



Lerwick New Town Conservation Area

Character Appraisal (Reviewed 2024)



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.

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 (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:

- 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) 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

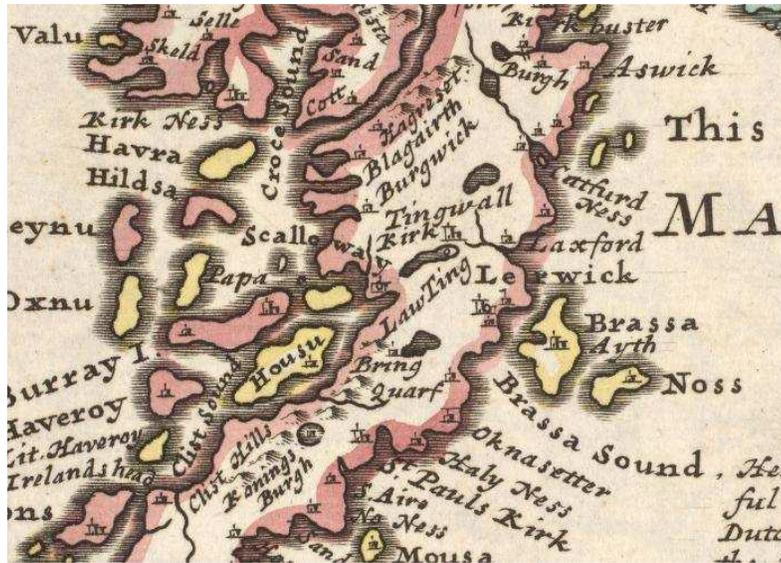
Town Conservation Area. This boundary line would benefit from some rationalisation to include buildings which were previously part of the Lerwick Lanes Conservation Area in the New Town Conservation Area, which is a better match for their character. The New Town Conservation Area was later extended to include the houses on the eastern side of Burgh Road and on the southern side of Scalloway Road.

2.2 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.

3 Historical Development



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

Lerwick's name comes from the Old Norse for muddy bay, Leirvick¹. 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 century². 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 Dutch³.

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 2000⁴.

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

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

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

³ 'Lerwick' leaflet, Shetland Amenity Trust, 1999.

⁴ 'Shetland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide', Mike Finnie, 1990,, p.8.

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.

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

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

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



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

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. *Photograph: 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; Islesburgh 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.

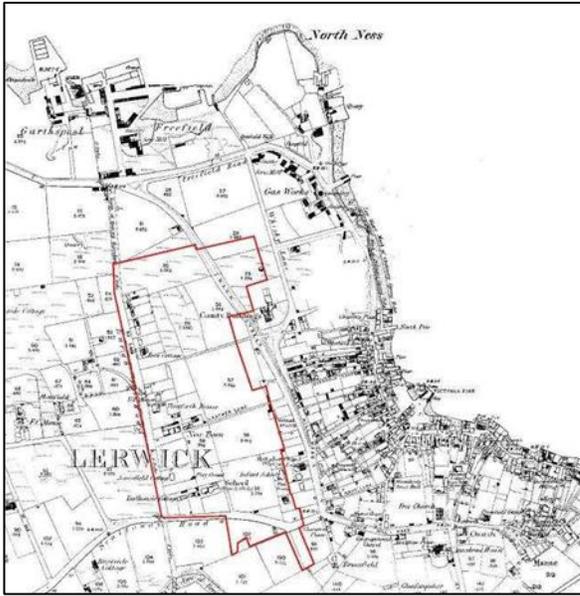


Looking west towards King Harald Street, Islesburgh House and Central School, c.1920s

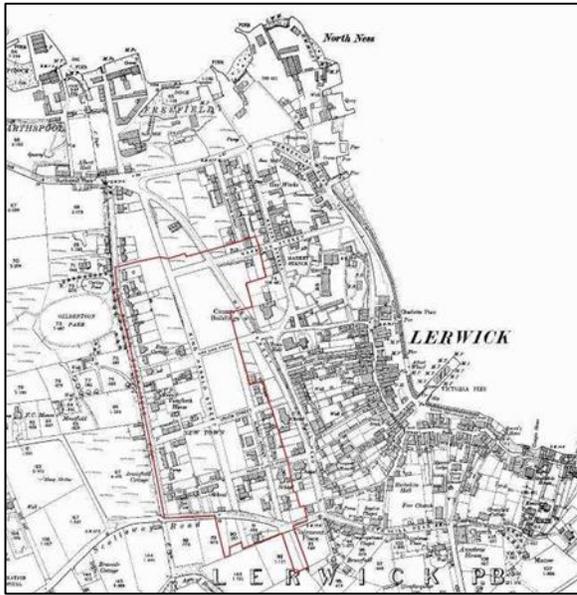


Town Hall and St. Olaf Street from King Harald Street, 1920s

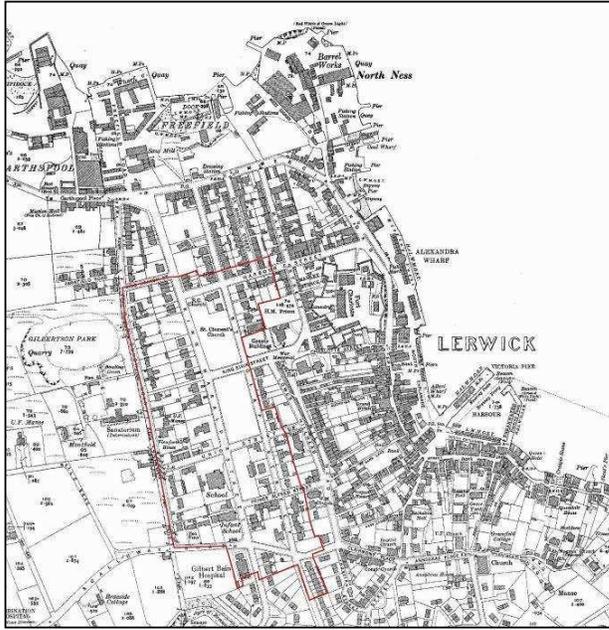
In 1930 [see OS Map 1930] we can see that the lower portion of the conservation area has now been built. The Old Gilbert Bain Hospital and the residential developments of Burgh Road, St Olaf Street and King Harald Street have been completed. The open area that becomes George V Playing Fields is still 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)

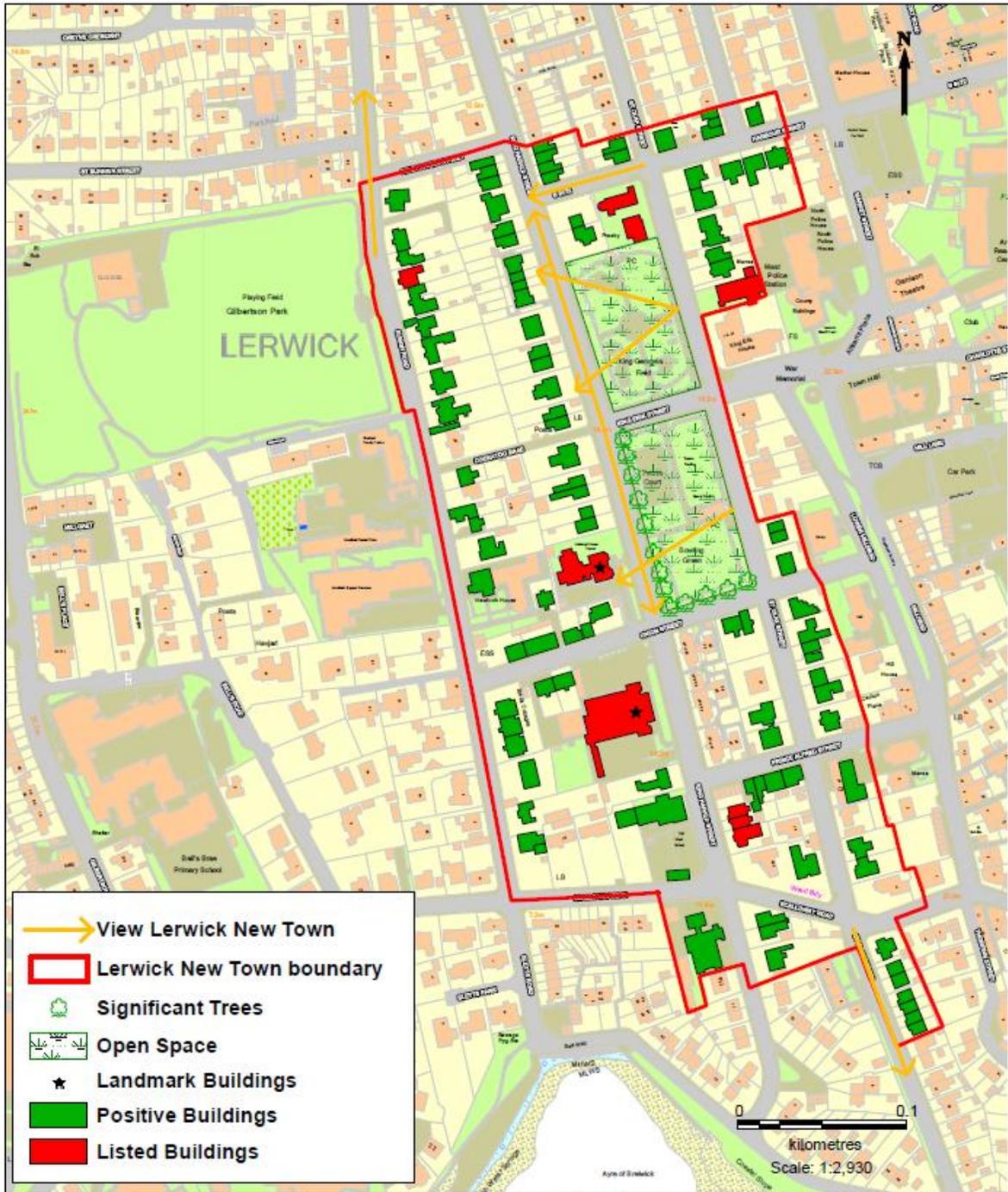


OS Map Lerwick 1901 (approx CA boundary in red)



OS Map Lerwick 1930 (approx CA boundary in red)

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



Lerwick New Town Conservation Area: Townscape Appraisal Map

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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.

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 site for the burning of the galley at the end of Lerwick's annual Up-Helly-Aa fire festival.



King George's Field playpark



St Margaret's Church

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.



St Olaf Street

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.

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.



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

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 lane 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 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.



Bowling green in Jubilee Park

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 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](#).

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 out of the conservation area towards Bressay and the harbour

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.



View from the War Memorial

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.

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.

At the time the appraisal was originally carried out the site on King Harald Street between Union Street and Prince Alfred Street contained a number of disused buildings associated with the former use of the Islesburgh Centre as a school. These buildings have been demolished and the site has subsequently been redeveloped as several blocks of flats. The scale and massing of these buildings, along with their use of contrasting but complimentary materials including fibre cement and timber cladding, is respectful of the character and appearance of the conservation area whilst introducing more contemporary design elements.



Victorian terrace on King Harald Street

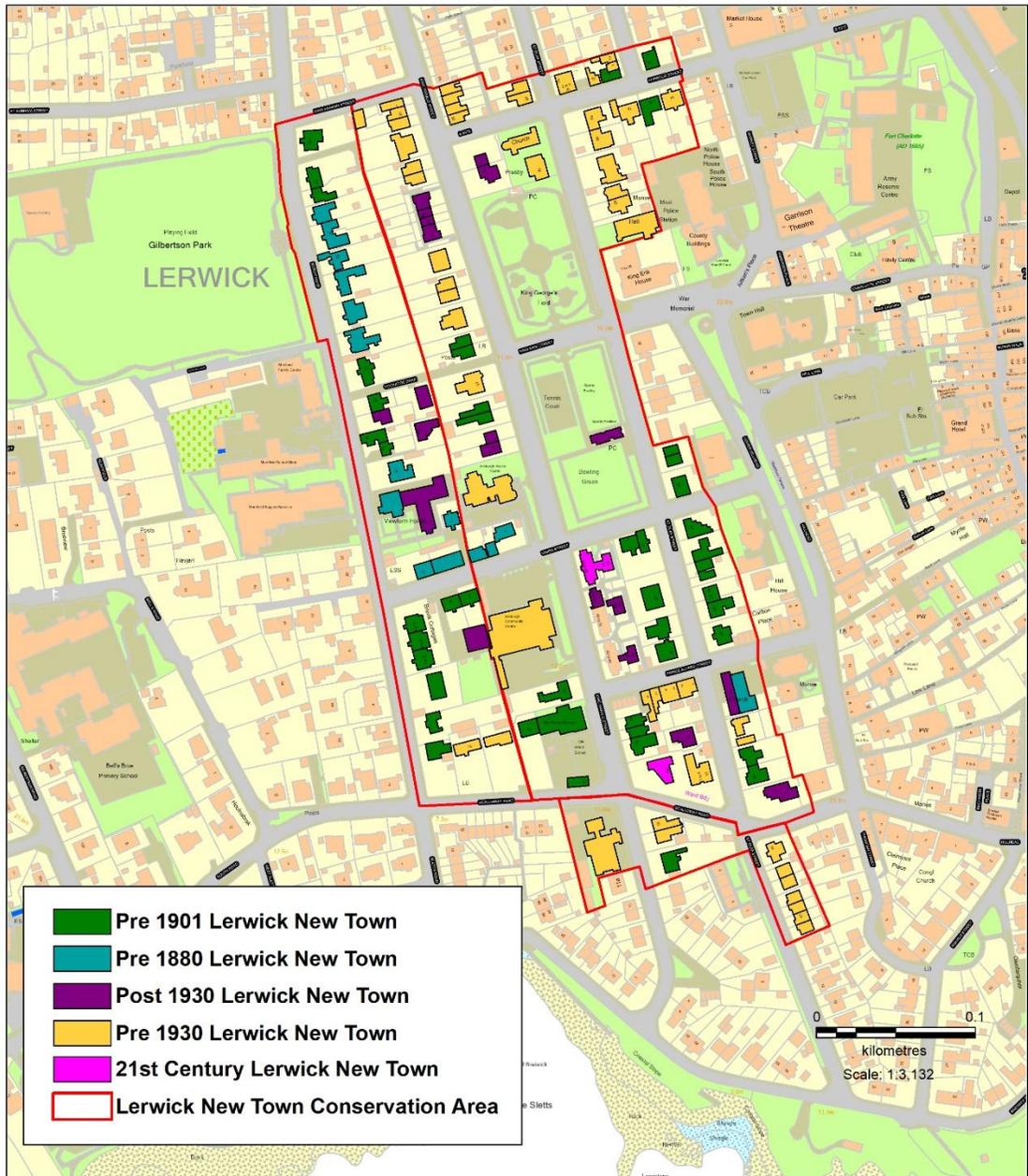
To the north and south of the conservation area houses are generally smaller and there are several short terraces. Grander detached buildings are found on the more prominent sites opposite the parks. Several of the larger properties are now used as guesthouses. Many of the properties now have mid 20th 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 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 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. There are no Scheduled Monuments in the Lerwick New Town Conservation Area.

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



Lerwick New Town Conservation Area: Building Analysis Map

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Above: Building Analysis Map

4.2.3 Key buildings

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

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.



Islesburgh House

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 skews. 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.

32-36 King Harald Street is listed at category C 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.



Union Street and St Olaf 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 on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'positive buildings'.

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.

Significant unlisted buildings include:

The Old Infant School, now a nursery, 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.



Former Infant School and 39 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.



The House of David, St Olaf Street

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.

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. Many windows have

been replaced with top opening casements which do not replicate the traditional form or appearance of sash and case windows.

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. Rainwater goods are generally cast-iron and often have decorative hoppers.

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 cost-effective ways and so replacement should always be a last resort.

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.



Boundary walls and railings on St Olaf Street

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 and the building is currently (2024) vacant. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 2022 for conversion of the building to residential use however works on site had not commenced as of September 2024.

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.

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.



Recent development on King Harald Street

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.

- Small-scale, incremental change – replacement windows, doors, re-pointing, satellite dishes.
- Small development in gardens e.g. garages and extensions which are out of character with the conservation area.
- Lack of building maintenance.

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 features.

Examples include replacement of timber windows or doors with inappropriate materials such as uPVC or unsympathetic designs or methods of opening. The replacement of natural roof slates and the painting of walls is also of concern. 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.

7.2 Quality of new development, alterations and extensions

There was previously little modern infill due to the limited number of gap sites and the protection against demolition that conservation area designation gives. As discussed above the recently built flats on King Harald Street are a good example of contemporary design being successfully inserted in a conservation area. However 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.



Harbour Street

7.4 Trees and hedges

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 their retention should be encouraged. 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).

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.

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.

8.2 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.

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

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

8.5 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.

9 Monitoring and Review

Shetland Islands Council will 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Shetland Local Development Plan (Adopted 2014)

[The Local Development Plan – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Historic Environment Policy For Scotland

[Historic Environment Policy for Scotland | Historic Environment Scotland](#)

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

[Managing Change in the Historic Environment | HistEnvScot](#)

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

[Your Property | Lead Public Body for Scotland's Historic Environment](#)

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
25 Burgh Road, inc boundary wall and gates	C
Parish Church of St Margaret, inc 87 St Olaf Street boundary walls, gate and gate piers	C

St Clements Hall, St Olaf Street inc steps, pedestals, boundary walls and gatepiers	C
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