lead to more serious problems in the future and is best dealt with early.

A significant threat to the historic fabric is inappropriate modern details and materials, such as replacement windows, doors and boundaries. During the review process it was noted that signs of lack of maintenance, particularly vegetation growth in gutters and chimneys, have increased significantly.

4.3 Character Areas

An analysis of the Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area indicated that it can be divided into six character areas, roughly according to historical development; street pattern and layout; built form; and uses and activities.

These are:

1. Waterfront/harbour area
2. Commercial Street

3. The Lanes
4. Hillhead
5. Fort Charlotte

It should be noted that the boundaries between these areas are blurred, as the buildings close to the boundaries may contribute to the character of more than one character area.

4.3.1 Character Area 1: Waterfront

Description: This area extends from the northern edge of the conservation area to the breakwater and forms the eastern boundary of the conservation area. The area consists of the piers, waterfront and buildings facing the waterfront.

The character of this area is very much connected to the functional aspects of this area such as the ferry terminal and the harbour but also includes shops, businesses and public realm. There are spaces where public assembly occurs both informally and as event spaces. Typical materials include corrugated metal cladding, stone, concrete surfaces and metal bollards.



The Albert Building



Victoria Pier

The main route through the waterfront is the Esplanade, which has open views over Bressay Sound. The historic buildings lining the eastern side of Commercial Street form the western boundary of the character area and this part of the conservation area has accommodated some successful contemporary interventions such as the new Lloyds TSB bank.

A number of the historic buildings on the western side of the Esplanade are lodberries that would once have stood on the water's edge until the waterfront was reclaimed in the late 19th century. These buildings also mark the transition between the more open spaces of the Waterfront character area and the more tightly packed streets and lanes behind.

Key features/Assessment of Significance

- Setting of the harbour – busy with fishing boats, ferry terminal, cruise ships in summer;
- Larger individual buildings set on the roadside in north of area
- More tightly packed buildings towards south;
- Mix of architectural styles and materials
- Public realm materials and design of varying quality, stone flag paving is distinctive and unifying feature
- Railings and seating at Victoria Pier are a positive feature
- Use of corrugated metal, stone and some render;
- Brighter colours than in Commercial Street;
- The B-listed Albert Building is a landmark;
- Glimpses up the lanes towards Commercial Street;
- Views over Bressay Sound.

Negative Features/Opportunities for Enhancement

- Public realm potential for improvement and more cohesive approach
- Lack of building maintenance
- Although signage generally sympathetic some potential for improvement.

4.3.2 Character Area 2: Commercial Street

Commercial Street is the historic core of the conservation area and is the main shopping street in Lerwick. This character area curves from the south-east corner of Fort Charlotte to Copland's Pier at the south-west of the conservation area. Commercial Street is lined by buildings with narrow frontages presenting a gable to the street and extending into the lanes behind. The street is narrow and is unsuitable for modern traffic levels. The buildings contain a great variety of shopfronts but Commercial Street has retained much of its character despite changes in commercial practices. Some 18th and early 19th century shopfronts, which have a more domestic character, still exist and make a significant contribution to the character of the area. The street is generally paved with stone or concrete flags. The buildings on the western side of the road provide shelter while allowing glimpses of the waterfront down the narrow lanes.



Commercial Street



South Commercial Street

At the south end of Commercial Street, commercial use is declining and the area feels more tranquil and residential. Here there are areas where the beach is just beyond the sea wall and the street feels more exposed to the elements. In some places the sea is directly accessible from the street down the historic slipways.

Key Features / Assessment of Significance

- Narrow pedestrianised shopping street. Ground floors generally in retail use with residential above (some evidence of underuse on upper levels);
- Gable ends face onto street with stone buildings extending back along the lanes;
- Network of lanes running perpendicular to the street;
- Stone, render, slate, timber windows and doors;
- Some traditional shopfronts;
- Local details such as tiled floors in doorways;
- Vertical emphasis to the buildings;
- Unique lodberry building types form a picturesque waterfront at the south end.

Negative Features/Opportunities for Enhancement

- Some modern and bland shopfront design and signage;
- Loss of vitality/ commercial viability;
- Underused upper floors;
- Public realm –stone flags replaced with tarmac
- Building maintenance issues;

- Small-scale, incremental change – replacement windows, doors, re-pointing, satellite dishes.

4.3.3 Character Area 3: The Lanes

Commercial Street is the historic core of the conservation area and is the main shopping street in Lerwick. This character area curves from the south-east corner of Fort Charlotte to Copland's Pier at the south-west of the conservation area. Commercial Street is lined by buildings with narrow frontages presenting a gable to the street and extending into the lanes behind. The street is narrow and is unsuitable for modern traffic levels. The buildings contain a great variety of shopfronts but Commercial Street has retained much of its character despite changes in commercial practices. Some 18th and early 19th century shopfronts, which have a more domestic character, still exist and make a significant contribution to the character of the area. The street is generally paved with stone or concrete flags. The buildings on the western side of the road provide shelter while allowing glimpses of the waterfront down the narrow lanes.



Pitt Lane and Park Lane

Key Features / Assessment of Significance

- Narrow pedestrianised shopping street. Ground floors generally in retail use with residential above (some evidence of underuse on upper levels);
- Gable ends face onto street with stone buildings extending back along the lanes;
- Network of lanes running perpendicular to the street;
- Stone, render, slate, timber windows and doors;
- Some traditional shopfronts;
- Local details such as tiled floors in doorways;

- Vertical emphasis to the buildings;
- Unique lodberry building types form a picturesque waterfront at the south end.

Negative Features/Opportunities for Enhancement

- Some modern and bland shopfront design and signage;
- Loss of vitality/ commercial viability;
- Underused upper floors;
- Public realm –stone flags replaced with tarmac
- Building maintenance issues;
- Small-scale, incremental change – replacement windows, doors, re-pointing.

4.3.4 Character Area 4: Hillhead

Hillhead is built at two levels, separated by a well-tended grassy bank. The houses on the upper level are medium-sized dwellings with small gardens, whilst those lower down are larger. The gothic St. Ringan’s Church, on the lower level of Hillhead, was built in 1885 by R.G.G Sykes, a Liverpool architect. The majority of buildings are of stone with grey slate roofs. Towards the War Memorial, the view is terminated by the many gabled façade of the Gothic County Buildings. To the south Hillhead turns to the east towards Annsbrae House and Greenfield Place. Here we find further medium sized stone villas and several churches.



Private houses and public buildings on Hillhead

Key Features / Assessment of Significance

- Edge of the New Town where plot and house sizes increase;
- Predominantly stone villas featuring bay windows, sash windows and traditional storm doors;
- More public buildings in this area – such as churches and the Town Hall. Representing the new civic spirit which leads to the building of the New Town;
- Wider airy streets contrast with the narrowness and density of the historic lanes;
- Good views north along Hillhead towards War Memorial;
- Stone, slate, timber window/doors.

Negative Features/Opportunities for Enhancement

- Small domestic developments e.g. Garages in gardens;
- Building maintenance issues;
- Small-scale, incremental change – replacement windows, doors, re-pointing, satellite dishes.

4.3.5 Character Area 5: Fort Charlotte

Fort Charlotte is a roughly pentagonal enclosure with bastions at the corners. The entrances (the main one being in Harbour Street) are round-arched. From the pleasant grassed area inside the Fort there is a wide view of the harbour, the Sound and Bressay. The Fort was completed in 1781 and named after the wife of George III, Queen Charlotte. Although Market Street leads past the Fort there is little evidence of its close proximity other than a high stone wall glimpsed between buildings. These buildings are of stone, although few are seen to their full advantage as most are rendered. Charlotte Street is narrower and has the feeling of a lane. Again, buildings obscure the Fort except where a grassy path leads to one of the arched gateways to the Fort complex. From Commercial Street the Fort is dominant, set high on a rocky bank with an almost open aspect towards the waterfront.



Fort Charlotte entrance from Harbour The Garrison Theatre

Street

Key Features/Assessment of Significance

- The Fort structure dominates the area to the east but with smaller buildings clustered around the western side disguising its form;
- Streets are regularly laid out around the edges;
- Buildings are generally set on the roadside;
- Historic buildings within the Fort Complex.

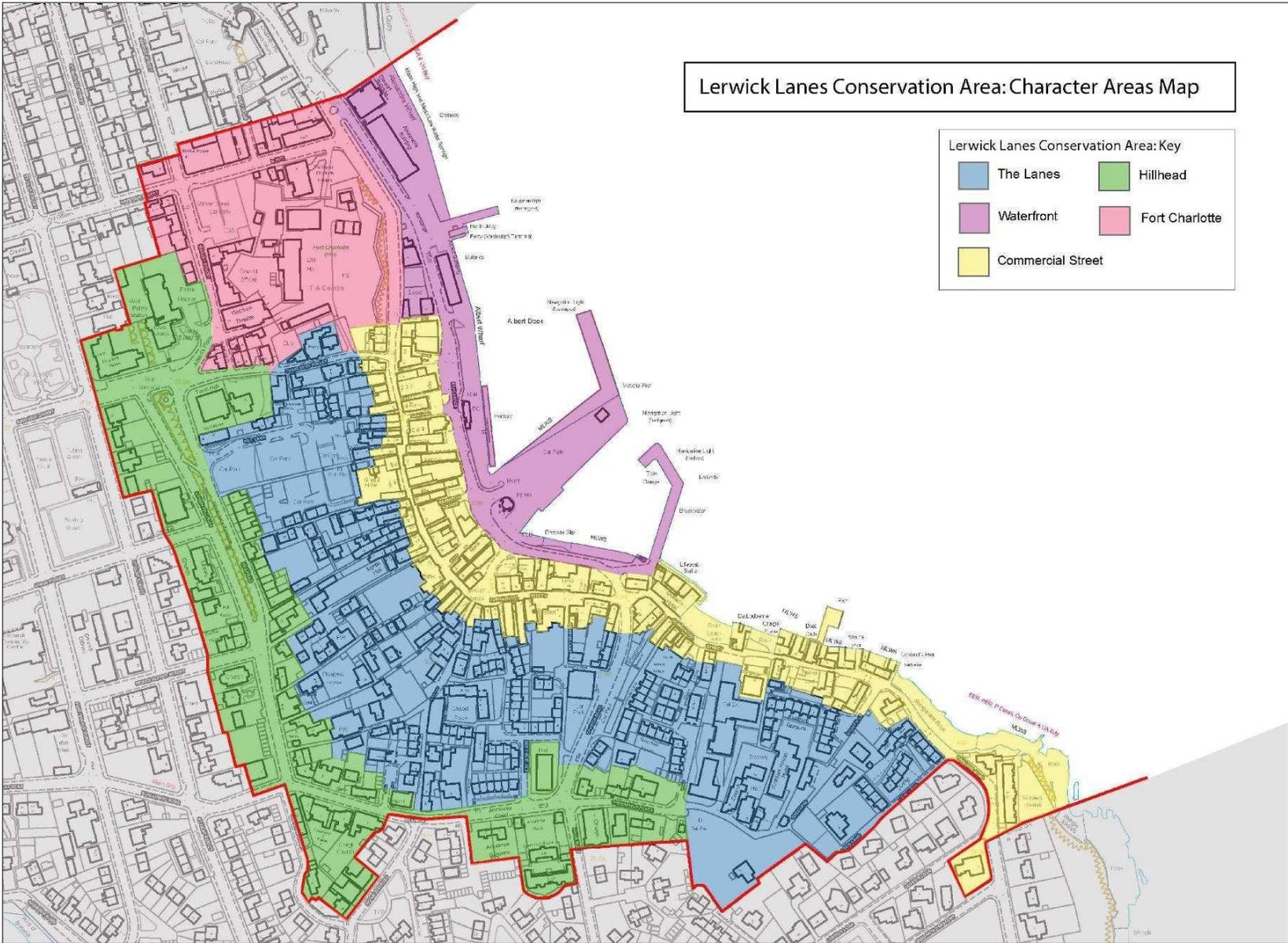
Negative Features/Opportunities for Enhancement

- Fort Charlotte can feel underused and slightly isolated from the rest of the town centre.

Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area: Character Areas Map

Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area: Key

	The Lanes		Hillhead
	Waterfront		Fort Charlotte
	Commercial Street		



5 Sensitivity analysis

5.1 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, cumulatively, can dilute the special character of the area. 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 boundary treatments or the painting of walls have adversely affected some of the buildings in the conservation area.

In many cases, these changes in detailing and the window replacements do not match the traditional glazing of a building and the local streetscape. Some buildings were identified which had suffered from stone erosion due to the use of impervious cement mortars and renders. In such a saline environment this can cause serious damage to the historic fabric of a building.



Original and carefully designed replacement windows, doors and railings contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation areas

Building maintenance

Lack of maintenance has become a more significant issue in recent years. Vegetation growth in gutters is a noticeable problem throughout the conservation area. This is causing guttering to overflow and water ingress to buildings. Many buildings require re-pointing, particularly around chimneys and wallheads. Where re-pointing has been carried out a cement mortar has often been used and applied across the face of the stone. As a result of this

stone is decaying at an accelerated rate due to water being forced into the softer stone by the impermeable mortar.

5.2 Quality of public realm

The poor quality of pavement and road surfaces, in particular the replacement of flagstones with tarmac, and boundaries in some places has a negative effect on the character of the conservation area. This is an area full of character and it is vital to ensure that public works do not detract from the otherwise high quality historic environment.

5.3 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, small extensions are common in the lanes area and where more recent developments have occurred they are not always sympathetic to traditional local details, which have provided the group value of the conservation area, in terms of their materials, proportions or general character.

Much of the mid 20th century infill architecture in the lanes area is beginning to look tired and this housing stock may need to be replaced or updated in the future. The regeneration and redevelopment of these properties will be a major issue for conservation area management in coming years.

5.4 Loss of traditional shopfronts

Shetland Islands Council has made great efforts to prevent the loss of traditional shopfronts and avoid an influx of standard modern designs. Good shopfront examples remain on Commercial Street and should be protected. In general the quality of signage and shopfronts is good and details reflect the traditional character and appearance of buildings. However there are instances of inappropriate modern shopfront designs and signage that do not reflect the character of the conservation area. At the south end of Commercial Street, the general character has moved from a commercial and retail environment to a predominantly residential area. If this trend towards change of use continues then further traditional shopfronts may be lost.



Signage and shopfronts within the conservation area are generally of a high standard

5.5 Loss of town centre vitality

Lerwick has suffered from a decline in retail use of the town centre. The south end of Commercial Street has seen a particular increase in change of use from retail/ commercial to residential. This decrease in retail activity could result in buildings being neglected or left empty if there is little demand for retail space within the town centre. Continued change of use from retail could lead to the loss of traditional features and shopfronts.

6 Opportunities for preservation and enhancement

6.1 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 was served in 1975. The types of work that are controlled include alterations to a dwelling, such as new windows and front doors, porches, front boundaries and painting are all controlled because planning permission is needed. These additional controls appear to be working reasonably well but there are examples of poor quality detailing and inappropriate replacement windows.

Recent changes to the GPDO have introduced new permitted development rights in conservation areas, allowing changes of materials and of windows and doors and installation of PhotoVoltaic panels in certain circumstances. In light of the negative impact on the conservation area arising from changes to unlisted buildings set out above, a new Article 4 Direction should be prepared and adopted.

Further detailed guidance on the existing character of the area, how this might be affected by cumulative change and possible appropriate design solutions should be prepared and adopted. Photographic surveys of the Conservation Area were undertaken in 2002 (shop-fronts only), 2006 and 2023/24. This work should be continued at regular intervals and as resources allow to enable enforcement, and to assess the rate of cumulative change in the conservation area.

6.2 Area of Special Advertisement Control

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (s183) gives power to make different advertising regulations for different areas, and in particular make special provision for conservation areas, areas of special control, rural areas and areas requiring special protection on the grounds of amenity.

As set out above the quality of advertisements and signage within the conservation area is generally good. However there are examples where signage and advertisements are not in keeping with the character and appearance of the conservation area. Consideration should therefore be given to introducing an Area of Special Advertisement Control to ensure that the design, materials and appearance of signage and advertisements within the conservation area is in keeping with its character and appearance.

Further detailed guidance on shopfront and advertisement design should be prepared and adopted.

6.3 Demolition of unlisted buildings

In conservation areas, demolition of unlisted buildings is controlled, in recognition of the contribution made by even relatively minor buildings to the overall character or appearance of a conservation area. Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any building of more than 115 cubic metres in size within a conservation area.

Policy 7 of NPF4 states that demolition of buildings in a conservation area which make a positive contribution to its character will only be supported where it has been demonstrated that: i. reasonable efforts have been made to retain, repair and reuse the building; ii. the building is of little townscape value; iii. the structural condition of the building prevents its retention at a reasonable cost; or iv. the form or location of the building makes its reuse extremely difficult. This is in line with Policy HE3 of the SLDP (2014) which requires that 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.

As part of the appraisal process, buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area have been identified and mapped. However the contribution of a building will also be assessed as part of the planning process when an application is submitted.

6.4 Building maintenance and 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 review process has identified deterioration in maintenance and repair which is having a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Detailed guidance on the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings is widely available however consideration should be given to the preparation of specific guidance documents. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of financial assistance through grant funding and to developing traditional building repair skills.

The Council can also advise on appropriate paint colours and types. Where buildings in the Commercial Street area have been painted very bright, strong colours a more appropriate approach may be to use stronger colours as an accent to highlight windows and doors and other woodwork. Stonework that is unpainted should remain so. Traditional limewash and lime mortars are ideal as they allow the wall below to “breathe”, rather than sealing-in any moisture and provide a flexible finish that expands and contracts with changes in temperature and humidity.

6.5 Buildings at Risk

Several buildings within the Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area 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.

Historic Environment Scotland maintains the Buildings at Risk register, a list of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas that are in a state of disrepair. This is regularly updated. 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.

6.6 Public realm enhancement

Works by the Roads department or by any of the statutory undertakers, can have a profound effect on a conservation area. The Council will endeavour to ensure that all such works are coordinated as far as possible

to minimise damage to the pavement surfaces and carried out to reflect the sensitive historic environment. The Council will continue to maintain and enhance the pavement surfaces within the lanes area.

6.7 Trees, Landscape and Biodiversity

National and local planning policy places strong importance on biodiversity protection and enhancement. Whilst the layout of buildings within the conservation area limits opportunities for planting there are still measures that can be taken to enhance the natural environment and these should be encouraged and required where possible.

Trees, including those within private gardens, should be maintained and managed as an important townscape asset, particularly due to their rarity in Shetland. New development should protect important trees, hedges and other established boundaries as well as enhancing biodiversity. The council should consider publishing specific guidance on preserving and enhancing biodiversity within the conservation area.

7 Monitoring, Review and Recommendations

Shetland Islands Council will aim to 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 Local Development Plan and government policy generally. Such 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 this document have been acted upon, and how successful they have 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.

The recommendations set out within the appraisal can be summarised as follows:

- A revised Article 4 Direction should be prepared and adopted.
- Consideration should be given to introducing an Area of Special Advertisement Control to ensure that the design, materials and appearance of signage and advertisements within the conservation area is in keeping with its character and appearance.
- Preparation and adoption of further detailed guidance on the impacts of cumulative change and appropriate design solutions.
- Photographic surveys should be carried out at regular intervals to enable planning enforcement and monitor change.
- Further detailed guidance on shopfront and advertisement design should be prepared and adopted.
- Consideration should also be given to the possibility of financial assistance through grant funding and to developing traditional building repair skills.
- 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.

- The Council will endeavour to ensure that works carried out by statutory undertakers, including the Roads department, are coordinated as far as possible to minimise damage to the pavement surfaces and carried out to reflect the sensitive historic environment. The Council will continue to maintain and enhance the pavement surfaces within the lanes area.
- Trees, including those within private gardens, should be maintained and managed as an important townscape asset, particularly due to their rarity in Shetland. New development should protect important trees, hedges and other established boundaries as well as enhancing biodiversity. The council should consider publishing specific guidance on preserving and enhancing biodiversity within the conservation area.

Appendix 1 - Further guidance

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

National Planning Framework 4

[National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

Shetland Local Development Plan (Adopted 2014)

[The Local Development Plan – Shetland Islands Council](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/media/1000000/2014-2018-Local-Development-Plan.pdf)

Historic Environment Policy For Scotland

[Historic Environment Policy for Scotland | Historic Environment Scotland](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/policy)

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

[Managing Change in the Historic Environment | HistEnvScot](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/guidance)

Advice on maintaining and making changes to traditional buildings, Historic
Scotland

[Your Property | Lead Public Body for Scotland's Historic Environment](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/your-property)

Appendix 2 - Listed Buildings

Address	Category of Listing
1 & 2 Aitkens Place	C
12 Charlotte Street, Lystina House including boundary walls, gates and gatepiers	C
26 Church Road including boundary walls	B
Commercial Road and Harbour St, Fort Charlotte	A
Commercial Street, 1 Hayfield Court including garden walls and railings	C
Commercial Street, Telephone Kiosk	B
9 Commercial St, The Old Manse, including boundary walls wash-house	B
25-29 Commercial Street (odd nos)	C
31 Commercial St, Quendale House including retaining, steps, boundary wall, railing, gatepiers and gate	B
41-43 Commercial Street (odd nos) Lochend House including courtyard, doorpiece, retaining and boundary walls	B
45 Commercial Street, Sea Winds	B
49 Commercial Street, Seafield House and 1-3 (odd nos) Chromate Lane	B
51-61 (odd nos) Commercial Street	C

67 Commercial Street and 1 Church Lane (formerly South Kirk Closs)	B
69-73 (odd nos) Commercial Street	C
81-87 (odd nos) Commercial St and 2 Queens Lane, Royal Bank of Scotland with boundary wall and gatepiers	B
93-95 (odd nos) Commercial Street	C
97 Commercial Street	B
99 Commercial Street	B
101 Commercial Street, and 1 & 2 Gardie Lane	B
103 & 105 Commercial Street including Hedde's Court	B
107 Commercial Street & 1 Mounthooly Street	C
109 Commercial Street & 2-4 (odd nos) Mounthooly Street	C
113 Commercial Street	C
115-117 (odd nos) Commercial Street, Bank of Scotland including railings and piers	B
143-151 (odd nos) Commercial Street, Grand Hotel	B
165 Commercial Street	C
167 Commercial Street	C

169-171 (odd nos) Commercial Street including gate and gatepiers	C
173 Commercial Street	C
175 Commercial Street including steps and handrail	C

2-8 (even nos) Commercial Street including sea wall Copeland's and Stout's Lodberries and piers	B
10 Commercial Street including Torrie's Lodberry and boundary wall	B
12 Commercial Street and Scarfataing including sea wall	C
14 Commercial Street, the sea door including Murray's Lodberry and MacBeath's Lodberry	B
18 Commercial Street, "Steamer Store"	B
20 Commercial Street, The Lodberrie including Bains Beach sea wall and steps, Craigie Stane Noost and sea wall	A
24-30 (even nos) Commercial Street, Queens Hotel and Church Lane, Lifeboat Station including sea walls	B
32 Commercial Street, Old Tollbooth	B
38-42 (even nos) Commercial Street	B

44-50 (even nos) Commercial Street, Lerwick Post Office with yard wall and gatepiers	B
52 Commercial Street with gatepiers	C
60-62 (even nos) Commercial Street, Anderson & Co	C
64 Commercial Street	C
66 Commercial Street	C
80-82 (even nos) Commercial Street	B
84 Commercial Street	B
86 Commercial Street	B
90-92 (even nos) Commercial Street	C
96 Commercial Street, Medical Hall	C
106 Commercial Street, Clydesdale Bank	C
116-126 (even nos) Commercial Street, Charlotte Place	B
Esplanade, Albert Building	B
Esplanade, Ellesmere Buildings	C
Esplanade & Irvine Place Harbour Master's Office, including yard wall	C
Esplanade, Leask's	C
Esplanade between Griegs Closs & Campbell's Closs, The Peerie Shop	C
1 Greenfield Place, St Columba'a Church (Church of	B

Scotland), including gates, retaining and boundary walls	
11 Greenfield Place, including boundary walls and gatepiers	C
2-4 (even nos) Greenfield Place	B
12-14 (even nos) Greenfield Place, St Magnus' Episcopal Church and Rectory, including boundary walls	B
1-7 (odd nos) Harbour Street, 1-3 (odd nos) Commercial Road, Brentham Place	B
Hillhead and Knab Road, Annsbrae House & 1 & 2 Annsbrae Place, including outbuildings, gates, gatepiers, boundary walls and railings	B
Hillhead & Charlotte Street, Lerwick Town Hall, including lamp standards, gatepiers, boundary walls and railings	B
Hillhead & King Erik Street, Lerwick War Memorial	B
Hillhead & Church Road, St Olaf's Hall (Formerly St Olaf's Church)	C
Hillhead, Wesley (Methodist) Manse, including outbuilding, boundary walls, railings and gatepiers	B

17 Hillhead, including boundary walls, railings and gatepiers	B
2 Hillhead, Gordon Cottage, including boundary walls and railings	B
4 Hillhead, including boundary walls and railings	C
King Erik Street & Market Street, Police Station, County Buildings, & Sheriff Courthouse (Formerly Zetland County Buildings), including boundary walls, gatepiers	B
4-8 (even nos) Law Lane	B
14 Law Lane, Windhouse, including retaining wall, boundary walls and outbuildings	B
2 Leog Lane, Leog House, including boundary walls and gatepiers	C
Lower Hillhead & Prince Alfred Street, 3-6 (inclusive no's) Carlton Place	C
Lower Hillhead and Union Street, St Ringan's Church (United Free Church of Scotland), including Church Hall, boundary walls and gatepiers	B
Market Cross	C
Market Street, Garrison Theatre	C
Prince Alfred Street, 1 & 2 Carlton Place, including boundary walls and gate	C

4-8 (even nos) Queen's Lane & 1 Queen's Place	C
1-12 (even nos) Twageos Road, Anderson Homes	C

