

# Kirkcudbright Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Draft Planning Guidance for Consultation - October 2025



Kirkcudbright Draft CACAMP		
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View over the Dee and the Kirkcudbright marina



Castle Bank, the ruins of MacLellan Castle, photo from 2001

## Introduction

### What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is defined in law as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance...” In 1967 the concept of the designation of conservation areas was introduced to the UK. The current legislation is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

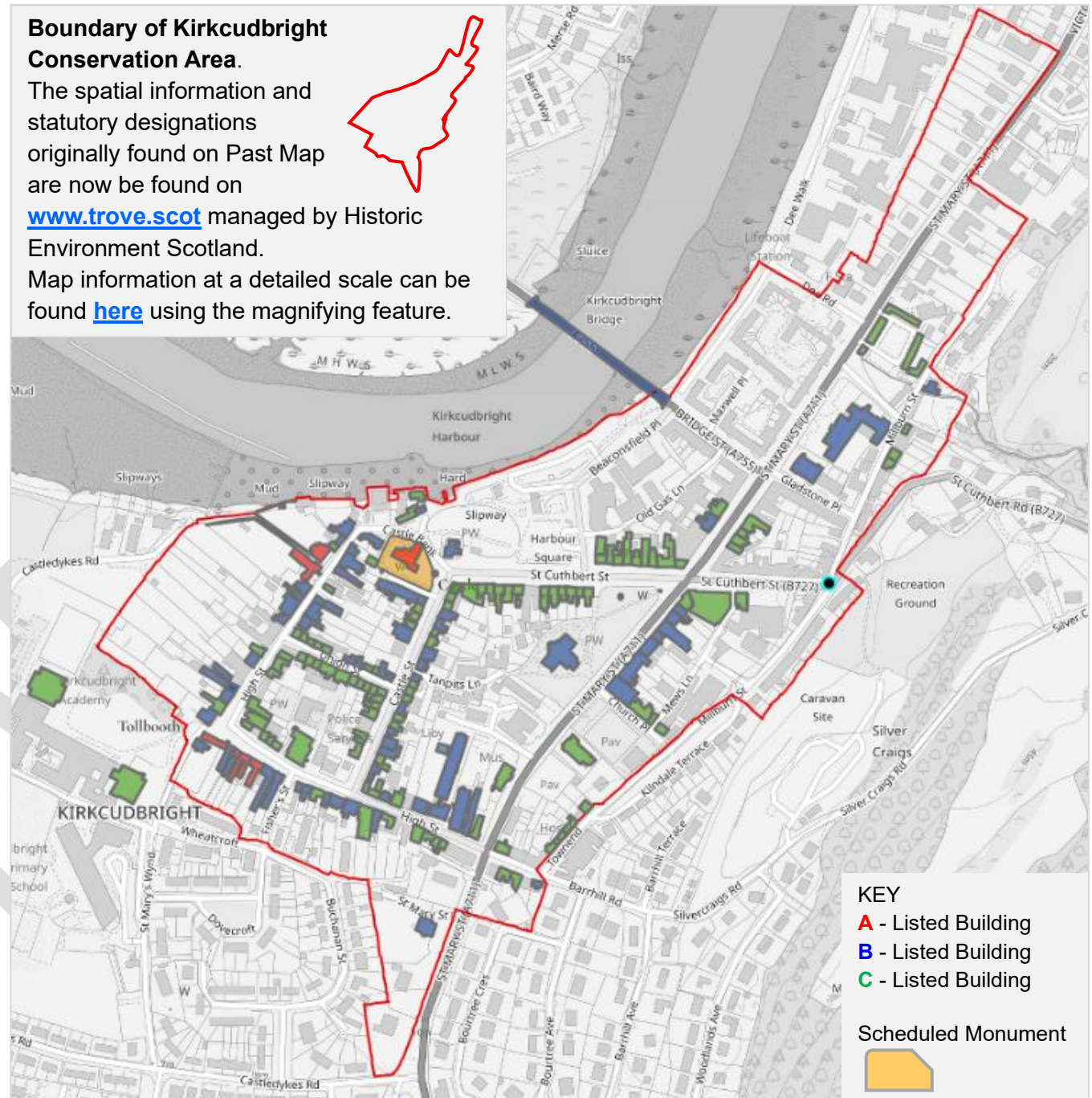
In a conservation area, development ideas:

- should be based on a clear understanding of historic and architectural character and its significance to cultural heritage;
- should be designed to avoid or minimise detriment to character or architectural and historic interest and cultural significance;
- demonstrate that the design of the proposal is the best way of achieving its benefits.

Local planning authorities should identify areas which merit conservation area status, promote the management of the historical and architectural character that is of interest and review them. Character is drawn from the combination of many features, layout

### Boundary of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area.

The spatial information and statutory designations originally found on Past Map are now be found on [www.truve.scot](http://www.truve.scot) managed by Historic Environment Scotland. Map information at a detailed scale can be found [here](#) using the magnifying feature.



and setting of buildings and spaces including the many Listed Buildings in a designated conservation area contributing to character.

When planning permission is required, the planning decision should preserve or enhance the overall character of the conservation area by maintaining the integrity of each of the significant elements of character. Even when the overall role of the area alters, the character can remain. Some change within a conservation area is inevitable to meet its changing role, to face current social and environmental challenges, give buildings long term uses and ensure the place is vibrant. New objectives can be achieved using well-designed development and sensitive and sustainable adaptations.

### **Purpose of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan**

The document appraises the existing character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area and gives guidance on how to manage it, and limit dilution of that character. It will be used to assess proposals put forward in planning applications including new development, alterations, enhancements, upgrades or

demolition, which may affect the character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area. Kirkcudbright CACAMP will help guide owners, occupiers and developers to think about how proposals can respect historic and architectural character. It supports and encourages sympathetic development and adaptations for sustainable uses, both ongoing and new, so that buildings and spaces will be comfortable, healthy, resilient and last long into the future.

The character appraisal identifies significant elements of historic character and setting, focusing on individual and grouped buildings and spaces; the townscape; the layout; and the use of materials. It notes the relevance of the setting, how the historic layout contributes to character and has influenced the streetscape, architectural detail and individually significant features. Some built structures and spaces will be selected for comment due to their particular contribution to character.

The management plan is informed by the appraisal and provides guidance on preserving and enhancing the character recognised in the appraisal. It sets out what actions and decisions will preserve or enhance the positive features of character. It guides development, supports

appropriate adaptation of buildings for new uses, and suitable improvements to reduce the impact of buildings and places on the climate, and appropriate changes to improve energy efficiency and comfort of the buildings.

**The purpose of the Kirkcudbright CACAMP** is to guide proposed change to:

- respect the setting and riverside location of the conservation area;
- respect the layout and grouped buildings;
- keep visibility between the significant buildings and spaces including the river and harbour;
- preserve, reinforce and enhance the general historic form of the buildings in the settlement;
- take full account of archaeology in proposals;
- promote sensitive adaptation of buildings, spaces and design of new development;
- encourage and support restoration, repair and repurposing of underused historic buildings and spaces; and
- support and catalyse well-considered ideas and projects that enhance character.

Buildings in Kirkcudbright are constructed from local materials such as stone, lime mortars and lime wash or lime harling. There are buildings from a range of centuries and decades in the conservation

area. Change should be compatible with the original fabric and construction method of a building and sympathetic to the design. Alterations and maintenance choices can affect the individual building, its neighbours and the character of the whole street depending on where it is located.

The retrofit industries have recognised that climate change adaptations to buildings will succeed only when the materials and systems used work with the original building because modern, hard, impermeable materials can gradually damage the fabric and create difficult internal environments and recurring maintenance issues.

Compatible energy efficiency adaptations for traditional stone buildings will achieve the best long-term benefits for the building fabric as will carefully choosing the best options for small-scale renewable energy generation. This will give long-lasting indoor comfort and preserve outside character.

**Energy surveyors and fitters should be familiar with the “Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency for Older and Traditional Buildings”**

### **Conservation area planning controls.**

Legislation requires that permission is sought for the following work:

**Demolition** of all, or most, of a building or structure, with some exceptions, needs Conservation Area Consent. National policy discourages most demolition and promotes repurposing. When a building makes a positive contribution to character there is a presumption against demolition where that would be detrimental to character. The intended use of the space after demolition may affect the application decision. Having a design for proposed site development may be required and if approved may need to be delivered very soon after demolition. Applications for demolition are normally made online.

<https://www.eplanning.scot/ePlanningClient/default.aspx>

**Alterations** and additions to the outside of buildings in a conservation area usually require some form of planning permission or an application for Prior Approval. House extensions, balconies, roof alterations, dormers, rooflights, chimney alterations, stone cleaning, new exterior painting or changing an existing colour, applying render or other cladding, changing exterior doors and creating hard surfaces around buildings continue to need Planning Permission. Renewable energy equipment may need permission, so best to ask. Alterations and replacement of some

windows in unlisted buildings in conservation areas may no longer need planning permission following the 2024 changes to the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(Scotland\) Order 1992 \(as amended\)](#). A Prior Approval should be submitted to establish if the design meets the conditions to be permitted development which are found [here](#).

A statutorily listed building always needs Listed Building Consent for any alterations.

It is national legislation that requires permission to be sought for change. The Council makes the Planning decisions using national and local planning policy and guidelines to assess the impact of proposals on the character of the property, those near it and for the whole of a Conservation Area such as Kirkcudbright. Sometimes officers will ask for alternative designs to improve the impact on character.

<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15329/Apply-for-planning-permission>

**Trees in conservation areas** have special protection. Proposals to remove

branches, fell a tree or carry out work affecting its roots must be notified to the Council six weeks in advance. This allows time for the Council to decide if a Tree Preservation Order should be placed on the tree or group where they contribute in a positive way to the character of the conservation area. National planning policy supports the retention of trees. The extent of proposed works to the tree or group may be completely rejected or more sensitive alternative works may be requested.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15334/Protected-trees>

**Attachments** such as satellite dishes or similar equipment may need planning permission in conservation areas. They have the potential to impact on character. It is usually possible to find discreet locations, sensitively designed equipment or consider a range of alternative solutions.

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15329/A>

**New buildings** in a conservation area need Planning Permission. Design must take account of the context, character and architectural themes of nearby buildings and spaces as well as the existing and

historic layout. Pre-application guidance and advice may be sought in advance of making an application using the following link.

[Get pre-application planning advice | Dumfries and Galloway Council](#)

## Planning Policy

### Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

[National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot](#)



Scottish Government adopted NPF4 in February 2023. It has six overarching spatial principles and 33 policies. Some affect the historic environment directly and others indirectly. Spatial principles with the most direct significance are considered in the following paragraphs.

Just transition recognises that change from previous policy was needed to reach net zero. Reducing carbon emissions from historic buildings and improving the resilience of historic assets to climate

change is part of that need. Therefore, national policies support appropriate adaptation measures.

The importance of improving biodiversity is recognised including the contribution which old buildings and structures can make to providing habitats for a range of plants and animals.

NPF4 also seeks to preserve character, encourage maintenance and promote enhancement of historic places. It recognises that Scotland's historic environment will be sustainable if the planning system supports its protection, enhancement and adaptation. It does not confine this policy to properties with specific designations.

### Conserving and recycling assets

There is a strong presumption to reuse and adapt all buildings and minimise demolition of parts of structures. *"We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste and building a circular economy."*

The adaptation of buildings of traditional and historic interest to create new uses and comfortable interior conditions will

contribute to this aim. It will also reduce the number of demolitions of any buildings, with or without a historic designation. As a running theme in NPF4, it acknowledges the importance of the broad historic environment and the embodied energy of the materials it uses. Therefore, it is more sustainable to adapt, reuse and repurpose than to demolish.

### Policy 7 Historic assets and places

makes direct reference to conservation areas, recognising that Scotland's cultural heritage contributes to economy, identity and quality of life. The principles and intent of Policy 7 are *“to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places.”*

Policy 7 includes a presumption to retain, maintain and adapt buildings in conservation areas where they contribute positively to historic or architectural character ensuring they have beneficial uses. This minimises waste and recognises the energy 'locked up' in the existing fabric. Sensitive alterations can reduce creation of waste and carbon emissions and support energy efficiency. Demolition is a last resort.

Conservation area designation seeks to sustain the special historic character, architectural interest, local identity and sense of place; sensitively reduce the impact of the built environment on climate change; and maximise the economic advantage of historic character, which current and future generations of people can benefit from.



St. Cuthbert's Parish Church and the entrance of the Johnston.

NPF4 policy 7 acknowledges that the character of conservation areas should be understood to enable good decision-making. Character appraisals and management plans help with this.

Historic Environment Scotland [HES] has a

range of learning resources, publications and guidance which set out national policy and good practice found here: [The Engine Shed publications and guidance](#) and [Managing Change](#) publications.

### Local Policy

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to the stewardship of historic areas across the region, recognising the important contribution they make to quality of life and sense of place for local people, the economy and the environment. Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2), adopted in October 2019, includes Historic Environment policies which are very similar in intent to those of NPF4. There are both heritage and settlement based policies for Kirkcudbright which recognise its place in the region as a settlement for residents and that draws visitors which in turn supports the local economy and people's livelihoods.

LDP policies are used to support decision making for planning applications in conjunction with the most recent National Policy Framework. Policies are successful when owners and occupants understand how they can help keep historic character and fabric by seeking good advice for their properties for adaptations or alterations,

appropriate construction materials and techniques. It is important that ongoing sensitive maintenance is carried out too.

### **LDP2 Policy HE2: 'Conservation Areas'**

promotes sensitive, informed approaches to development within conservation areas. To assist developers to design the most appropriate change, it refers to adopted Supplementary Guidance (SG) including [Historic Built Environment SG](#); a range of [guidance](#) specific to places; and Council [Planning Guidance](#) (PG). The new LDP regulations do not permit the creation of supplementary guidance but continues to allow planning guidance to be adopted by Councils to support LDP policies. Planning guidance can be updated to reflect changes in the legislation and promote actions needed because of the climate change emergency.

### **Kirkcudbright Conservation Area**

Kirkcudbright Conservation Area was designated on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1974 and the boundary modified on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2001. In July 2003 an Article 4 direction was introduced and Classes 30,31,41 and 67 of the General Permitted Development Order need planning permission. Other development that needs permission is in

line with other Scottish conservation areas.

The settlement of Kirkcudbright in Gaelic is Cille Chùithbeirt, which translates as chapel of St. Cuthbert, and demonstrates the town's association with Saint Cuthbert.

Churches are named St. Cuthbert's Church of Scotland on St. Mary Street and St. Andrews and St. Cuthbert Roman Catholic church on High Street. There was a Franciscan house [Grey Friars] established at Kirkcudbright by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The town sits at the mouth of the River Dee where it becomes an estuary and enters the Solway Firth. The area is known as the Crooks of Dee.

The Dee River estuary is tidal, with a shallow, harbour which has long been a significant feature of the historic town. A castle was first mentioned in records 1288, at the site of Castle Dykes which is outside the conservation area boundary. The stone may have been used to build MacLellan's Castle around 1508, a not uncommon practice. It has been ruinous since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is close to the river estuary and possibly within or close to the area that was the convent of Greyfriars. The Dee crossing from the east to the west

has had a number of different forms. In 1577 it was a simple ferry and possibly before that too. Much later the ferry became a pulley and chain ramped entrance, flat bed craft. A model in the local museum shows the later 19<sup>th</sup> century ferry.



A wrought iron bowstring bridge was constructed in 1868 with one span opening for shipping but it was damaged by river ice in the 1890s and the current bridge replaced it in 1926. The current bridge was

damaged by a tanker in 1975 and the reinforced concrete is in poor condition. The bridge is B Listed. Although only a small portion of the eastern end is within the conservation area, it is a key route and the crossing is an important feature.

The town gained burgh status about 1330 and became a Royal Burgh in 1455 allowing some sea trade, mainly with ports on the Irish Sea coast. There were periods of decline in the fortunes of Kirkcudbright.

Some existing buildings date back to the late 16th century, but the layout became established in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to which the present plan form is linked. Many buildings were replaced in the mediaeval town during the 18th and 19th century growth and contribute to character and vitality.



OS 1850 edition – mid-century development of the town.



Left: View to the Dee from the raised area close to MacLellan's Castle

The later developments had wider, straight streets, although the scale and form of individual buildings continued to resemble earlier buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The following part of the guidance is in two parts:

### **PART ONE – History, Development and General Character**

The historical development of Kirkcudbright and an overview of the significant themes and elements which come together to create its character.

### **PART TWO: Managing Character**

Management requires the character to be preserved and enhanced particularly when making planning or enhancement decisions. Proposals will be supported which continue most of the following:

- the layout of the historic harbour;
- the pattern of development in the different areas of the town;
- retention of elements of uniformity;
- recurring architectural details or paired features;
- traditional building materials; and/or
- the form and features of buildings which contribute positively to character.

Good management will support and catalyse initiatives and actions which enhance character, by individual owners, occupiers or as a collective group.

## **PART ONE – HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF KIRKCUDBRIGHT CONSERVATION AREA**

### **National and Regional Context**

#### **Planning objectives**

LDP2 seeks to consolidate the role of the settlement as a district centre. It supports redevelopment of brownfield sites for business and supports new housing close to the town centre on 5 separate sites.

The town and its position in the Solway Coast Regional Scenic Area is recognised as is the associated significant history.

Since LDP2 was published, Kirkcudbright community has promoted and achieved projects that recognise the position of the town and its importance as part of the landscape corridor of the Ken Dee River system. Projects take advantage of the historic and architectural quality and setting of the Kirkcudbright Conservation Area and have repurposed and improved a number of Listed buildings.

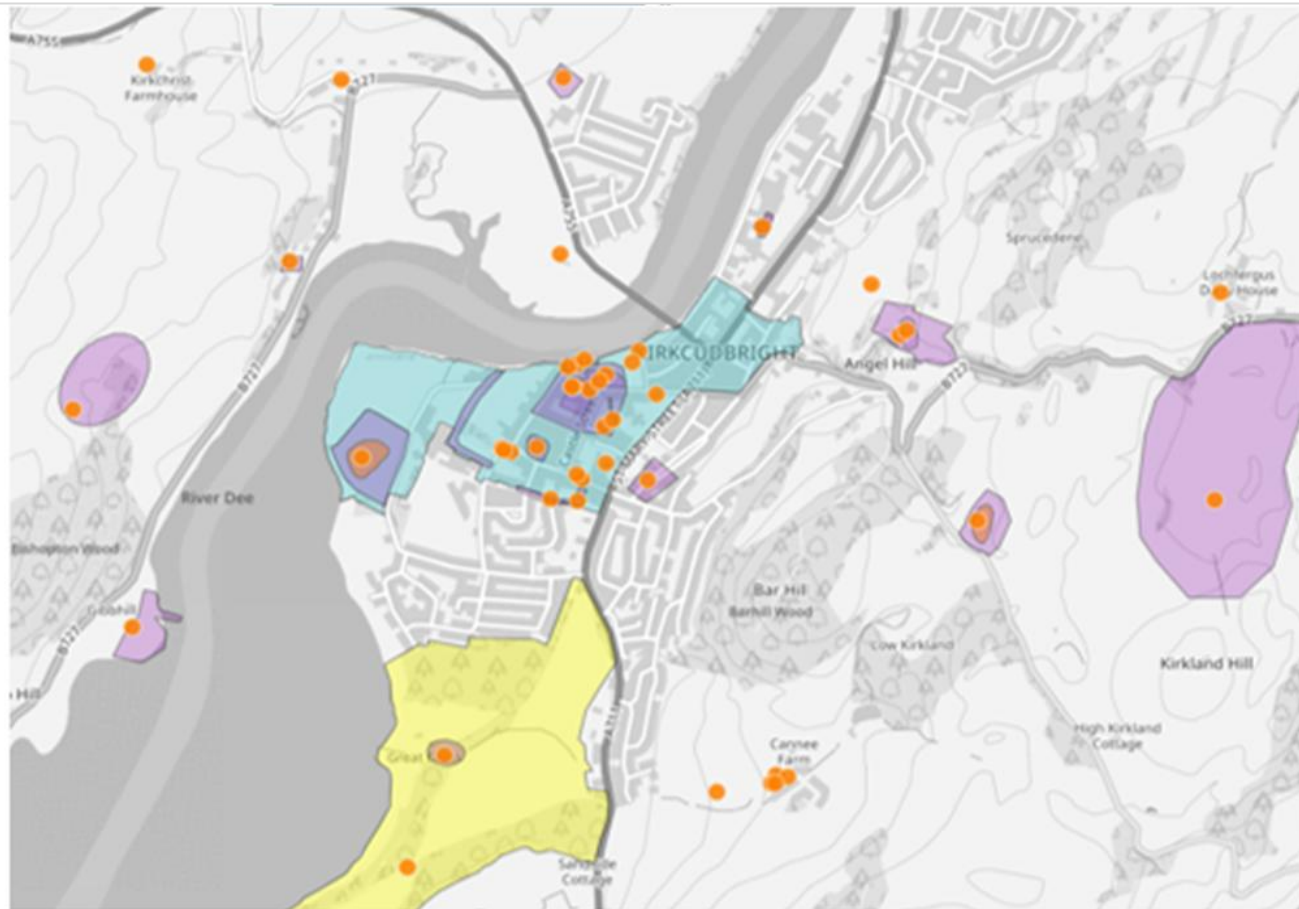
### **Art in the Community**



The return of an émigré artist, E A Hornel, in the 1880s, began what was later

recognised as an influential artists' community. Kirkcudbright became a summer venue for painters from Glasgow and attracted other international artists. It has continued this strong association with creativity and influence on art in the cultural venues.



The Venus of Kirkcudbright by Jankel Adler, 1943 [creative commons licence](#) NB: the copy does not have the intensity of colour of the original.



- 
Scheduled Monuments
- 
Archaeology Interest
- 
Archaeological Sensitive Areas
- 
Find-spots
- 
Non-Inventory Designed Gardens

This is an extract from Dumfries and Galloway Council's Historic Environment Viewer [HEV](#)

Please note that the content of the mapping information changes as sites are added and updated regularly.

The town has primary and secondary level schools for the town, the surrounding rural areas and smaller settlements.

The 2022 Census recorded the population of Kirkcudbright at approximately 3230, a small reduction since 2001. Like much of Dumfries and Galloway, the number of people living in Kirkcudbright over 50 years old is significantly higher than those under.

Although Kirkcudbright generally has better health than the average for the region, it is noted that some residents experience significant issues including a relatively high level of children living in poverty (20% in Kirkcudbright town)

### Housing

There is a wide range of house types. Millburn Street has small terraced single and 2-storey dwellings.



Some of the smaller streets and alleys have been developed for housing and flats. Church Row has relatively modest, former alms houses and newer housing and flats has been developed in the alleys and closes near the parish church.



design, the layout largely respects the street form and is perhaps modelled on Atkinson Place from about 1869 which has alms houses, now C Listed, built around a garden area. It was social housing of its time being built from subscriptions to house the 'deserving poor' and is still managed by the Kirk Session.



There are many much larger scale historic houses many of them terraced with access through pends to the rear where there are private gardens.



In the 1970s, Maxwell Wynd was award winning and while very much of seventies

The majority of buildings and outbuildings in the conservation area have found new uses. Subdivision and repurposing of under-used buildings has taken place, providing more selection for living, however some of these are also for short-term letting. While this contributes to tourism it may also have an impact on the housing available for others.



Pends and closes in various parts of the conservation area.



There are many dwelling types in the conservation area: - terraced dwellings, both large and small; homes above shops; detached houses close to others; or villas in suburban style. Large houses on High Street on former burgage plots have long gardens, some with outbuildings.



**Tourism** is an important element of the local economy. Kirkcudbright town continues to be marketed as the Artists' Town due to its historic associations with the art world but also as a centre for creativity and art. There are several places where artists have a strong presence, drawing visitors from afar such as the Hornel gallery in Broughton House, Tolbooth Art Centre, The Stewartry Museum and Kirkcudbright Gallery all of which are housed in repurposed buildings of historic significance and contribute to the character of the conservation area.

Kirkcudbright is a popular base for outdoor activities such as cycling and walking and general appreciation of the landscape, the river, an active harbour, the nearby coast and the historic buildings. Tourism accommodation in historic buildings in the town conservation area supports a small number of hotels and guest houses as well as self-catering and cafes and restaurants and specialist shops in the town.

### **Local services and employment**

As well as the hotels and hospitality outlets located within the conservation area, including pubs and a few tearooms, which

provide some local employment, there is a selection of shops including a supermarket and post office. There is employment linked to fishing, service trades and farming or in industries based away from the town. Development to the west has historically been restricted by the river although until recently there was a creamery just over the bridge. There are local facilities for residents and the wider catchment including a swimming pool.



### **Open Space**

Kirkcudbright is surrounded by attractive landscape some of which is woodland with a network of trails.

Within the conservation area, on the corner of St. Cuthbert's Street and St. Mary's Street is a central space called

Soaperie Gardens,. It has many trees and an attractive, informal layout providing shade and seasonal colours in the middle of town and adjoins Kirkcudbright Parish Church.



Kirkcudbright's Rotary Club put together a guide to the garden, which is available

locally. There are also historic features in the gardens.

Church Place has a bowling green with tennis courts close by on St. Mary's Street.



There is public open green space alongside Greyfriars Church on the mound known as Mote Brae near the information centre. It is also informal and gives good views over the harbour and marina area on the River Dee.

Dee Walk is linear public open space with regular trees and a very pleasant place to walk by the river.

The open space makes an important contribution to the character of the conservation area, allowing the layout and elements to be appreciated.

### Flooding

Parts of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area are prone to flooding in areas closest to the River Dee estuary with some areas vulnerable to surface water flooding. Much of the conservation area has the potential to flood as seen in the extract from [SEPA kkb](#) copied on p.18 but the information may change.



### Archaeology

Several interesting archaeological features exist and are marked on the Dumfries and

Galloway Council's Historic Environment Viewer as seen in the extract on page 11. Some are referred to in later sections.

### Building materials

Most of the original building materials were lime pointed stone with slate roofs. Lime paints and lime harling were also used on a very significant number of buildings. The original finish materials are still a feature although there are some colour variations. Cement based renders have crept in, replacing traditional finishes in some streets. However, many lime renders and paints remain.

There are some brick buildings in the conservation area often outbuildings or small industrial sites but not often in prominent positions.

Natural slate is the dominant historic roofing material on sloped roofs. Some Scottish origin slates remain on older buildings, but others are more likely to be of Welsh or Cumbrian origin. More recently, imported slates have been used sometimes changing the roof colour and pattern of slating quite noticeably.

Roof ridges are a mix of sandstone and galvanised zinc.

The mix of stone that is used is sandstone, whinstone and some granite. There is both rubble walling and cut and dressed stone.

The status and age of the building has influenced the choice of stone and its finish.

Building Material	Description	Use
<b>Whinstone</b> (local greywacke but sometimes dolerite, or basalt.)	Whinstone is usually partly metamorphosed, hard, granular, sedimentary stone in shades of grey.	A common building stone in the conservation area as both coursed and random rubble stone for elevations although often painted or rendered and painted white or cream. It is also commonly used in garden walls and sometimes for kerb stones.
<b>Granite</b> (silver-grey granite)	Hard, metamorphic, speckled grey, stone some was quarried at Dalbeattie originally or Creetown.	Used in a number of carefully designed buildings mostly as quoins or window margins but notably in The Johnston Italianate school building. Also used for steps, kerbs, setts and sculptures.
<b>Sandstone</b> (red, or brownish-red from regional Permian deposits)	Sedimentary rock often with a big colour range but mostly brownish red, in Kirkcudbright.	Sandstone is found in the facades of a number of designed 19 <sup>th</sup> century buildings and used to embellish many of the churches in the tracery and carved window margins. It is also used for skew stones and ridge capping and appears in some boundaries.
<b>Brick</b> (reddish fired clay)	Fired clay brick products appear in red/orange shades. Source not known.	Most often in former industrial or outhouse type working buildings with some in smaller streets or rear gardens.
<b>Terracotta</b>	Strong coloured moulded shaped product	Seen as a boundary wall capping and in use for moulded decoration on some buildings but not common in the conservation area
<b>Concrete</b>	Aggregate material used in modern structures and renders.	The most notable use is on the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century bridge across the Dee.

## History of Kirkcudbright – from Mediaeval to Modern

The origins of the town of Kirkcudbright are not known, and there is no evidence for any settlement before the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Fragments of carved stones and finds of Viking grave-goods confirm the existence of the church in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and the find of a contemporary linen-smoother from Millburn Street may indicate the first traces of the settlement nearer the river.

The word order of the name Kirkcudbright suggests Anglo-Scandinavian but it may be an earlier Celtic name, *Cille Chùithbeirt*. The cult of Cuthbert became popular after the Synod of Whitby in the year 664, when Galloway was under Northumbrian control. The foundation of the church may also date back to this period.

The first record of the name was in 1210: '*Kirkcudbriht*'. The next, in 1296, was quite similar: '*Kirkcuthbriht*'. The name clearly shows the link to the church of St. Cuthbert, which lies uphill to the east of the town, outside the conservation area.



The graveyard on the site of former 8th century St Cuthbert's church

The church of Kirkcudbright, and all its rights, were granted by Uchtred, Lord of Galloway, to the Monastery of Holyrood, between 1161 and 1174.

Abbot Ailred of Rievaulx visited Galloway in 1164 and was present at the town's patron saint festival of St. Cuthbert.

John Spottiswoode wrote in his account of religious houses in Scotland in the early 1600s, that the Franciscans, or Grey Friars, were established at Kirkcudbright from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Other sources attribute the foundation to King Alexander II in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century when he ruled Scotland.

Alexander is credited with establishing a Cistercian convent on the west of the Dee and an Augustinian priory on St. Mary's Isle. (Other sources attribute the Augustinian priory to Fergus in repentance for his 'rebellions'). Fergus founded nearby Tongland and Dundrennan religious houses. It is acknowledged that these differing accounts are at odds.

Mote Brae is probably the site of the earliest castle overlooking the early harbour and built by Fergus, Lord of Galloway, when Galloway was independent of Scotland.

However, Galloway was conquered in a series of campaigns by the Scottish crown, ending in 1155 when Malcolm IV began building Castledykes, just outside the burgh. The castle was first mentioned in public records in 1288 when John Comyn was guardian of *"the castle and lands which belonged to the King in Kirkcudbright"*.

King Edward I of England invaded Scotland in 1300 and took the castle in Kirkcudbright along with other regional castles where the coastal positions gave him advantage for ongoing campaigns. There is a record of Edward making oblation (religious donation) of seven shillings at Greyfriars Church.

Edward Bruce retook Castledykes in 1308 and was then granted it by his brother King Robert.

Surviving records show that:

- the town was laid waste from 1335-6;
- Edward III of England granted it to John Mareschal;
- as a King's burgh it paid rent to the Crown along with Dumfries and Wigtown;
- its form was a single, L-shaped street (High Street) located on a low gravel ridge.

It is not clear if the town ditch, or fosse, defining the limits of the burgh was in existence in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1369, Kirkcudbright was granted to the Douglas family, as Lords of Galloway. Sir William Douglas launched an attack on the Isle of Man from Kirkcudbright in 1388.

From 1452-5 the dispute between the Scottish Crown and the Douglas family reached a head and in 1455 King James II reaffirmed the rights and privileges that the town had during the reign of Robert the Bruce. He re-established the Franciscan Friary *"occupying the eastern portion of the ground overlooking the creek or harbour"*, with its western boundary where MacLellan's Castle remains now stand.

In 1456, an attack on the Isle of Man failed and in 1457 a counter raid by the Stanleys, Lords of Man, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Douglas challenged the Stewart royal intervention in Kirkcudbright and reputedly destroyed much of the town. It is likely that the turbulence and the creation of a Royal Burgh, led to the construction of the town wall and excavation of the ditch.

16<sup>th</sup> century burgh records reference how the town defended itself in an English

attack in 1547 by Sir Thomas Carleton, noting that the townsfolk *'barred their gates and manned their dykes'*.

From the Dee along the eastern edge of the Franciscan Friary to Townend a large creek, and joined the Meikle Yett, (main town gate) close to the present day Selkirk Arms. The wall and fosse continued westwards rear of the burgh plots and turned north near the Academy along the foot of gardens on High Street to the Water Yett at the river. There is a sketch map in records from 1566, showing the Toll Booth and a mercat cross at the corner of High Street.

The earliest standing structure in the conservation area is MacLellan Castle dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. James IV stopped at Kirkcudbright on a pilgrimage to Whithorn in 1501 and purportedly stayed at the castle. He stayed again in 1508. He gifted the castle and some lands to the magistrates *"for the good of the inhabitants of the town"*.

Manx raiders destroyed the town in 1507, and the castle was ruined, only the site name remaining. However, by 1526 the town had been rebuilt. It became a walled town in 1547 to defend against Henry VIII.

After the reformation the town provost was Thomas MacLellan and he obtained the Franciscan friary site and built a new castle near the river with the stone from the friary starting in 1577. St. Mary's Augustinian friary became a large house as a seat for the Earl of Dunbar and Selkirk until 1608.

In respect of trade from the harbour, a warrant was granted in 1237 to one Erkin, allowing him to import corn from Ireland at a time of scarcity. Wool, hides and woollen cloth are noted as exports in the 15th century. From 1434 to 1478 thousands of hides were exported through Kirkcudbright and in 1471 wool made up an important part of Scottish exports. By the later 16<sup>th</sup> century wine was imported from France and salt and iron came ashore. There was also timber exported to Brittany. The Civil War (War of the Three Kingdoms) harmed trade from the port, but it slowly picked up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On his visit to Scotland in the early 1700s Daniel Defoe noted that *"the harbour had no ships and the fishery had no nets"*.

A parish school opened in 1577 and Kirkcudbright formed a presbytery (an administration body of the church).

By 1610 there was a mill on the burn from Loch Fergus, and beer-brewing is recorded by the mid-century. There was a Low Road to Dumfries in the mid-18th century, passing northwards through Millburn to the double-arched stone bridge at Tongland, built in 1737. Thomas Telford's bridge was built in 1808 on a new route.

In 1754 there was a 'low road to Dumfries' and the road northwards past Millburn to the newly built Tongland Bridge.

Boat building was one of the local industries along with a corn mill and a distillery built nearby.

In 1789 Lord Daer offered the town Council £50 to repair the harbour and build a quay. The following year in June an agreement between the Town Council and Lord Selkirk saw the first major change to the town layout, with the construction of Castle Street, followed by that of Union Street. In the early 19th century the town expanded beyond the old burgh boundary along St Cuthbert's Street.

Paisley Union Banking Company opened a branch in the town in 1793 and Galloway Banking Company of Castle Douglas

around 1806 but both were short lived.

A new school was built in 1815 and there was a brewery and paper mill by the Mill Burn and there were communally built houses put up in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

An iron bowstring girder road bridge was constructed across the Dee in the 1860s replacing the ferry. The railway arrived in 1864 and a gasworks established in 1892.

At that time there were three hotels, the Selkirk Arms, The Commercial and The Royal. About this time the returning artist E. A. Hornel began to give the town a new focus and reputation as an artist community. The Kirkcudbright Museum was built, leading to the creation of more art galleries.

The old harbour was infilled in 1910 and a quay was built. The creamery was opened on the west of the river which was important during the wars. There was furniture making, oil distribution and by the 1950s there were 6 hotels. The cottage by the harbour became an art gallery. However, some businesses began and closed quite quickly.

There were administrative changes that

affected the town but it continued to build on the art connections with The Tolbooth Arts Centre opening in 1993 in a former mill beside the old tolbooth on High Street.

In 1577 the crossing of the River Dee was a simple ferry and possibly before that too. Much later the ferry became a pulley and chain ramped entrance, flat bed craft. A model in the local museum shows the later 19th century ferry.



Below and left: Brick used in small dwellings and industrial buildings in the conservation area.



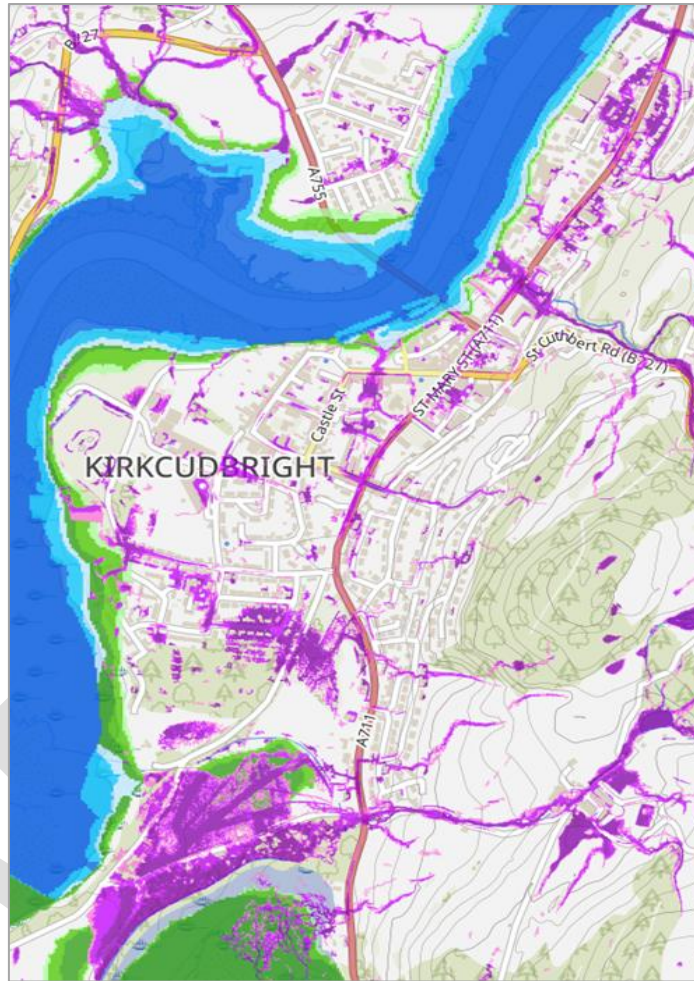
The Tolbooth Arts Centre and Gallery



A wrought iron bowstring bridge was constructed in 1868, one span opening for shipping. It was damaged by river ice in the 1890s, the current bridge replacing it in 1926. In 1975 the bridge was hit by a tanker in 1975 and is in poor condition. It is B Listed and a small portion of the eastern end is in the conservation area, and is a key route with the crossing being an important feature.



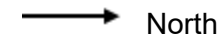
Extract from Gordon, Robert, circa. 1636-52



Extract from SEPA flood map showing areas at risk of flooding from the river, estuary or surface water accumulation.



Joan Blaeu's Timothy Pont map printed 1654



## Description of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area

The urban structure of the town had 5 stages of development.

1. The early development on the Mote Brae or Castle Bank. Nothing remains of the original buildings, except the name.
2. Next to be developed was the ridge of higher land to the south which became the mediaeval burgh with a main street (now High Street) running south-southwest from Mote Brae to the Tolbooth then turning sharply east. Meikle Yett was the defensive port on the east side of the medieval burgh where some form of gate remained until 1771.
3. The mediaeval burgh was encircled by a wall and ditch following the harbour creek on the east. A market place was set up beside the Tolbooth at the corner of High Street. This burgh pattern can still be seen with mediaeval or tenements of regular width and length which run back from frontages on High Street. The earlier houses have been mostly rebuilt and are now primarily of the 18th and 19th centuries although still on the burgage plots even if at different depths.

From 1790 development took place beyond the old burgh beginning with planned growth of the town, now Castle Street and Union Street, which was laid out to the plan agreed with the Town Council and the Earl of Selkirk.

4. Development took place in St. Mary Street and St. Cuthbert's Street in the earlier part of the 19th century as a

continuation of the plans for Castle Street, in a formal planned expansion of the town. However, the character today is more mixed with a range of building styles and uses, especially commercial.

5. Development of the suburbs took place around a cluster of mills at Millburn and remained quite separate until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.





Some are named in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century John Wood plan. This network of public, semi-public and private routes is a strong feature of the character of the conservation area.

Closer examination of the plan through the link to NLS maps reveals some of the names of property owners or occupiers. Johnston is a recurring surname where High Street meets St. Mary's Street. The

plan also shows that before the later 19<sup>th</sup> century St. Mary Street was very suburban with little semi-rural however, development began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with a bank and terraced large houses. Beyond the junction with St. Cuthbert's Street Johnston's Free School was built in unusual Italianate style using granite as the prominent building stone. For a while it stood separate until the street was developed with large dwellings, a town hall,

**Street Pattern and Form**

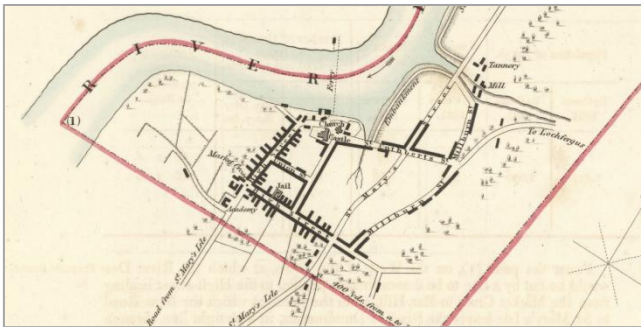
The core of the settlement has largely retained its original layout.



John Ainslie Stewartry of Kirkcudbright 1797

Left: John Wood Plan of the Town of Kirkcudbright 1843

The established L shaped High Street, wide St Cuthbert's Street and Castle Street are very clear from the three maps. The link is to the map image held by the National Library of Scotland (NLS maps) are included.



Great Reform Act Plan of Kirkcudbright 1832

One of the features of the historic core is the alleys, closes, 'slaps', wynds and pends some of which reflect the mediaeval burgage plots. There are examples of some of these in the housing paragraphs on p.12.

a church and a museum.  
 When the Glasgow and South Western Railway came to Kirkcudbright in 1864, the station was on St. Mary's Street where it has survived although the railway finally closed in 1965. Large villas were developed to the northeastern end of the street which are within the conservation area. The various large buildings and sidings have been replaced with the Maxwell Wynd housing development.



Former Railway Station on St. Mary's Street



Millburn Street is approximately parallel to St. Mary's Street and links to High Street via Townend. Although it was considered to be a little separate from Kirkcudbright it had an important corn mill and housing for the families who worked in it and in other local labour. The former corn mill building complex has been repurposed as seen in the before and after photographs.



6-inch, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey revised 1907 showing the railway terminus and development to the northeastern end of St. Mary's Street

The corner of Old High Street as named in the Wood map and High Street had a cross and buildings with a courthouse and jail, on the north side of High Street. The civic function has changed but the buildings continue to have public access and form an important historic meeting point in Kirkcudbright.

### Trees and Hedges

Trees are generally confined to open space areas and a few in private gardens. There are no street trees despite the wide streets. The trees are important where they are found. Hedges are not frequent in the conservation area but there are some alongside private gardens.

### Buildings

Maclellan's Castle, within the town, is one of the most prominent buildings. Rising over the lower harbour cottage and other surrounding buildings it is dominant in many views. It closes the view westwards along St. Cuthbert Street.

The Parish Church is very significant. It not only dominates the open space on the corner of the two widest streets in the town but its mass and height ensures it is widely seen, even in closer more intimate views, such as out through the closes of the

Tanpits Lane housing. The church is an impressive landmark and noticeable in the skyline.

The Tolbooth, both on its own and as a group with the two 17th century houses to the east, is highly significant in views along both sections of the High Street and in forming the backdrop to the former market area. The Tolbooth is also seen from outwith the conservation area especially from the south along St. Mary's Wynd and Buchanan Street.

The Sheriff's Court rises dramatically both in bulk and height above the surrounding High Street properties. It dominates the views over the town from outside and along the High Street from the east.

The above named buildings are key landmarks in views from the west side of the river and on the higher approach to the town from this side. The visual effect is increased by the massing of buildings on the High Street which creates complex urban groupings to be carefully considered.

The conservation area is dotted with key or prominent buildings and these must be regarded as important in considering proposals affecting them or their setting.



They range from the category A listed Broughton House in High Street to the former Alms Houses of Atkinson Place. Others worthy of particular mention include the Council Offices next to the Selkirk Arms, a fine bow fronted Georgian House, the Stewartry Museum on St. Mary Street and,

nearby, the Town Hall. However there are many more with individual significance in their architectural features and history.

The main original historic materials are set out in the table on page 16.

There is a complex variety of sights and views which needs to be taken into account when considering proposals for development or change many of them framed by or including parts of these buildings.

There is much variety in the buildings of the town. Some of the very formal Georgian houses whose prominent architecture proclaim a former social dominance, such as Broughton House, stand in close relationship to the smaller single and two-storey houses of much simpler architectural detailing,

The contrast in architectural styles and detailing within a street may also be considerable.

### Windows and doors

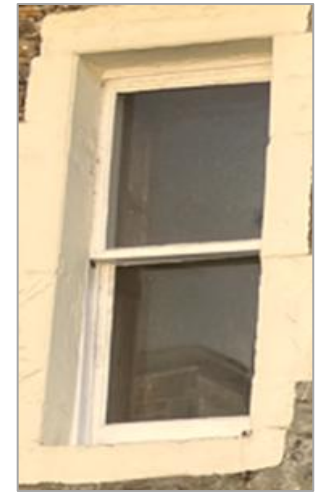
There are a variety of windows and doors across the conservation area and many replacements that have changed the original character. The original sash and

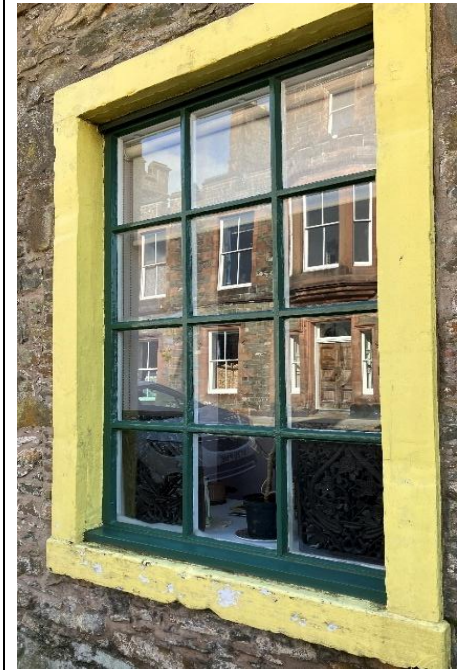
case windows had a variety of formats some with unequal opening lights. These are particular to the character of some buildings, but many have been lost.

Many doors have been replaced with non-traditional formats in modern materials but where they have been kept there are a selection of double leafed storm doors, 6 and 4 panelled doors, plain planked doors and more unusual formats from different periods.

A number of very attractive fanlights have been retained, some in need of a little sensitive refurbishment.

A selection of architectural elements including windows and doors and boundary treatments along with some of the surface treatments that contribute to character are included on the following pages.







Above and left column: selection of doors and fanlights, demonstrating the range and variation that are present in the conservation area and to establish that they are very significant in many of the properties.

Right column: a small selection of the railings and gates and other boundary treatments of differing designs and levels of detail. There are many through the conservation area which are significant to the character.



Above and on preceding page: A small selection of the window styles to demonstrate a range of ages, pane formats and designs which are significant to the character of the conservation area.

## Roofscape, Townscapes, Building Facades and Architectural Embellishment

The roofs of the town buildings are full of high points with chimneys and mix of dormers, some half above the eaves and others fully on the roof. There are church spires and square towers and occasional turrets in some of the grand buildings and a surprising corner castellation where St. Mary Street meets St. Cuthbert Street.

In St. Mary Street it is interesting to look up at the mostly 2 or 2 ½ storey elevations and note an occasional oriel window and projecting first and second floor bay; overhanging gable verges in one place; or the eaves line of the terraced buildings are at the same height along the length of most of the street. Above ground floor, there is a continuity and regularity and occasional features that jar with the design of the majority.

St. Cuthbert Street is wide. Lengths of roofs are at the same height but there also steps down and a small number without dormers. This is seen in High Street where the roof slopes have a range of small pitch variations and in the narrower Union Street. The unique roofscape is important

in each street. This street is wide and going west it leads to Castle Street although MacLellan Castle forms a visual stop.

Castle Street also has a little bit of height variation and a mix of roofs with and without dormers. It is mainly 2 bay, 2 storey with an occasional 3 bay building. Although there not so many shop frontages, some of the window openings suggest that was not always the case. The shop frontages in all the streets are varied.

High Street has more buildings that had former civic functions. There are many formal door-pieces and entries that lead through to the back of the former burgage plots. High Street has a right-angled turn beside the Tollbooth building and past the churches.



The window margins through the town and

many of the facades are painted in a variety of colours although mostly not very strong. However, the civic buildings are bare stone with contrasting stone margins and dressings. These are details that mark them out.



The majority of buildings have natural slate roofs, skew stones and some have retained their stone ridge capping and hip capping. However, there are a number of replacement roof materials which create a different texture and diminish character. It appears that most of the visible roofing uses small slates in diminishing courses. There are a variety of roof heights including single storey and single with dormer space above as well as two storey. The majority are in runs of two storey although between the buildings of the same number of storeys, there may be height variations.

Generally, the terraces create a uniform run of roofs.

There are some very large, multi-flue chimney stacks, many with an interesting collection of chimney cans. These are a key part of the character of the roofscape and what people see from along the streets.

Where there are dormers in the roofs some are half dormers, with gables but others full dormers some hipped. The variety of shapes of dormers both old and more recent is of significant interest just as the contrast between the roofs with and without dormers is of interest. Many dormers must offer great views for the occupants.

Many buildings are not very ornate but there are groups of grander, statement buildings, some raised from the street in Georgian Classical style but others using ashlar and corner dressings to announce their status.

The vernacular architectural character is of stone some cut blocks and others rubble and some finished with paint or traditional lime harling. The roofs have skew stones and stone ridges where they remain.



### Shopfronts

Of the shopfronts that remain, there is a mix of styles and designs from different periods. Some are quite typical of Victorian and Edwardian shops but others seem to date from the earlier Georgian period.

There are a few simpler shopfronts, some more traditional in appearance than others but the variety is very much part of the vitality of the streets. Some examples are on page 31.

### Boundaries and surfaces

There are many interesting walls and railings throughout the conservation area. Some need of refurbishment to replace broken elements and missing parts, fill gaps, remove rust, or simply repaint. However, there are also newer boundary features which have been successfully introduced successfully as enhancements.

The surfaces throughout the conservation are varied. Some areas of tarmac are in poor condition, concrete has replaced older surfaces and although there are stone kerbs remaining many of the originals have been replaced. The new stone surface along the sea front, with



new nautical railings has revived an attractive promenade along the crescent. Pages 25 & 26 include some examples.

### Statues, sculptures and cultural pieces.



Through the conservation area there are pieces of interest placed to tell a story or remember activities and people of the past. They are a mix of factual of national interest and flamboyant or evocative and have become part of the character.

## **PART TWO: Managing the Character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area**

### **General Management Points**

The historic character of Kirkcudbright has been recognised through its designation as a conservation area. However, the challenge of meeting climate change targets and improving living standards within the conservation area requires an approach which can accommodate both preserving character and improving energy efficiency.

### **Managing development**

To preserve and enhance the special built character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area, the existing mix of building heights, stepping down or continuous eaves between adjoining buildings depending on the street should be noted and kept. The high points and special architectural features as well as the range of both

On previous page:

Sculpture outside MacLellan Castle

War Memorial on St Cuthbert's Street; Modern huts and sculpture by the visitor's centre

Cycleway signage by the river; Carved timber embrace

simple and more ornate designs should also be kept in a similar mix and changes to elevation finishes should be resisted. New development should respect the layout of the existing streets and where possible, repeat the existing characteristics. There are examples of development that could be improved by taking on board these themes.

### **Pattern and Layout**

Much change has taken place in Kirkcudbright with peripheral developments but the basic form of the conservation area and the pattern of development is unchanged. This is something that can easily be retained in future proposals. Kirkcudbright has a strong historic core layout and the phases of development since mediaeval times can be read in the layout. However, the layout that contributes to the character of the northeastern end of St. Mary's Street is very different with its villas in large plots

from, for example, the terraced area that was Millburn and Gladstone Place which are both simpler and much denser in slightly different ways.

### **Historic Views**

It does not appear that historic views have been significantly altered but this is a key element of the character of the conservation area and protecting those views should continue. Woodlands on the hillside to the east provide an important backdrop and an amenity space. The bridging of the Dee may become something for discussion in the future and the route may need to be carefully considered to preserve long views. The riverside scenery contributes to how attractive Kirkcudbright is as a place to visit. Views to MacLellan Castle along streets are of importance. These are key elements of the character of the conservation area.

### **New development**

There has been significant new development in the conservation area in the last 50 years and while some elements are well thought out, such as layout, the shapes and general form of some of the properties jar somewhat with the general character of Kirkcudbright. In addition, some of the materials chosen to finish the elevations need more maintenance than they have had and as a result they look unkempt. This would be easily remedied with carefully thought-out maintenance programmes. It is a useful lesson going forward in respect of any other new development that might be proposed. Windows have been altered but there are possibilities of reverting to formats that are more appropriate when applications are made.

### **Climate change adaptations**

As with all climate change adaptations to traditional buildings, and in historic areas, care needs to be taken to use methods that are best for the longevity of the individual building, the comfort of its interior and the character of the place.

Recent UK Government reports have

established that, already, some of the insulation adaptations have been poorly chosen or executed and will need to be remedied. The push to achieve reduced emissions and costs of living should be suited to each building. The range of breathable insulation has increased, and the knowledge in the workforce is changing to be more sensitive to individual buildings. Short guarantees on work and materials to remain serviceable is not climate efficient.

In respect of retrofitting renewable energy equipment, there are many options available. However the roof must be in good order as it is more difficult to maintain when panels are attached and in some areas the wind lift factor may add stresses to the roof that it was not designed to cope with. These are preliminary matters that can be dealt with before taking advantage of the aspect of roof slopes and sloping rear gardens.

New technologies that communities can share rather than seek to have new equipment on every individual house may also be a way forward.

### **Shop fronts**

New shop fronts where they are proposed

should be simple and in many cases the frontage of buildings would need very little adaptation, just signage. There is a selection of mainly sympathetic shopfronts in the conservation area and the wish to change these should be carefully balanced with the impact on historic character and the wider character of the conservation area. Policy should always encourage re-use and adaptation as a first choice.

### **Advertisements and signage**

The signage in the conservation area is attached to traditional buildings or free standing and is characteristic of the seaside environment. The current approach seems to be acceptable, with minimalism and subtlety taking precedence over garish options. There are many options for signage that is not attached to a building but stands near it or signage that has a minimal area of attachment which can be as effective as large signs. Listed Buildings may have additional requirements to minimise signage in order to preserve their character.

### General management matters

There are few unused buildings or even under-used although there are a number of buildings that have recently been vacated and sold such as the former police station with plans being considered for its future use. The Johnston, former free school, has been spectacularly repurposed with a dark sky centre, nursery and a range of other uses. In this way the building has been restored by the community and contributes in a very beneficial way to the community. There are a number of areas behind some of the larger properties and buildings in some of the closes where there may be opportunities going forward which will ensure that the buildings survive cared for and contribute to the community differently from the present.

### Maintenance and general care and repair.

There are no more important actions than to maintain properties in a timely manner. However maintenance needs to be carried out using the correct materials which will not cause long term damage to the building. Sometimes this means that patience is required especially

where lime mortar is needed as it may take a bit of time and care. Cement products produce more instant results but they are often the wrong material for stone buildings.

Guidance from Historic Environment Scotland is available to assist owners and occupiers make the best choices.

There are many sources of guidance provided by Historic Environment Scotland on behalf of Scottish Government which can assist owners and occupiers of buildings and spaces to consider how their proposals may impact existing historic fabric and character with ideas on the range of options to design for the best outcome.

The guidance can be found on the following websites.

[The Engine Shed publications and guidance](#)

Historic Environment Scotland's [Managing Change](#)

Management of the character of the conservation area will be supported by

interest in the layout and historic fabric and by the community in Kirkcudbright may have ideas and thoughts which build on the existing successes but may be different and which will contribute to the ongoing vitality and historic interest of Kirkcudbright.

It is worth making reference to the potential for a new bridge in the future which will need to be of a design that preserves or enhances the character of the conservation area.

The Council's website includes updates in respect of the bridge.

The CACAMP is not trying to provide a solution but it acknowledges that it is a significant issue for the character of the conservation area.

