

Kirkcudbright Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Planning Guidance - May 2026



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View from the conservation area over Kirkcudbright marina on the Dee.



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).

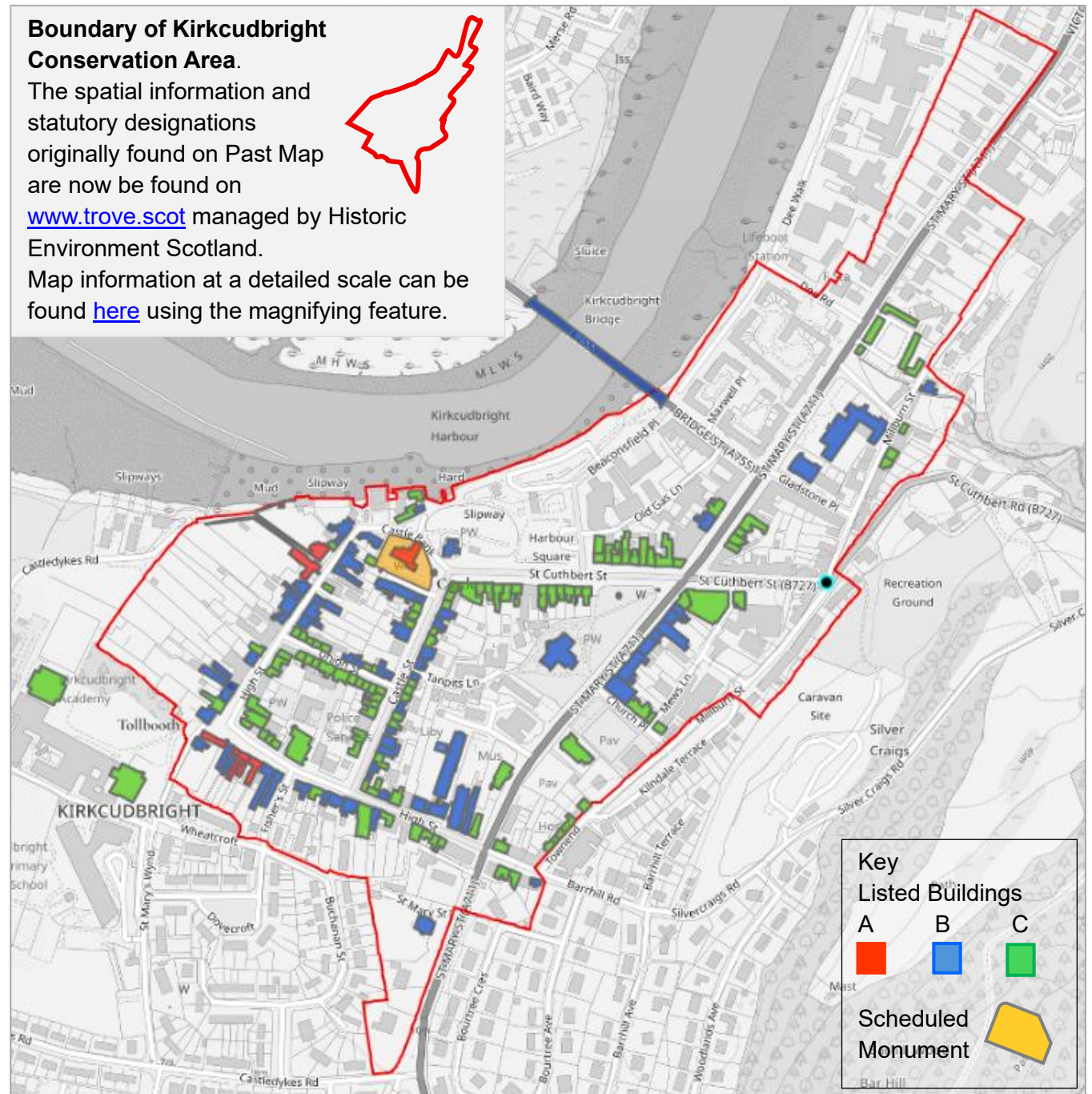
The 1997 Act requires local planning authorities to identify and review areas where historic and architectural character merits conservation area status and to promote management of that character.

In a conservation area, proposals

- should be based on a clear understanding of historic and architectural character and its significance to cultural heritage;
- be designed to avoid or minimise detriment to character or architectural and historic interest and cultural significance; and
- demonstrate that the benefits of the proposal are being achieved in the most sympathetic way.

Boundary of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area.

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



Character is drawn from a combination of many features, layout and the setting of buildings and spaces, including the many Listed Buildings in a designated conservation area which contribute to character.

When planning permission is required, the planning proposal and decision should focus on preserving or enhancing the overall character of the conservation area by maintaining the integrity of the significant elements of that character. Some change within a conservation area is inevitable to meet its changing role, face social and environmental challenges, give buildings long term uses and ensure the conservation area is a vibrant place. New objectives can be achieved with well-designed development and both sensitive and sustainable adaptations. When the overall role of the area alters, the character can remain.

Purpose of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

This document considers the architectural and historic character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area, appraises it and gives guidance on how to manage and limit dilution of the character. It will be used to assess planning application proposals including new

development, alterations, enhancements, upgrades or demolition as they may affect the character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area.

It will help guide owners, occupiers and developers to think through their proposals to ensure they respect historic and architectural character and support sympathetic, sustainable development and adaptations. This will allow existing and new uses to continue in comfortable, healthy, resilient buildings and spaces lasting 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 significant features. Some built structures and spaces have been selected for comment due to their individual 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 actions and decisions that will preserve or

enhance the positive features of character by supporting appropriate adaptation and development of buildings with suitable materials for energy efficiency improvements to reduce the impact on climate change.

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 – assess, investigate and record archaeological evidence;
- 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 generally constructed from local materials such as stone with lime mortars and some are coated in lime wash or lime harling. The buildings in the conservation area come from a range of centuries and decades. Alterations and maintenance should be matched to the original fabric and construction method of each building and sympathetic to its design.

Alterations and maintenance choices can affect an individual building, its neighbours and the character of the whole street depending on where its location.

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

The retrofit industries have recognised that climate change adaptations to buildings will only work effectively when the materials and systems used are compatible with the original building. Some modern materials are hard or impermeable or both, which can cause gradual damage to the fabric, create recurring maintenance issues and cause damp internal environments.

Compatible energy efficiency adaptations for traditional buildings have the best outcome

for the building fabric. This will give long-lasting indoor comfort and preserve outside character. Small-scale renewable energy generation can be carefully chosen.

Planning controls in conservation areas.

Planning laws require permission for the following work.

Demolition of all, or most, of a building or structure needs Conservation Area Consent, with some exceptions. Demolition of a Listed Building always needs consent.

National policy discourages demolition and promotes repurposing. Where a building makes a positive contribution to character, a further presumption against demolition exists as its loss would be detrimental to character. Proposed use of a space created by demolition may affect the decision, so a design for the proposed site may also be required and delivered soon after demolition. Applications 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 paint colour, applying render or cladding, changing exterior doors and creating hard surfaces around buildings continue to need Planning Permission. Renewable energy equipment may need permission, so first check with the Council.

Following changes to the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(Scotland\) Order 1992 \(as amended\)](#) in 2024, alterations or replacement of some windows in conservation areas, in unlisted buildings, may no longer need full planning permission. However, a [Prior Approval](#) should be submitted to establish if the design and details meet the conditions set out in the 2024 amendment, found [here](#).

National legislation requires that all statutorily listed buildings need Listed Building Consent for any alterations. The Council makes Planning decisions using national and local planning policy and guidelines to assess the impact of proposals on the character of a property, those near it and for the whole of a Conservation Area such as Kirkcudbright. Officers may ask for changes to the design to improve the impact on character.

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 the Council to decide if a Tree Preservation Order should be placed on the tree or group, where they contribute positively to the conservation area. National planning policy supports the retention of healthy trees. The extent of proposed works to a tree or group may be rejected or more sensitive alternative works may be requested.

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

Attachments of equipment to the exterior of a building in conservation areas often needs planning permission as they may impact on character. It is usually possible to find discreet locations, sensitively designed equipment or alternative solutions.

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

New buildings need Planning Permission. Design should take account of context, character and architectural themes of nearby buildings and spaces to respect the historic layout. Pre-application guidance may be sought in advance of making an application here: [Get pre-application planning advice | Dumfries and Galloway Council](#)

An **Article 4 Direction** is in place In Kirkcudbright Conservation Area which means that planning consent is needed for work by the Council or other statutory bodies that is in the General Permitted Development Order, 1992 in Classes 30, 31, 41 and 67.

Planning Policy

NPF4 policies and LDP policies support decision making for planning applications.

Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

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

In February 2023, Scottish Government adopted NPF4. It has six overarching spatial principles and 33 policies. Some have direct and others indirect impact on the historic environment.

Those with direct impact and of most significance are considered below.

Just transition recognises that change is needed, from previous policy, 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. National policies support appropriate adaptation measures.



The importance of improving biodiversity is also recognised, including the habitats that old buildings and structures can provide for a range of plants and animals.

NPF4 seeks to preserve character, encourage maintenance and promote enhancement of historic places. This principle is not confined to properties with designations and NPF4 clearly recognises the importance of the whole of Scotland's historic environment and that it will be sustainable if the planning system supports its protection, enhancement and adaptation.

Conserving and recycling assets

There is a firm presumption to reuse and

adapt all buildings and minimise demolition of all or parts of structures. Re-use of buildings of traditional and historic interest with or without historic designation will contribute to this by reducing the number of demolitions of all buildings. It values the embodied energy of the materials, work skills and construction processes and that repurposing is more sustainable than demolition.

“We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste and building a circular economy.”

NPF4 Policy 7 Historic assets and places

This policy makes direct reference to conservation areas, recognising that cultural heritage in Scotland contributes to the economy as well as people’s 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 has a presumption to retain, maintain and adapt buildings where they contribute positively to character, historic or architectural, and to find them beneficial uses. Demolition is a last resort. This will reduce waste and keep the energy

‘locked up’ in the existing fabric. It supports sensitive alterations which minimise waste and carbon emissions and promote energy efficiency.



The granite entrance feature of The Johnston (former school) and St. Mary’s Church (now apartments)

Policy 7 confirms that 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.

To enable good decision-making, policy 7 promotes the need to understand the character of conservation areas. Character

appraisals and management plans are intended to help with this.

As the lead body advising Scottish Government, Historic Environment Scotland [HES] has a range of publicly available guidance, publications and other resources which help the reader understand aspects of the built heritage and which set out national policy and good practice in more detail: [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, sense of place for local people, the economy and the environment.

Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2)

LDP2 was adopted in October 2019. It includes Historic Environment policies which are similar to those of NPF4. General heritage policies and a specific settlement-based policy apply to Kirkcudbright, recognising its district and regional role providing for residents and attracting visitors whose spend supports the local economy and people’s livelihoods.

Conservation areas are successful when owners and occupants understand the need to maintain historic character and fabric and to seek good advice before adapting or altering, and that ongoing, timely, maintenance needs to be carried out using compatible construction materials and sensitive techniques.

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 the [Historic Built Environment SG](#) and a range of supplementary and planning [guidance](#) specific to places or particular buildings or themes.

The new LDP regulations don't allow adoption of new supplementary guidance but continue to allow Councils to adopt planning guidance to support LDP policies. Planning guidance can be updated when there is a change in the legislation.

Kirkcudbright Conservation Area

Kirkcudbright Conservation Area was designated 8th November 1974 and the boundary was modified 9th September 2001. An Article 4 direction was introduced in July

2003 so permission is also needed for development in Classes 30, 31, 41 and 67 of the [General Permitted Development Order 1992](#)

Kirkcudbright in Gaelic is Cille Chùithbeirt, which translates to 'chapel of St. Cuthbert'. The names of some of the churches signal the early link:

- St. Cuthbert's Church of Scotland; and
- St. Andrews and St. Cuthbert RC Church.



Greyfriars Episcopal Church beside MacLellan Castle

There are also church buildings adapted for new uses:

- St. Mary's former Free Church,
- Greyfriars Episcopal Church, and
- United Presbyterian Session Chapel.



MacLellan Castle, Scheduled Monument

There was at least one friary within the boundary of the conservation area, probably a Franciscan House [often called Greyfriars]. Much of its stone may eventually have been used in MacLellan's Castle, circa 1508. The castle is itself ruinous since the 18th century, although it is a Scheduled Monument. It is close to the river estuary, possibly within the area of the Greyfriars.

The town is positioned at the mouth of the River Dee where the river becomes an estuary before entering the Solway Firth.

The estuary is tidal, with a shallow harbour which has long been a significant feature of the historic town.

View to the Dee from Mote Brae, near MacLellan's Castle



Below: Extract from Robert Gordon map circa 1636-52



The east to west Dee crossing took a number of different forms over the centuries.



Top: Former bowstring iron bridge over the Dee from 1868 and Below: B Listed 1926 concrete bowstring bridge over the Dee.

In 1577 it was a simple ferry and possibly before that too. By the mid-19th century, the ferry was a chain-operated, ramped, flat-bed craft, a model of which can be seen in The Stewartry Museum. A wrought iron bowstring bridge was constructed in 1868 with one span opening for shipping. It was damaged by river ice in the 1890s.

The current bridge replaced it in 1926 but the condition of the reinforced concrete has been

deteriorating for decades, made worse by a tanker collision in 1975. A small portion of the eastern end is within the conservation area. The appearance of the crossing is important and is a key route.

The town status was elevated to the rank of a Royal Burgh in 1455. This was highly significant for the development of the town's economy, as it allowed international trade, such as the import of wine from France, timber from the Baltic and, later, tobacco from the West Indies, as well as trade around the Irish Sea. There were several periods of success and also decline in the fortunes of Kirkcubright. It is acknowledged that the profits from tobacco plantations were due to the enslaved people who carried out the cultivating and harvesting so trade through the port also profited from slavery.

Some existing buildings date back to the late 16th century, initiating the layout of the older areas of the town. The current layout grew from this and was largely established by the early decades of the 19th century. The conservation area is largely centred on this.

Later development had wider, straighter streets, but the scale and form of individual buildings continued to resemble those from the 17th and 18th centuries. The established mid-19th century layout is seen on p.10.



[View map: Ordnance Survey, OS town plan - Kirkcudbright, Sheet - Ordnance Survey large scale Scottish town plans, 1847-1895](#)

The following part of the guidance is in two parts:

PART ONE – History, Development and General Character

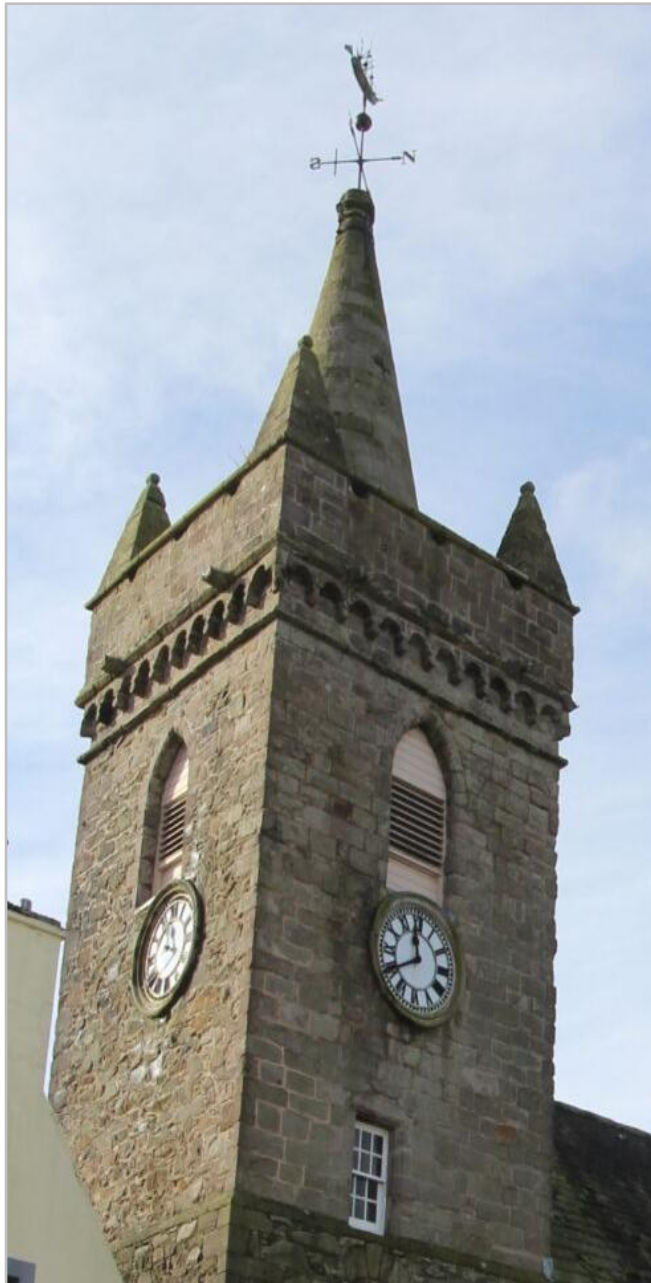
The historical development of Kirkcudbright and an overview of the significant themes and elements which come together to create its character.

PART TWO: Managing Character

Management requires the character to be preserved and enhanced particularly when making planning or improvement 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 supports and catalyses initiatives and suitable actions by individual owners, occupiers and collective groups to preserve or enhance character.



Above left: the Tollbooth tower and spire featuring weathervane and the stone probably repurposed from Dundrennan Abbey. Above right: Deeside Walkway. Repurposed former railway station on St. Mary Street.

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's position within the Solway Coast Regional Scenic Area is recognised along with the significant history associated with it.

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 have taken 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

In the 19th century, in Gatehouse of Fleet, a Scottish family with the surname Faed had become celebrated artists. Perhaps inspired

by this, from 1880 a community of local artists grew up, including E A Hornel. The town became a summer venue for painters from Glasgow and Edinburgh and attracted international artists and makers which continues today.



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

The strong association with creativity has continued and influenced a number of cultural venues, including art galleries, in the town.

Education

There are primary and secondary level schools in Kirkcudbright with a catchment area that includes small, nearby settlements in the surrounding rural areas.

Population and health

The 2022 Census recorded the approximate population of Kirkcudbright as 3230, a small reduction since 2001. The number of people over 50 years old is significantly higher than those under.

Kirkcudbright has better health than the average for the region, however 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. Modest sized housing and flats have been developed in the smaller streets and alleys. Church Row has former alms houses. Newer housing and flats have been developed in the closes near the parish church.

Maxwell Wynd was award winning in the 1970s, and while very much of seventies design, the layout largely respects the street form. It may be modelled on Atkinson Place dating from about 1869, a development of alms houses, laid out around a garden area and now C-Listed. It was social housing of its time built for retired workers and is still managed by the Kirk Session



Photos: A selection of alleys, closes and pends with housing and a variety of dwellings along the streets including large terraced and semi-detached dwellings.

Dwellings in MacLellan Close area are 20th century redevelopment of older buildings and spaces.

Atkinson Place alms houses (top right) date from the 19th century.





Conversions and adaptations

Most buildings and outbuildings in the have found new uses and subdivision and repurposing of under-used buildings continues to take place, creating a good selection of dwelling types. Some become short-term lets which contributes to tourism but may also impact on the housing available for longer term residents.

As seen in the photos, there are many large-scale historic houses. Some of these take the form of grand terraces with access to the rear through pends, alleys and closes where there are private gardens with repurposed outbuildings too.

Tourism is an important element of the local economy. Kirkcudbright is a centre for creativity and art and continues to be successfully marketed as the Artists' Town, using its long historic associations with Scottish art. Art heritage and current artists and makers have a strong presence, drawing visitors from afar and to venues including Hornel's Broughton House, the Tolbooth Museum and Gallery, The Stewartry Museum, Harbour Cottage Gallery and the new Kirkcudbright Galleries, which occupy buildings of historic significance, contributing to the character of the conservation area.



Kirkcudbright is a popular base for outdoor activities – cycling, walking, use of the river, enjoying the landscape and nearby coast, harbour watching and observing historic buildings. Providing visitor accommodation in historic buildings supports a small number of hotels and guest houses, self-catering lets, cafés 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. Local facilities for residents and the wider catchment include a swimming pool.

Open Spaces

Open green spaces are important places in



Kirkcudbright. It is also surrounded by attractive landscape some of which is woodland with a network of trails but there are many more urban green spaces too. The open space makes an important contribution to the character of the conservation area, and allows the location, setting, layout and individual elements to be appreciated.

Soaperie Gardens, seen above, is on the corner of St. Cuthbert's Street and St. Mary's Street. It is a central space adjoining Kirkcudbright Parish Church with many notable trees. The attractive informal layout, with some historic features, and trees provide shade and changing seasonal colours in the middle of town. Kirkcudbright Rotary Club published a guide, available locally, to the 36 different varieties of trees in Soaperie Gardens.

There is a Bowling green on Church Place and Tennis courts on St. Mary's Street.

Mote Brae beside Greyfriars Church on the mound and close to the information centre is now an informal space with some seating and good views over the harbour and mooring area on the River Dee.

Dee Walk is a linear public space with regular trees; good for enjoying the river.

Flooding

Parts of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area are prone to flooding in areas closest to the River Dee estuary and some areas that are vulnerable to surface water flooding. Much of the conservation area has the potential to flood. This can be seen on the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency website [SEPA kkb](#) where information is up to date.

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 17.

Building materials

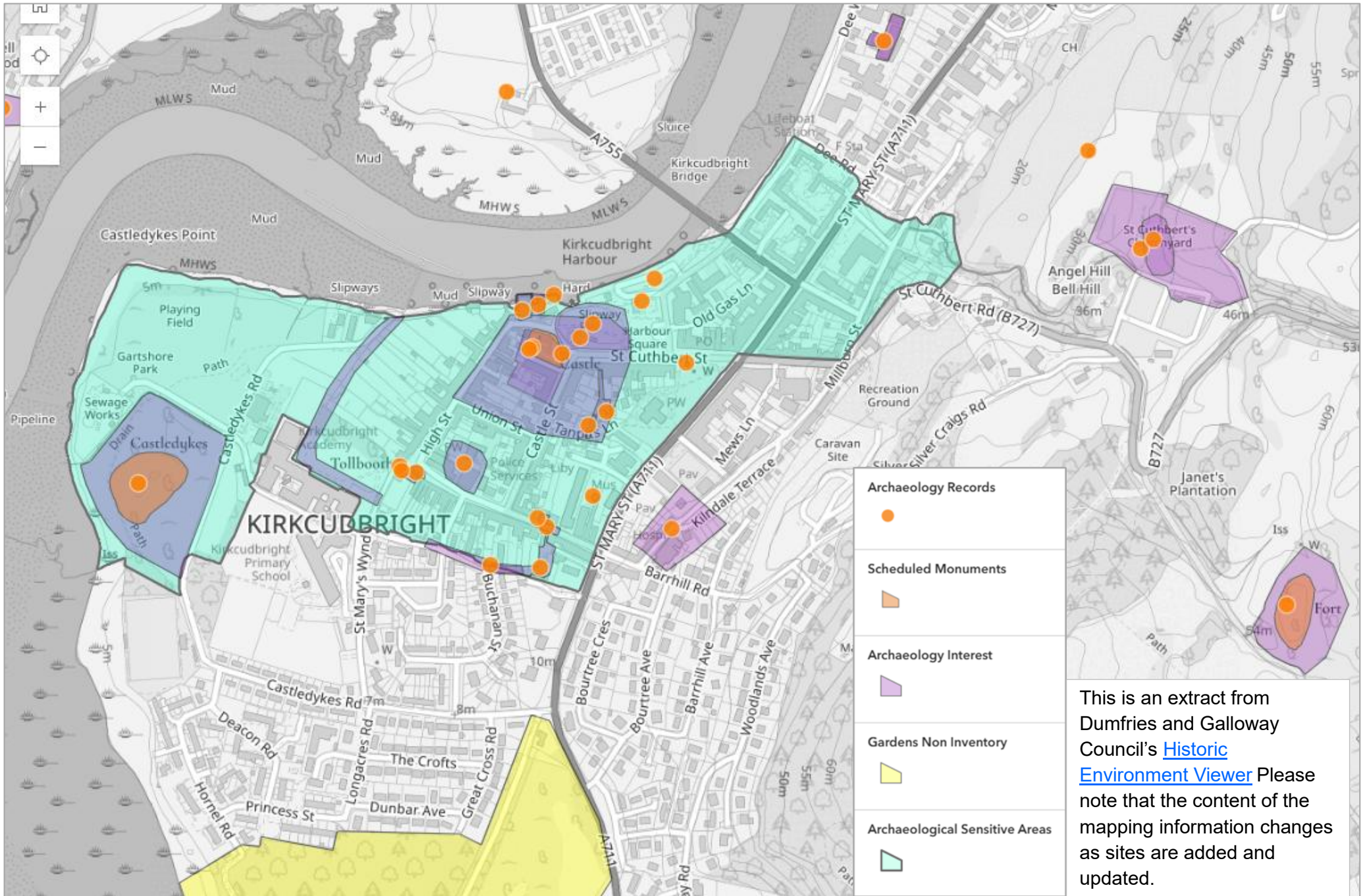
Most of the original building materials are stone pointed with lime under slate roofs. Lime wash and harling were used on a very significant number of buildings. The original finishes are still a feature with some colour variations. Some changes may have taken place in the 18th and 19th centuries and cement renders from the 20th century. Many original elevations remain.

There are a few brick buildings in the conservation area, often outbuildings or small workshops but not usually in prominent positions.

Natural slate is the dominant historic roofing material. Some Scottish slates remain on older buildings, but others are more likely of Welsh or Cumbrian origin. Recent, imported slates have been used which have noticeably changed the roof's colour and slating pattern. Roof ridges are a mix of sandstone and galvanised zinc.



The mix of stone used is sandstone, whinstone and some granite as set out in the table on p.18. There is both rubble walling and cut and dressed stone. The status and age of the building influenced the selection of the stone type, how it was cut and its surface finish.



Building Material	Description	Use
Whinstone (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.
Granite (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.
Red Sandstone (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 th 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. Some may be repurposed from older buildings.
Pink/Grey Sandstone	As above, hard, sedimentary rock with a wide colour range but in this case grey with a pink tinge. Grey sandstone suggests Silurian period so possibly older than some of the red sandstones.	This is found in the spire of Kirkcudbright Tolbooth and it is thought that it may be Netherlaw Sandstone from Rerrick Parish which was quarried as far back as the 12 th century to build Dundrennan Abbey. From its closure in the 16 th century, the abbey stone was used as a source of building stone locally so it would not be surprising to find it may have been used in other buildings in Kirkcudbright.
Brick (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.
Terracotta	Strong coloured, smooth finished, shaped or moulded, fired clay.	Seen as a boundary wall capping and in use for moulded decoration on some buildings but not common in the conservation area
Concrete	Aggregate material used in modern structures and renders.	The most notable use is on the 1926 Kirkcudbright Bridge across the Dee.

History of Kirkcudbright – from Mediaeval to Modern

Every account of history varies, so there are areas with little information and where people disagree. There is no evidence of a settlement at Kirkcudbright before the 9th century, so the early origins are not known. However, fragments of carved stones and Viking grave-goods finds confirm that a church existed in the 10th century. The find of a contemporary linen-smoother, from Millburn Street, may indicate the first traces of the settlement down by the river.

Kirkcudbright takes its name from a kirk or church, dedicated to St. Cuthbert, the patron saint of Northumbria; a 'cult' of St. Cuthbert had begun in the 7th century. Records show that Kirkcudbright church was visited in 1164 by Ailred, the Abbot of Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire. It was sited in a raised position east of the town, where St. Cuthbert's kirkyard is now found. It was probably founded in the 8th or 9th century when Galloway lay under Northumbrian control.

In the 12th century, the Lords of Galloway were powerful with a strong military presence in the Irish Sea and parts of the west coast of Scotland. They had fleets of



war galleys and the natural harbour at the Dee estuary provided good shelter. A timber castle was built on the rise of Mote Brae, to defend the fleet and the early harbour. The town grew up, beside the tidal River Dee, probably from the 12th century and took its name from the Kirk of St. Cuthbert.

There were religious houses established in the area by the 13th century. Some sources suggest 12th century dates for the Greyfriars (Franciscans) in Kirkcudbright.

The developing settlement probably began along the, now L-shaped, High Street. By the end of the 12th century, a royal castle was being built of stone at Castledykes, south-west of the town where it looked over



Stone marking the site of the royal castle at Castledykes with a plaque outlining its shape.

shipping in the Dee, first mentioned in public records at the end of the 13th century.

The castle was taken by Edward I of England in 1300 with other coastal castles. Edward Bruce retook it in 1308 and his

brother King Robert granted it to him. Later in the 14th century, Edward III of England granted the town to John Mareschal after it had been laid waste in previous years. It was recorded as a single L-shaped street on a low gravel ridge.

After the Wars of Independence, at the end of the 14th century, the Douglas family were granted the town as the Lords of Galloway but conflict between the Scottish Crown and the Douglas family peaked from 1452-5. The town was established as a Royal Burgh, receiving a charter in 1455. The charter enabled town business to be conducted under a Provost and Councillors.

In 1456, an unsuccessful attack on the Isle of Man was made from the town, followed by counter attacks and raids. The 9th Earl of Douglas fought with the Stanleys from the Isle of Man. The town was damaged.

Defences may have been built soon after, in the form of a ditch and wall around the town with gates at either end of the High Street. Those structures helped Kirkcudbright successfully defend itself against an English force attack in 1547.

16th century burgh records note that the townsfolk *'barred their gates and manned their dykes'*.



The charter also allowed the town to trade internationally through the port and, for a time, based on customs duty income paid, it was one of the top ten ports in Scotland. Wine from Bordeaux was regularly landed.

During the 1620s, the Tolbooth was built on High Street and held meetings of the Provost and Council, when the economic structure included the Council, Kirk Session, Incorporated Trades Guilds, Masonic Lodges, and other local organisations. It probably replaced an earlier version on the site. It also hosted a range of judiciary functions.

Along the length of High Street, properties had access through alleys, pends and closes to long, narrow plots, used to grow vegetables and keep farm animals. (The strips are now gardens.)

In the late 15th century, Kirkcudbright's affairs were dominated by the MacLellan family.

A parish school opened in 1577, and Kirkcudbright formed a presbytery (an

administration body of the church). In 1582 Thomas MacLellan completed a castle. It was partly on the site of a 15th century Franciscan Friary. A small part of the friary survives close to the castle in the masonry of the chancel of Greyfriars Episcopal Church.

The Meikle Yett was rebuilt in 1590, but it was removed in 1771 and the pillars and ornamental stones were used at the churchyard entrance seen in the photo, p.19.

In 1622, Scotland's first 'New World' emigrants sailed from Kirkcudbright to Nova Scotia on the vessel named The Planter.

Records indicate that by the end of the 17th century there was a mill and beer-brewing.

The prosperity of the town was due to the success of trading activities. Although in the later 15th and 16th centuries it was an important port in Scotland, by 1727 Daniel Defoe wrote:

'Here is a harbour without ships, a port without trade, a people without business: and that which is worse than all; they do not seem to desire business, much less do they understand it'.

In 1754 the road to Dumfries ran northwards through Millburn to a double-

arched stone bridge at Tongland, built in 1737. From the later 18th century The Earls of Selkirk had a major influence in Kirkcudbright's affairs as their extensive estates surrounded the town. The town's population began to grow in in the later part of the 18th century.

Under the Provost Lord Daar, the harbour was repaired and a new quay was built. Newly planned streets were developed to provide more housing, partly funded by two early forms of building societies.

The 'new' streets were Castle Street, St. Cuthbert Street, Union Street and St. Mary Street. Older properties on the High Street were renovated with impressive frontages, some of which remain.

Although there was a school in the 16th century, and probably earlier, in 1766 a two-roomed schoolhouse was built and a new purpose-built school was provided with the support of the Earl of Selkirk. (It was extended many times with support from dignitaries linked with the town.)

Stewartry Turnpike Trustees improved the roads and the 'low road to Dumfries' led northwards past Millburn to cross the Dee using the new Thomas Telford engineered bridge built in 1808 a little bit away from

the earlier 1737 bridge, which remained in place.

Kirkcudbright took on the role of county town of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. The administrative, legal and educational functions carried it through economic changes. The town was considered a desirable place to settle in the 19th century. New public buildings reflected the town's prosperity such as the Parish Church, Town Hall, Sheriff Court, Kirkcudbright Academy and, largely through voluntary donations, the Stewartry Museum. A new, free school, was also built in 1847 endowed in a bequest from Kirkcudbright ship owner and merchant William Johnston.

Boat building was one of the local industries and there was a corn mill and a distillery built nearby as well as a brewery and paper mill close by Millburn.

A new harbour basin was constructed about 1820, which was then replaced in 1910 by the present harbour quay. The railway arrived in 1864 and a gasworks was established in 1892. There were three hotels around this time - the Selkirk Arms, the Commercial and The Royal.

The Dee River at Kirkcudbright was crossed by a ferry until bridged in 1868 with



Above: A-Listed Tongland Bridge finished 1816; engineered by Thomas Telford with architectural elements attributed to the artist Alexander Nasmyth.
Below: A-Listed Old Tongland Bridge, from 1737

a bowstring bridge constructed from wrought iron. The current bridge replaced it in 1926 (photos on p.9).

A creamery opened at the west end of the bridge in 1921, finally closing in 2010. By the 1950s the town's commerce included furniture making, oil distribution and 6 hotels.

From the 1880s there have been artists working in the town. The presence of the returning artist E. A. Hornel, with others, gave the town a new focus and reputation as an artists' community.

In the 1940s, E. A. Taylor, used the term "Artists' Town" in an article he wrote to describe Kirkcudbright. He was an artist, critic and husband of illustrator Jessie M. King.

The town's rich artistic heritage is unique in Scotland and part of Kirkcudbright's more recent history. The survival of many of the most significant historic buildings and structures are linked to their association with artists: Hornel stayed at Broughton House and Jessie M. King stayed at Greengate. Harbour Cottage was saved from demolition in a campaign in 1955 led by artist Charles Oppenheimer and later became a gallery.

In 1957 the former Ship Inn became Kirkcudbright's first art gallery.

In 1993 Tolbooth Arts Centre opened on the High Street attached to the old tolbooth.

The story of the Kirkcudbright School of

local artists features in the B-Listed Kirkcudbright Galleries in the former Town Hall which was built in the late 1880s and adapted and extended in the 21st century to accommodate this use.

The respected Scottish sculptor George Henry Paulin designed Kirkcudbright's War Memorial, unveiled in 1921.

Description of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area

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

- a. The early development began on the Mote Brae or Castle Bank however nothing remains of the buildings, except the name.
- b. To the south, the ridge of higher land was next to be developed. It became the mediaeval burgh with the High Street running south-south-west from Mote Brae to the Tolbooth, then turning sharply east. The Meikle Yett was a defensive gateway on the east side of the medieval burgh where a form of gate remained until 1771.
- c. The mediaeval burgh seems to have been encircled by a wall and ditch. It followed the harbour creek on the east. Beside the Tolbooth at the corner of High
- d. In the earlier part of the 19th century, development took place in St. Mary Street and St. Cuthbert's Street, continuing the formal planned expansion that started with Castle Street. The later streets have quite mixed character with a range of building styles and uses, especially commercial at ground floor.
- e. Development of Millburn is seen on maps from the late 18th century. It was related to the mills and families linked with them. The mills may have been built as early as the 15th century. Millburn remained fairly separate from Kirkcudbright until the 19th century.

Street a marketplace was set up. The mediaeval burgh pattern can still be made out as the buildings or tenements on High Street have regular width frontages and lengths running back from them. The earlier houses were mostly rebuilt and seem to be from the 18th and 19th centuries even though they occupy the burgage plots. From 1790 development took place beyond the old burgh beginning with the planned growth of the town, now Castle Street and Union Street. It was laid out to the plan agreed with the Town Council and the Earl of Selkirk.

Street Pattern and Form

The core of the settlement has largely retained its original layout. 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 section earlier. A few have names in John Wood's mid-19th century plan if viewed at a more detailed scale. This network of public, semi-public and private routes is a strong feature of the character of the conservation area.

Looking at the plan through the link reveals names of property owners or occupiers with Johnston a recurring surname.

The corner of Old High Street, as named in the Wood map, with High Street had a cross and buildings with a courthouse and jail, on the north side. The market took place in the street space. The civic function has changed but the space and its adjacent buildings and have public access at an important historic meeting point in Kirkcudbright.



St Mary's Church conversion to residential and the development behind it.



The Tolbooth Arts Centre and Gallery, completed 1629

Before the later 19th century St. Mary Street was very suburban. However, development began in the mid-19th 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, 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 as a building although the railway closed finally in 1965.

Large villas were developed to the north-eastern end of the street which are within the conservation area and have a particular pattern of development contributing to the character of St. Mary's Street.

The various large buildings near the railway terminus and sidings have been replaced with the Maxwell Wynd housing development.

Millburn Street is roughly parallel to St. Mary's Street and Townend links it with High Street.

Until the 19th century Millburn was perceived as a separate little community from Kirkcudbright centred on 18th century mills including a corn mill and housing for the families working locally. Today only one two-storey corn mill building survives, converted to a pottery, near a mix of houses. The photos on p.29 show the utilitarian, vernacular character of the buildings. Some of the corn mill complex has been repurposed and lost elements of its historic vernacular character.

Setting, Topography, Landscape, Location, Viewpoints and Key Approaches

Kirkcudbright is on the left bank of the river Dee on a narrow gravel ridge with swampy areas and creeks close to the town. On the west of the Dee the glaciated landscape is drumlins, interspersed with rocky outcrops used for rough pasture in fields bound by dry stane dykes. There are clumps of gorse with yellow blooms, much of the year, in the grazed fields.

The underlying geology is mixed but mainly composed of greywackes (whinstone) and siltstones with some igneous intrusions and younger rocks. To the east the land rises towards the granite outcrop of Bengairn and Screel with a rolling topography with glacial

deposits. It is mostly pastureland. There is a military site at Dundrennan southeast of Kirkcudbright used for training and weapon testing. The Dee valley is an important link to the north northeast. A hillside leads up to the east to St Cuthbert's Churchyard and semi-natural woodland. Close beside the town on the southeast is Barwood on Barhill which is an important woodland on rising land and a backdrop to, and view out of, the conservation area.

Within the conservation area the streets open to the harbour car park and harbour and others have the view closed down by Maclellan's Castle.

Views to and from the open space of Soaperie Garden and Mote Brae are key to the enjoyment of the character and many elements of the conservation area. It provides a sense of spaciousness in contrast to some of the densely built up and narrower streets.

Key to character is the interaction between the river frontage, old and more recent development and open space have views to the west.

The views up towards Barwood and west towards St. Mary's Isle from different parts of the conservation area also contribute to

character and the sense of being a compact and small town in a rural and estuarine setting.

Some of the intersections of the streets have corner fronting or feature buildings and spaces which open up these node points.

Currently, from the northwest, the approach is over the Dee Bridge and this leads to Bridge Street which in turn meets St. Mary's Street. The approach is currently dominated by use-restriction signage and temporary traffic controls related to the deteriorating bridge.

From the north-east the approach is through the various stages of suburban development meeting the conservation area at the mainly Victorian semi-detached and detached villas on St. Mary's Street. In the view is the spire of the former St. Mary's Church and beyond that, the spire of St. Cuthbert's Church. This approach comes past the square granite tower of The Johnson and many grand commercial and



former civic frontages which are now in use as cultural spaces.

From the south south-west the view along the road towards the conservation area has the tower and steeple of St. Cuthbert's Church in sight. Leaving the conservation area, in the opposite direction, the wooded hill is a noticeable feature above the modern residential development.

From the south-east the narrow twisty road downhill from the Old Churchyard of St. Cuthbert is wooded on both sides and close to the town, the spire of the former St. Mary's Church comes into view quickly followed by the tower and spire of St. Cuthbert's Church over the roofs of Millburn Street.

A few maps which show the layout and pattern of development of Kirkcudbright.

Previous page: John Wood [Plan of the Town of Kirkcudbright](#) 1843 map image held by National Library of Scotland. L-shaped High Street, wide St Cuthbert's Street and Castle Street are clear in the maps.

Left: 1797 map by John Ainslie with link to digital image held by National Library of Scotland
[John Ainslie Stewartry of Kirkcudbright 1797](#)

Right: 2nd edition OS revised 1907 showing the railway terminus and development to north-eastern end of St. Mary's Street





Millburn Street before and after the completion of the conversion, repurposing and modernisation of the former Corn Mill and grain store in the bottom left photo.

Trees and Hedges

Trees are generally confined to open space areas with some significant trees visible in private gardens.

There are generally no street trees despite the wide streets, however there were in the past. However, there is a line of deciduous trees along Dee Walk by the river and some planted or retained in car parks and spaces around buildings close to streets. The trees are important where they are found as they provide a green setting in the built environment. Soaperie Gardens is a good example referred to previously in the Open Spaces section.

Hedges are not frequent 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 views to it are of great significance to the character. The Parish Church is also very significant in its position close to the main commercial streets.



Trees as seen in Kirkcudbright Conservation Area emphasising the important overall impact they have on the setting.

It dominates the open space on the corner of the two widest streets in the town, its mass and height ensuring 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, is highly significant in views both on its own and grouped with the two 17th century houses to its east. As it forms the corner, views to it are along both sections of the High Street. It is a strong backdrop to the wide part of the street which was a 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 is prominent in views over the town from outside and along the High Street from the east. The buildings referred to are key landmarks in views from the west side of the river and on the approach to the town from the higher ground. The visual impact is amplified by the variation in the massing of buildings and groups on the High Street.

The different scales and forms of buildings create a complex and unique urban form which contributes to character.

The conservation area is dotted with key or prominent buildings which must be regarded as important when considering proposals that will affect them or their setting. They range from the Category A listed Broughton House in High Street to the C Listed 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 the Town Hall nearby.

Only a small number of buildings have been referenced but there are many more buildings of individual and group significance in the conservation area due to the contribution they make to character through simple design, architectural features and their history. Some of those attributes are how they have used local and traditional materials. The main original historic materials used in the masonry of the buildings are set out in the table on page 18.

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 buildings.

There is great variety among the buildings of the town. Some of the very formal Georgian houses have prominent architecture which suggests former social status, such as Broughton House. The grander buildings are often close to smaller single and two-storey houses which have much simpler architectural detailing.

There is also a good deal of contrast in architectural styles and detailing within a street.

Windows and doors

There are a variety of windows and doors across the conservation area and many replacements that impact the character in a variety of ways. Doors, windows and fanlights are very significant to character in many of the properties. Some traditional windows and doors and other architectural elements are included in the following tables.

Original sash and case windows had a variety of formats some with unequal opening lights. Each style is particular to the

character of each building; unfortunately many have been lost.

Original doors include 4 or 6 panelled doors, a number of double-leafed storm doors, plain planked doors and more unusual formats from different periods. Door replacement with non-traditional formats in modern materials has diminished character.

Some very attractive fanlights have been retained; some need a little sensitive refurbishment.



A small selection of the door and window styles in Kirkcudbright Conservation Area to illustrate the range of pane and panel formats and design details.



Roofscape, Townscapes, Building Façades and Architectural Features

The roofs of the town buildings have a mix of high points with chimneys and differently shaped dormers, some half above 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 mainly 2 and 2½ storey elevations and note an occasional oriel window and projecting first and second floor bay; one overhanging gable verge; or the same height eaves line of the terraced buildings along the length of most of the street. Above ground floor, there is a continuity and regularity and occasional features that contrast with the design of the majority.

St. Cuthbert Street is wide. Lengths of roofs are the same height but there are also step changes between others. Most have dormers.

High Street has a range of small roof pitch variations which is also seen in Union Street. The unique roofscape is important to the character of each street.



Historic photos of the area outside the Toll Booth on corner of old and new High Street. Below and left: shops on Castle Street.



Going west, St. Cuthbert Street leads to Castle Street where MacLellan Castle forms a visual stop at the eastern end.

Castle Street has a little height variation and a mix of roofline detail. Most buildings are without dormers but nearly all have kept their chimneys. It is a mix of 2 bay, 2



storey with some 4 bay frontages. There are some unusual frontages which contribute to character as a result of their



contrast with others. High Street has buildings that had former civic functions. There are many formal door-pieces but also entries or pends that lead through to the back of the former burgage plots. High Street has a right-angled turn beside the Tollbooth building, a space which held a market in the past and past the churches.

The window margins through the town and many of the façades 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.

Most buildings have natural slate roofs, skew stones and many have stone ridge and hip cappings. It appears that most of the visible roofing uses small slates in diminishing courses. However, some replacement roofs have a different colour and pattern of slating which diminishes the character.

There is a variety of roof heights; single storey, two storey some with dormers. Nearly all the street frontages are in two storey runs although there may be height variations too. Despite this, generally, the

terraces create quite uniform lengths of roof.



Statement buildings with civic functions are found in places too.

There are large, multi-flue chimney stacks, many with an interesting collection of chimney cans which together 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, others are full dormers and some of both are hipped.

The variety of shapes of dormers, both old and more recent, is of significant interest just as other contrast between the roofs is of interest. Many dormers must offer great views for the occupants over parts of the conservation area and beyond.

Most buildings are not very ornate using simple Georgian themes in their designs. 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 elevations. Some are cut blocks and others rubble; some are finished with paint or traditional lime harling. The roofs have sandstone skews and ridges where they remain.

Shopfronts

There are many existing shop frontages and some window opening sizes and shapes suggest that there were more in the past.

The shop frontages are varied and interesting dating from different periods,

mostly contributing to the character of the conservation area in a very positive way.



Above: Two shop fronts in Castle Street

Of the shopfronts that remain, there is a mix of styles and designs. A few examples follow.

Some are quite typical of Victorian and Edwardian shops, but others seem to date from the earlier Georgian period and may have existed earlier even if slightly modified. They provide a good cross-section of traditional shopfronts in the wider region and a reminder of the use of the role of the buildings they occupy and the mixed uses of the historic streets. There are a few simpler shopfronts, some more traditional in appearance than others. The variety is very much part of the vitality of the streets

Boundaries and surfaces

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

The surfaces throughout the conservation are varied. Some areas of tarmac are in poor condition; concrete has replaced older surfaces. There are stone kerbs remaining many of the originals have been replaced.

Statues, sculptures and cultural pieces.

Through the conservation area are objects of cultural and creative interest. They are placed to tell a story or remember activities and people of the past or simply to attract interest. There is a mix of styles and materials and, some are of national interest. They vary between sombre, serious pieces that provoke thought to flamboyant to reflect local colour. Many have become linked to regional and local activities and national events linked to the community and have become part of the local character.

Selkirk Memorial Cross at the St.Mary's Street entrance to Soaperie Gardens.

Made from granite and designed by J A Heaton carved by a London company.

It was erected in memory of 6th Earl of Selkirk Dunbar James Douglas in 1885 by Cecily the Countess of Selkirk.





Each of the pieces above tells a story of a person or people in history, an event or cultural association with Kirkcudbright. They are found outside MacLellan Castle and Harbour Square.



Left: A view along Castle Street showing variation in the roofscape and streetscape, including the plain stone façades, variety of render or harling surfaces, building heights, variety of dormer, painted window margins, entries to the rear leading to the ruins of MacLellan Castle at the very end.

Following page: an aerial view of Kirkcudbright from the north-east over the harbour, MacLellan's Castle and showing the layout of the streets and the proximity to the sea.



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, there are some major challenges facing the retention of historic character.

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 easily available has increased, and the knowledge in the workforce is changing to be more sensitive to individual buildings. Short guarantees on

work and materials when they may need to be remediated to remain serviceable is not climate or financially 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 locations, panels may increase the wind lift factor and add stresses to the roof that it was not designed to cope with. These are preliminary matters that can be dealt with. Taking advantage of the aspect of the roof slopes on the main house, outbuildings and sloping gardens should also be explored.

New technologies that communities can share rather may be a way forward to reduce the need to have new equipment on every individual house.

Three challenges:

Maintenance

The first of these is maintenance. The trend to replace is resulting in the loss of original features that have already lasted for a long time. Some of this would be unnecessary if a more targeted and regular maintenance

regime was carried out to all buildings such as painting timber, re-puttying windows, regularly painting timber doors, mending roofs especially slipped slates and flashings and repairing and unblocking rainwater goods and rones. It is always best to do this as soon as they are noticed with a regular inspection, so they are noticed.

Climate Change Adaptation

The second challenge is meeting climate change targets and improving living standards within traditional buildings in the conservation area. Modern approaches to insulation and heat retention in traditional buildings can lead to unintended damp inside the property which under-mines the intention. Each building requires an individual approach which should be put together by a suitably qualified energy surveyor with the appropriate qualification which is: "Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency for Older and Traditional Buildings." Conservation experienced architects may also have the necessary knowledge. The choice of materials and methods used can improve energy efficiency and keep the character.

Retrofit Renewable Energy Generation

The third challenge is to consider how to best retrofit solar panels onto or for a traditional building. It is important that the condition of the roof is good before attaching panels of any type as they will prevent slipped slates from being seen and easily repaired. The method of attaching panels to an older roof needs to be very clearly detailed so that there is no unnecessary damage to the slate covering, lead flashings or the sarking boards or batons beneath the slates. If there are outbuildings with a good roof slope in the right direction, they should be considered as an alternative to a main roof. New garden structures could also be considered to support solar panels.

Managing development

New buildings

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. 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 which exists in each street should be noted and repeated. If there is infill development proposed it should take its design cues from the existing buildings closest to it.

New development should respect the layout of the existing streets and where possible, repeat the general existing characteristics. The little lanes may be able to support development if vehicle access does not compromise the character of the street.

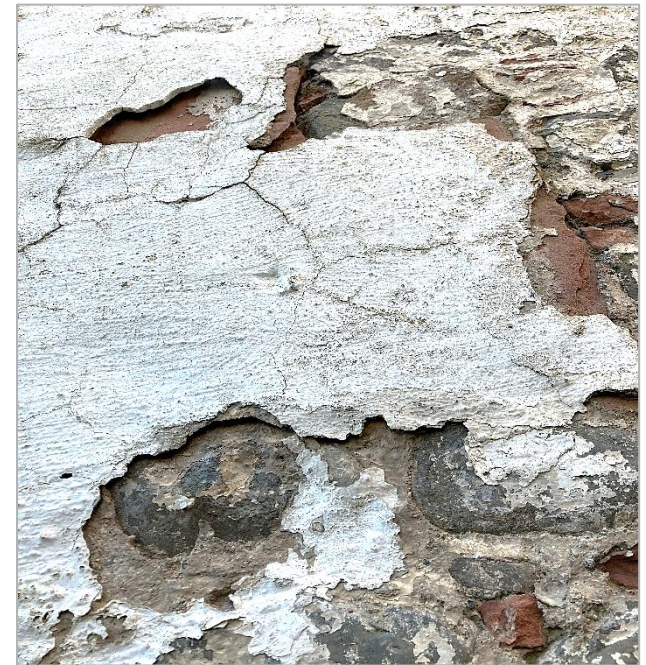
The size of new buildings in the smaller streets should itself be small, in keeping with the modest, lower order of those streets. Larger buildings are better reserved for the main streets if they are carefully designed to limit negative impact on character. There are examples of development that could have been improved by taking on board these themes.

Material choices and maintenance

Some of the materials chosen to finish the elevations of recent new development 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 which should influence the selection of materials; a useful lesson in respect of any further new development that might be proposed.

Damaging use of cement render on whinstone and sandstone rubble elevation now defacing the sandstone.



Alterations to buildings

The most important advice in respect of alterations is that they are based on a proper understanding of the significance of all the elements and materials of a building

in respect of its own character and what it contributes to the wider character of the conservation area.

There has been a move away from traditional materials which were, and are, sustainable and respect the original built fabric without damaging it in the longer term. Modern materials and technologies including paints and renders may have a limited lifespan and a slow but destructive impact on stone elevations, reducing their resilience to weather.

Some windows and doors have been altered too but double-glazing units are susceptible to leakage after 15 to 20 years. Repair to existing windows, doors and adding secondary glazing to the interior and/or an internal lobby door, can have a good outcome over a longer period and the failure of sealed double-glazed panes can be avoided.

Leaving original box frames in place reduces the amount of disruption to the original fabric of the building. A well thought out approach to alterations is needed. Take advice from a surveyor or architect with traditional building expertise to consider all the possible solutions, outcomes and risks before change is made.

Roads and utilities work in the conservation area should be very carefully designed so as not to spoil any of the existing, valued character and ensure that the work puts back surfaces to the standard that is required in a conservation area. Unfortunately, mismatched materials and workmanship is evident already along with poor cleaning, maintenance and repair, illustrating the negative impact.

Changes to street furniture or lighting need to be discussed in advance with the community particularly those people working to promote the character and appeal of the conservation area which in turn attracts tourism income.

New pieces of street furniture, be that signage, information points, transport shelters or benches should be designed to work well with already loved items and groups. Minimising clutter by sharing attachment posts where possible is important too.

The ability to maintain street furniture well should be part of decision making as should removing redundant signs as part of regular care.



Cement pointing damage to sandstone



Pattern and Layout

Much change took place in Kirkcudbright in phases including peripheral developments and repurposing of buildings and spaces. The basic pattern of development and the form of the conservation area remains. This is something that can easily be retained in future proposals.

As Kirkcudbright has a strong historic core and the phases of development since mediaeval times can be read in the layout this should influence proposals.

Different parts of the town have different character. There is contrast between the terraced streets or closely adjacent streets and the more 'suburban villa' character of the north-eastern end of St. Mary's Street with houses in large plots. Millburn Street is also quite different being a modest terraced area.

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.

Shop fronts

New shop fronts where they are proposed should be simple or based on the form of another traditional frontage. In many cases the frontage of buildings would need very little adaptation, just signage, particularly where there are already enlarged downstairs windows from previous use as a shop.

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 of the building, the street and the wider character of the conservation area. Policy encourages the re-use and adaptation of existing rather than removing any elements. However, there will be instances when a simple modern design may be a good solution.

Advertisements and signage

There is business signage attached to traditional buildings in the conservation area. There are also some free-standing signs 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 has a minimal area of attachment which can be as effective as large signs. Listed Buildings may have additional requirements to minimise signage, to preserve their character.

Repurposing buildings and spaces

There are few unused and under-used buildings, outbuildings and spaces. The success of Kirkcudbright as a place has resulted in buildings being successfully repurposed but also a few recently vacated buildings awaiting re-use.

The Johnston, former free school, has been impressively repurposed including 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 in the future.

Maintenance, general care and repair

There is no more important action than to maintain properties in a timely manner, using the correct materials. This prevents 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 and extra knowledge although the trade skills are the same. Cement products produce more instant 'repairs' than lime products but they are often the wrong material for stone buildings.

Guidance from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) help us make the best choices. Some sources of HES guidance are provided on behalf of Scottish Government to assist owners and occupiers of buildings and spaces to consider the impact their proposals may have on historic fabric and character and give ideas on the range of options 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](#)

A particularly useful page is:

[Common Problems in Buildings | The Engine Shed | Part of HES](#)

Conclusion

Management of the character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area will be supported by continuing interest in the place, its layout, historic fabric and the community. Coming together with ideas and thoughts which build on the existing successes will engage the people who live and visit and will contribute to the ongoing vitality and historic interest of Kirkcudbright. There are a number of community groups promoting work which does this in Kirkcudbright.

At the time of publication, conversations and engagement with Kirkcudbright community have begun to discuss the options and 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 to everything but to encourage thoughtful approaches to change so that the character of Kirkcudbright Conservation Area continues.



The Johnston