

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Development Management Sub-Committee
DATE	14 February 2013
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report outlines the Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan as a basis for public consultation.
- 1.2 The key section of this document is the management plan element, which is appended to this report. The document in its entirety can be viewed by accessing the following link:

[www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/masterplanning](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/masterplanning)

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) Approve the Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan for a six week public consultation period.
- (b) Agree that, following completion of the public consultation, any comments received and subsequent amendments to the document be presented to a future meeting of the Sub Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no known legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety policy implications arising from this report.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Aberdeen has eleven conservation areas, many of which were established over forty years ago, however, only five of them have a character appraisal and none

have a management plan. The Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan is the first step in a comprehensive review of our conservation areas leading ultimately to Supplementary Guidance that includes character appraisals for all conservation areas and an overarching management plan to protect and enhance them.

- 5.2 Conservation areas are defined in legislation as being “*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997). Conservation area designation embraces the quality and interest of an area as a whole, rather than individual buildings within it.
- 5.3 Under current legislation, conservation area designation automatically brings the following works under planning control:
- Demolition of buildings;
  - Removal of, or works to, trees;
  - Development involving small house extensions, roof alterations, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior, provision of hard surfaces and additional control over satellite dishes; and
  - Minor works that are “permitted development” elsewhere such as replacement windows and doors.
- 5.4 The *Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012* commits the Council to producing conservation area character appraisals in order to support the built heritage planning policies, specifically Policy D4 – *Aberdeen’s Granite Heritage* and D5 – *Built Heritage*. The Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan includes character appraisals for six conservation areas that have not previously had one prepared – Albyn Place/Rubislaw; Bon Accord/Crown Street; Cove Bay; Ferryhill; Great Western Road and Marine Terrace. Building on the appraisals a management plan has been developed that covers all of the conservation areas and provides generic guidance to help secure their long-term viability.
- 5.5 The character appraisals and management plan have been combined to form one document. Following public consultation the Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan will be amended in light of comments received and presented again to the Sub-Committee for consideration as Interim Planning Advice. As such it is intended to provide guidance to the public and help developers identify and formulate proposals in conservation areas. It will be used as a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning; advertisement; tree work; listed building and conservation area consent applications.
- 5.6 It is intended that the document will be updated in due course to include the remaining five conservation areas that currently have character appraisals (Footdee; Old Aberdeen; Pitfodels; Rosemount and Westburn and Union Street) once these have been reviewed. Ultimately one document will cover all conservation areas in Aberdeen and be approved as Supplementary Guidance.

## Management

5.7 The six conservation area character appraisals define and evaluate key attributes such as buildings, streets, views and open space that contribute towards the areas' special architectural and historic interest. The appended management plan section summarises the common threads in the character appraisals and provides generic guidance for all conservation areas and specific guidance for extensions in the West End Office Area of Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area.

5.8 It also includes the following two proposals:

### De-designation of Cove Bay Conservation Area

Cove Bay Conservation Area was designated in 1975. There have been significant developments in the village since that date as well as a large number of seemingly minor alterations that have had the cumulative effect of seriously eroding Cove Bay's special character to such a degree that it no longer meets the legal definition of a conservation area.

5.9 De-designation would restore Permitted Development rights to householders in the village; however there is still an Article 4 Direction in place that removes these rights from development on the principle elevations. It is intended that this Article 4 Direction is also removed once the Government has completed its review of Permitted Development rights for non householder development, which is expected later this year.

### Boundary amendments to Ferryhill Conservation Area

5.10 Deletion

1 -121 Whinhill Gate

1 - 19 Fairfield Way

1 – 6 Polmuir House, Fairfield Way

This late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development on the western fringes of Ferryhill Conservation Area does not contribute its special historic or architectural character and should be removed. As with Cove Bay Conservation Area these properties would still be covered by an Article 4 Direction until it is removed.

5.11 Addition

4 – 10 Devanha Gardens West

This is a well preserved terrace of four early 20<sup>th</sup> century properties showing an Arts and Crafts influence that adds to the historic street scene and should be included in Ferryhill Conservation Area. The rest of the northern side of Devanha Gardens West already lies within the Conservation Area.

## Public consultation

5.12 Initial scoping consultation was conducted with organisations representing key interest groups, such as the relevant local Community Councils, and no issues were raised at that stage. The Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plan will be the subject to public consultation and will be amended in light of the feedback received before being put before the Sub Committee for final approval as Interim Planning Advice. The relevant Community Councils, heritage

groups and the general public will be consulted on the document through the Council's web site; public libraries; Marischal College and local drop in sessions.

## 6 IMPACT

- 6.1 The proposal contributes to the Single Outcome Priorities 10: *We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need* and 12: *We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.*
- 6.2 The proposal contributes to Smarter Aberdeen's aspiration of *Smarter Environment – Natural Resources* – providing an attractive streetscape.
- 6.3 The proposal contributes to the EP & I Directorate Priority 3: *Protect and enhance our high quality natural and built environment* and to the Planning and Sustainable Development Operational Priority PSD3: *Protect and enhance our heritage and high quality built environment.*

## 7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/9/contents>

Scottish Government's Planning Advice Note  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/12/20450/49052>

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2012)  
<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=42278&slD=9484>

## 9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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## 2 Management Plan

### 2.1 Working assumptions

This guidance is intended to add more detail, where required, to Scottish Planning Policy as set out in the *Scottish Historic Environment Policy* (2011), and to policies within the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 (see Appendix 1). It covers all eleven of Aberdeen's conservation areas, unless otherwise specified. This is because there are a large number of generic management issues that emerged from the conservation area character appraisals in section 3. In considering the future of our conservation areas we have used the following working assumptions:

- a) Conservation areas are managed by a large number of stakeholders – businesses, residents, the City Council and other agencies. Together they share responsibility for their care and maintenance. Aberdeen City Council has a statutory duty to protect and enhance the historic environment. We will try to ensure that initiatives and projects in the area are mindful of that and that work is carried out in partnership with stakeholders.
- b) We have had conservation areas in Aberdeen for over forty years and some have stood the test of time better than others. Inevitably mistakes have been made and we want to learn from them. For the future we want to ensure that our conservation areas are those whose historic environment is the most worthy of protection and enhancement. We also recognise that planning requirements are more stringent in conservation areas particularly with regard to the removal of Permitted Development (PD) rights (Appendix 3). To that end we will amend boundaries or de-designate any areas where a robust, evidence based case for retaining conservation area status can no longer be made.
- c) Conservation areas are more than historic buildings and spaces. They help give Aberdeen its distinct sense of place, telling the story of our common past. Although this document is primarily aimed at the physical fabric of conservation areas we recognise the important role that they play in the City's environmental sustainability, economic and social wellbeing. We welcome opportunities to work with residents and businesses to promote and improve our conservation areas as attractive places to live and work.

## 2.2 SWOT analysis

The following SWOT analysis draws together the various general characteristics of Aberdeen's conservation areas. It provides a basis from which to develop strategies to conserve all that is positive, identify opportunities to enhance it, and address the negative issues.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread use of granite as a construction material provides architectural cohesion and a strong sense of place despite diverse building styles</li> <li>• Affluent city that suffered little bomb damage</li> <li>• Distinctive conservation areas such as Old Aberdeen and Footdee</li> <li>• Integrity of the C19 suburban conservation areas</li> <li>• Clear street hierarchy with emphasis on linear grid pattern of the development</li> <li>• High quality buildings, many of which are listed, generally in good state of repair and maintenance</li> <li>• Abundance of street trees, open spaces and trees/vegetation within front gardens/courtyards that soften the extensive use of granite as a building material</li> <li>• Range of detailing especially on upper floors</li> <li>• Sustainable, permeable development layouts well suited to walking</li> <li>• Public transport linkages</li> <li>• Small, compact city centre</li> <li>• Undulating topography</li> <li>• UK's only commercial harbour in the heart of a city centre</li> <li>• Relationship to planned urban parks and landscapes</li> <li>• Article 4 Directions removing permitted development rights in most conservation areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property tenure often fractured with individual buildings in multiple ownerships with no/inadequate factoring arrangements in place. This leads to poor ongoing property maintenance.</li> <li>• Absentee landlords</li> <li>• Inappropriate development in past e.g. windows and dormers</li> <li>• Few conservation area character appraisals and no management plans to date</li> <li>• Lack of sustained co-ordinated development/management over past 40 years</li> <li>• Varying standards and styles in roads maintenance and street furniture.</li> <li>• Loss of the original development pattern and boundary walls due to back land developments, car parking and rear extensions.</li> <li>• Inappropriate signage materials, proportions and colours</li> <li>• Loss of traditional street signage</li> <li>• Satellite dishes</li> <li>• Heavy goods vehicles in city centre accessing harbour</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use both the built and natural heritage in conservation areas to help promote Aberdeen as a desirable location in which to live, do business and visit</li> <li>• Heritage led regeneration and integration with initiatives to revitalise Union Street and city centre</li> <li>• Encourage active community involvement in conservation area management</li> <li>• Programme of public realm, signage and street improvements that encourage sustainable transport and community well being</li> <li>• Redistribution of both commuter and heavy vehicles to the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will free up road space that can be assigned to sustainable transport initiatives</li> <li>• Work with the area's natural topography to create interest and celebrate a local sense of place</li> <li>• Reinstate street trees where these have been lost</li> <li>• Repair and reinstatement of traditional cast iron railings</li> <li>• Preparation of design statements to support planning applications with an emphasis on a contextual appraisal for new developments</li> <li>• Improve use of informal open space</li> <li>• High quality contemporary design, materials and detailing that add to the character of conservation areas</li> <li>• Education to ensure property owners are aware of the history and value of conservation areas, information on how to maintain historic buildings and their obligations as property owners (especially with regard to tenement properties and communal repairs)</li> <li>• Upgrade Aberdeen City Council's existing conservation area web based information and Technical Advice Notes</li> <li>• Conservation areas are a rich resource for environmental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing retail patterns and short term uses</li> <li>• Diminishing public investment</li> <li>• Economic downturn affecting investment in property maintenance and improvements</li> <li>• High land values resulting in over development</li> <li>• Car parking – both on and off street</li> <li>• Loss of vegetation in the front courtyard and rear gardens due to car parking and extensions</li> <li>• Unsympathetic development which does not reflect or relate to the character of the conservation area</li> <li>• Lack of public resources to manage conservation areas</li> <li>• Cumulative effects of incremental minor changes – windows, doors, removal of boundary walls etc</li> <li>• Removal of conservation area status</li> </ul>

The character appraisals reveal a large number of common issues facing our conservation areas, many of which are shared across the country. A number of factors need to be considered in order to manage the future of our conservation areas, ensuring that their historical character and assets are protected and maintained. Some of these topics are already the subject of national and local guidance and others are more ones of day to day management and maintenance:

### **Development**

- Control the design and type of development within the conservation area, ensuring it is sympathetic and of high quality.
- Ensure the appropriate use of materials with regard to longevity and sustainability to protect and enhance the character and quality of the conservation area in the long term.
- Require the submission of design statements and contextual appraisals for new developments.
- Encourage the adaptive re-use of buildings and mixed use projects that address physical, visual or economic decline, subject to compatibility with neighbouring property and uses.
- Increase maintenance through awareness and education of owners about the importance of their buildings and responsibilities.
- Support increased energy efficiency measures in buildings where this does not conflict with conserving the historic environment
- Control the proportions, style, materials and quality of shop signage within the conservation area.
- Only allow repair and replacement of windows and doors with those of traditional style, proportions and materials.
- Ensure placement of burglar alarms so that they provide their function without having an adverse impact on the character and amenity of the building.
- Prevent the proliferation of satellite dishes.
- Stem the decline in the numbers of trees in private properties by encouraging the planting of trees and sound management of existing trees.

### **Public realm**

- Compile a rationalisation and repair strategy to reduce the street clutter, repair damage to pavements and identify areas where significant further investment is required for renewal.
- Increase the opportunity for the enhancement and improvement of the public realm including street tree provision, reinstatement and repair of iron railings, rationalisation of street furniture and signage
- Ensure adequate enforcement for utilities companies who breach the conditions of their reinstatement certificate, or complete the works with damage or disregard to the conservation area.



## 2.3 Generic guidance for all conservation areas

There are several common issues and the following generic guidance will apply to all conservation areas:

### A Design statements

Applications for development in a conservation area need to be accompanied by a design statement unless the development comprises the alteration or extension of an existing building. We strongly recommend however that developers do provide one for significant alteration or extensions of existing buildings in conservation areas based on the guidance in Planning Advice Note [68](#) *Design Statements*. The design statement will outline:

- the significance of the site in terms of the setting of the conservation area, using the character appraisals as a basis;
- the design approach used, including concepts and design development;
- an assessment of the impact that the design and layout of the development proposal would have on the conservation area.

This helps the planning officer understand the issues more easily, which in turn enables the application to be processed more swiftly.

The quality of design in conservation areas could be improved by referring projects at the pre-application stage to the Aberdeen City and Shire Design Review Panel for consideration.

### B Development form

A high quality standard of design will be expected from proposals for new development and alterations in conservation areas. Where appropriate we will encourage good quality contemporary design that makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and whose materials are sympathetic to the local building palette. If a traditional approach is considered more appropriate, the architectural detail, proportions and material should reflect local distinctiveness.

Preserved patterns of development, open spaces and building lines all contribute to an area's form and character. These features require special consideration in the face of development pressures. A careful and holistic consideration of the building and its

setting is always the starting point when assessing development proposals in a conservation area. The context and prevailing scale of existing historic buildings should be respected. Where possible proposed development should enhance or maintain views of local landmarks and the wider townscape character as detailed in the individual conservation area character appraisals.

## **C Sustainable development**

The impacts of climate change are far reaching and affect the existing historic built environment as much as new development. A holistic approach to adapting and “climate-proofing” both existing and new buildings will be encouraged wherever possible. Care should be taken to ensure that such proposals integrate with their context and do not harm the special character of the conservation area. Measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change will be encouraged in both existing and new development. Please see websites in the Bibliography (Appendix 5) for more information about adapting historic buildings to make them more energy efficient.

New development in conservation areas must consider the location, site layout and orientation of buildings, outdoor spaces and the connectivity of their proposals together with ventilation and cooling, insulation, drainage and water requirements of the development and the visual impact these may have on the conservation area. It should comply with the sustainability requirements and expectations for all development, but at the same time take account of its location in a conservation area.

## **D Disabled access**

When considering historic building alterations opportunities to improve the accessibility to all sections of the community should be included in the development proposals, except where it can be demonstrated that it would seriously harm the conservation area’s historic or architectural significance. Whilst there can be a conflict between the retention of historic fabric and improving accessibility it is usually possible to improve the situation with careful and holistic consideration of the building and its setting.

Similar considerations need to be taken on board when designing the public realm to ensure that, for example, surfacing materials respect the historic character of the place, but are easy to negotiate for those with visual or mobility impairments. For more information please see Historic Scotland’s [Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Accessibility](#).

## **E Roads**

The streetscape is an enormously important element of our conservation areas, many of which feature extensive linear streets as a defining feature. In the [Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012 Policy D4 Aberdeen’s Granite Heritage](#) we are committed to

retaining original granite setted streets and granite pavements in conservation areas as they are such a defining ingredient of the city's streetscape. The individual character appraisals identify streets and lanes that make a particularly important contribution to a conservation area, including historic roads and those with granite sett surfaces. This information can be used to help prioritise road improvement and maintenance programmes in conservation areas.

There can sometimes be conflicts between the historic environment, and the tourism economy it helps to sustain, with other factors such as accessibility and maintenance costs. Our policy is clear that granite setted streets and pavements should be retained, however careful design and thought has to be given to how this is best achieved on a street by street basis. For example some of our existing setted streets are uneven making access difficult for those with limited mobility. In such cases it may be more appropriate to lay new replacement granite setts to ensure a level surface in areas of pedestrian traffic whilst using salvaged granite setts in other locations.

Many largely tarmaced streets still retain granite setts and crossings that can help manage traffic speed as well as side gutters that serve to emphasise the linear quality of most of our streets. Cumulatively these features make a very strong positive contribution to our conservation areas and should be retained.

## **F Street signage**

The individual street letter tiles with their trademark directional pointing fingers are found in all of our conservation areas with the exception of Cove Bay. They are a very significant element in Aberdeen's streetscape and unique in Scotland. As the conservation area character appraisals have noted, many of these traditional road signs are being lost and replaced with inappropriate modern signage. Within conservation areas historic street signage should be replaced with similar traditional street letter tiles. As part of our road maintenance repair programme we will replace modern style signage in the city centre and identified key conservation area streets with traditional street signage on a phased basis.

## **G Street furniture**

The character appraisals in section 3 have identified clutter and uncoordinated seating, litter bins, bollards and lighting as issues that detract from the conservation areas. The design and quality of street furniture is one clear way of re-enforcing the historic development pattern and hierarchy of spaces. The streetscape quality should be commensurate with its conservation significance.

## **H Commemorative signage**

Signage on buildings can add to the visual clutter of a conservation area; however some interpretation and memorial signage can enhance understanding. In many instances signs will require advertisement consent and we already have supplementary guidance that covers signage. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992 however excludes memorials from its definition of advertisement. Listed building consent is required where the erection of a plaque materially affects the building's special architectural or historic interest. In instances where all of the following criteria apply to memorials we will treat them as not making a material difference to a listed building provided that the memorial:

1. is only on a category B or category C listed building. Category A listed buildings will normally require consent;
2. does not exceed 500mm in diameter;
3. located not below 1m from entrance level and not more than 3m above.;
4. is the only plaque on the building;
5. is secured in place using non ferrous fixings positioned into the mortar joints

## **I Open spaces and parks**

Landscaped open spaces and planned urban parks make a valuable contribution to the character of our conservation areas. The relationship of the built environment and street pattern to these spaces must be evaluated to demonstrate how they are conserved and enhanced in any new development proposal. Clearly identifying ownership and maintenance responsibilities will help target opportunities. The Council's [Open Space Supplementary Guidance](#) and [Open Space Strategy](#) contain further advice on appropriate management and enhancement of existing areas of open space.

## **J Parking in front gardens**

Granite boundary walls are a strong feature of our conservation areas. They help to define the streetscape making a clear delineation between public and private realm. They are particularly important in unifying a street, especially when accompanied by appropriate railings. We will seek to retain such walls in conservation areas. Allowing the removal of front garden boundary walls to create parking spaces in front gardens will result in fragmented street frontage and public realm and will therefore be resisted in most circumstances. Parking in all but the largest front gardens, which already have been designed with driveway access in mind, will have a detrimental effect on the setting of buildings in the conservation area, potentially obscuring important features. Please see the [Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance](#) for more details.

## **K Trees**

It is important to retain existing mature trees as they add to the amenity value of the conservation areas. They also provide other benefits to the urban environment such as wildlife habitat and visual diversity as the seasons change. An arboricultural impact assessment is needed for any development sites in conservation areas that have mature trees on them as part of any planning application. Any tree loss will be subject to the requirement for two for one replacement planting and where this is not possible on the site an alternative planting site will have to be found nearby. Please see the Council's [Trees and Woodlands Supplementary Guidance](#) for more information.

Street trees make an important contribution to the streetscape and emphasise the linear nature of many of the roads in our conservation areas. They are valued by the public, however the root systems of some of the original species planted have spread, lifting up pavement slabs and undermining boundary walls. This has resulted in trip hazards and accessibility difficulties. Whilst street trees are to be retained wherever possible there is a fine balance to be struck between this objective and addressing hazards to the public. Where replacement or new street tree planting is proposed this should include details of the use of a root management system to prevent future damage to the adjacent hard surfaces. In many instances the replacement tree species may be a smaller variety to reduce potential trip hazards.

## **L Neglected buildings and land**

The condition of buildings, streetscape and land can strongly influence the appearance and character of a conservation area. Uncared for buildings that are poorly maintained and in a state of disrepair, together with eyesore sites, can have a significant adverse impact on the whole area. Working with [Aberdeen City Heritage Trust](#) we will encourage owners to maintain their properties and land. There may be occasions where more stringent action is required and in such circumstances we will use the statutory powers available to us as a local planning authority.

## **M Buildings at Risk**

The [Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland](#) (RCHAMS) maintains a national [Building at Risk Register for Scotland](#) on behalf of Historic Scotland that identifies historic buildings in a serious state of disrepair and/or with no current viable use. Five of the 25 buildings on the Register in Aberdeen are located in conservation areas. We will work with Historic Scotland, other agencies, owners and developers to improve the condition of these neglected buildings and bring them back into use.

## **N Review of Article 4 Directions**

All conservation areas in Aberdeen, with the one exception of Rosemount and Westburn, have an Article 4 Direction on them which removes householder Permitted Development (PD) rights. These Directions were put in place to protect the conservation areas from the adverse effects of cumulative inappropriate minor changes. In 2012 the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 came into force that removed PD rights from all residential properties in conservation areas, which has very broadly the same effect as the Article 4 Directions. It is likely that the Government will extend this further to include non-residential properties. At that point we will review our Article 4 Directions and, subject to legal guidance, remove or amend them as appropriate. This does not apply to the Article 4 Directions for Kingswells and Burnbanks Village as these settlements are not conservation areas.

## **O Information and communication**

Informed decisions in conservation areas need to be based on accessible up to date information and we will provide information about conservation areas and their practical implications for residents and businesses on our website. We welcome working with local amenity and community groups, the public and other interested parties who wish to improve or promote understanding of their local conservation area as far as resources permit.

## **P Review and monitoring**

**P1 Review:** all conservation areas change over time and it is our intention to review them every five years to ensure that the individual character appraisals and management plans are up to date, reflect contemporary issues and relate to subsequent reviews of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. This will be dependent upon budget and other constraints existing at that time. Public consultation will be carried out where there have been substantial changes in a conservation area or where significant modifications to the document or conservation area boundaries are proposed. The role of this document will also be reviewed periodically as part of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan process.

**P2 Photographic surveys:** in June 2012 we conducted a detailed photographic survey of all buildings and open spaces within the conservation areas to give us clear baseline data to enable us to monitor future changes. We intend that this survey should be carried out every ten years in the conservation areas, subject to available resources.

**P3 Observation:** officers from the planning authority visit conservation areas at regular intervals and check on the progress of any restoration and enhancement schemes. They can also note any unauthorised development works that do not have the necessary planning consents and take appropriate enforcement action.

## **2.4 Guidance for individual named conservation areas**

### **Q Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area Rear extensions to terraces in the West End Office Area**

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan supports the principle of office use in the West End Office Area. This Area lies within Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area and comprises a large number of listed buildings. These large, predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings come under considerable development pressure for new or enlarged rear extensions. Properties are generally set within proportionately large feus served by rear access lanes with some coach houses and later garages. Usually rear extensions can be successfully accommodated on detached and semi detached properties.

The terraced properties in the West End Office Area are all Category B listed buildings and, as such, are more sensitive to inappropriate development. There can sometimes be a conflict between the drivers of supporting commercial development on the one hand and conserving our historic environment on the other. These terraces are:

1 – 23 (odd) & 2 – 18 (even) Albert Terrace;  
1 – 16 (inc) Albyn Terrace;  
1 – 10 (inc) Queen's Terrace and  
1 – 26 Rubislaw Terrace.

When considering planning and listed building applications for rear extensions on the above terraces we will take into account national advice set out in Historic Scotland's [Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Extensions](#) and also the Albyn Place/Rubislaw Conservation Area Character Appraisal in 3.1.

We will assess proposals for rear extensions to address the following:

### **Q1 Relationship to the principal building**

Any extension should allow the listed building to be understood and appreciated. The form, scale, design and materials of any proposed development should complement and relate to the principal building and not normally exceed 30% of the original rear garden size.

The traditional extension building form is an offshoot to the side of the building. Where an extension is centrally positioned across the rear of the listed building it should not normally extend more than 70% of the feu width and respect the location of existing windows and doors. In general extensions should not be greater than a single storey in height above ground level (excluding sub basement level if present) unless:

- (i) the design is of an exceptionally high quality with reference to scale; massing; materials; detail and setting and/or
- (ii) it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that a larger extension is required to act as enabling development to secure the long term viability of the listed building.

## **Q2 Context**

Rear extensions do not impact solely on the principal listed building, but also on the wider terrace. Any proposed development will be assessed in terms of its impact on the adjoining listed buildings and on the terrace as a whole. Some terraces have had more and larger rear extensions than others and these variations should be taken into account when assessing any development. Contextual analysis and drawings will be required to support planning and listed building consent applications.

## **R Cove Bay Conservation Area**

### **Removal of conservation area status**

The Cove Bay Conservation Area character appraisal in section 3.3 details an area in severe decline that no longer meets the legal definition of a conservation area as being “*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. Without solid community support and action Cove Bay would become a conservation area in name only. This character appraisal documents insufficient evidence to retain Cove Bay as a conservation area. After careful consideration it is recommended that Cove Bay Conservation Area is de-designated and that the existing Article 4 Direction be removed. This reflects the basic assumption set out in 2.1 b) that “we will amend boundaries or de-designate any areas where a robust, evidence based case for retaining conservation area status can no longer be made.”

**What would this mean in practice for local residents?**



Removing the conservation area designation and the Article 4 Direction that would restore householder permitted development rights currently removed from properties within the Conservation Area. Residents would be able to undertake certain minor works to their properties without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights). For more information please see summary in Appendix 3. This would not apply to Listed Buildings where Listed Building Consent would still need to be obtained for works affecting their special character

Because removing conservation area status and the Article 4 Direction are two separate legal processes there is likely to be a time lag between them. This could result in a situation where conservation area designation is removed, but residents would not yet have full householder permitted development rights because the Article 4 Direction is still in force. To avoid unnecessary confusion we would inform residents of changes to both conservation area designation and the Article 4 Direction, outlining what difference this makes in practice to them.

De-designating Cove Bay as a conservation area would remove protection from trees unless they were covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Felling and substantial pruning of trees would no longer need consent and this could lead to a loss of tree cover. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in Cove Bay Conservation Area at present however we will make an arboricultural assessment of the area with a view to making Tree Preservation Orders as necessary.

Property prices in conservation areas can often be are slightly higher, which could be adversely affected if designation is removed. This is unlikely to be the case in Cove Bay however because the quality of the area's historic environment has deteriorated over a long time.

## **S Ferryhill**

### **Conservation area boundary changes**

#### **S1 Proposed deletion**

One of the basic assumptions set out in 2.1 b) is that “we will amend boundaries or de-designate any areas where a robust, evidence based case for retaining conservation area status can no longer be made”. There has been substantial residential development in the Whinhill Gate and Fairfield Way area of Ferryhill Conservation Area since designation that does not add to its architectural character. It is recommended that the Conservation Area boundary is amended to remove the area shown on Plan 1 comprising the following properties:

1 -121 Whinhill Gate

1 - 19 Fairfield Way  
1 – 6 Polmuir House, Fairfield Way

### **Advantages**

Removing both the conservation area designation and the Article 4 Direction would restore householder permitted development rights that are currently removed from properties within conservation areas. Approximately 150 households would be able to undertake certain minor works to their properties without the need for planning permission. For more information please see summary in Appendix 3 and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00388268.pdf>. Removing this area from Ferryhill Conservation Area alone would not restore permitted development rights and it could be some time before the Article 4 Direction is reviewed and/or revoked.

### **Disadvantages**

There are a substantial number of trees in this area that would not be protected unless they were covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Felling and substantial pruning of trees would no longer need consent which could lead to a loss of tree cover. Whilst this would detract from the area, tree protection is insufficient reason on its own for continued conservation area designation. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in this area at present however we will make an arboricultural assessment of it with a view to making Tree Preservation Orders as necessary.

Fairfield Way forms part of the historic boundary of The Round (1<sup>st</sup> OS plan), later Roundhay (2<sup>nd</sup> OS plan), and now The Cowdray Club and Fonthill lodge on Fonthill Road. This section of the boundary would therefore be excluded from the conservation area however it would not be under any development threat as it is now adopted road.

## **S2 Proposed addition**

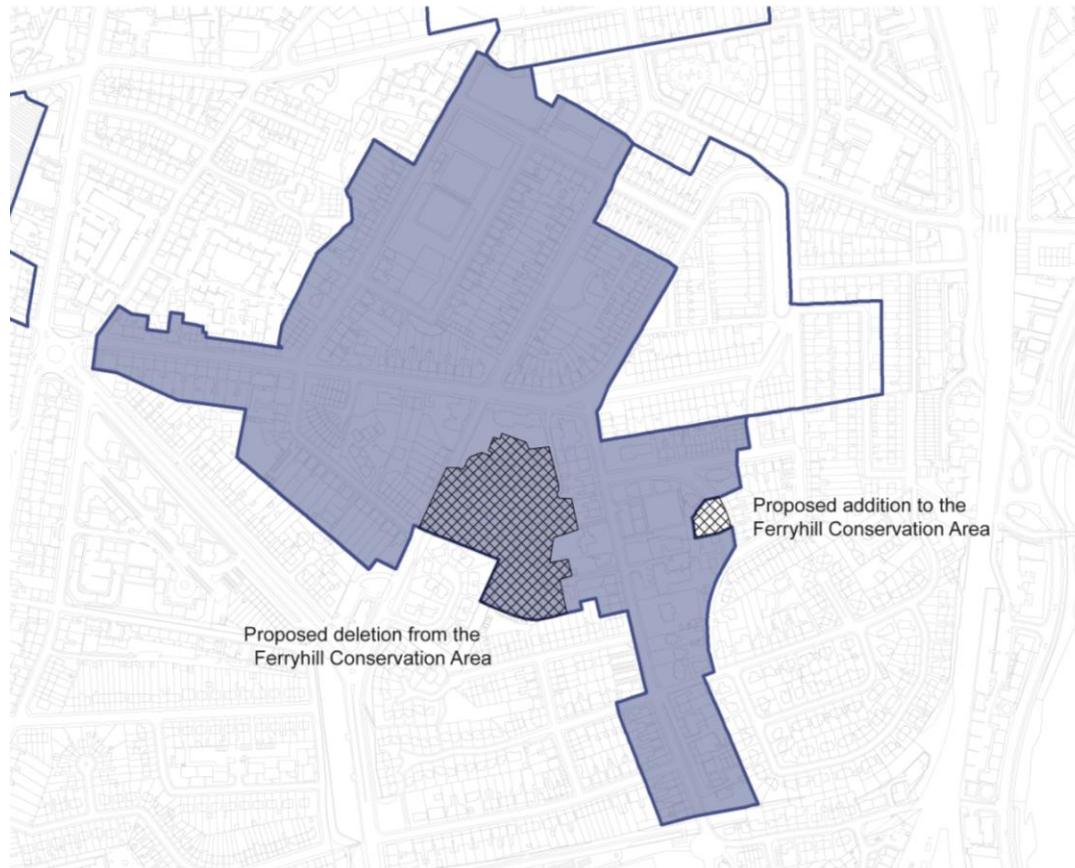
4 – 10 Devanha Gardens West is a terrace of four early 20<sup>th</sup> century properties showing an Arts and Crafts influence. Constructed in a traditional manner of granite they are set back from the pavement with small front gardens. The terrace is generally well preserved and adds to the historic street scene. It is curious that they were omitted from Ferryhill Conservation Area as the rest of the northern side of Devanha Gardens West lies within the Conservation Area.

### **Advantages**

Extending Ferryhill Conservation Area to include 4 - 10 Devanha Gardens West would give the properties greater protection from unsympathetic alterations and add greatly to the streetscape. The terrace shows the development of this area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Disadvantages

Including these properties within the Conservation Area would remove householder permitted development rights. Certain minor works to the properties would require planning permission. For more information please see Appendix 3 and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00388268.pdf>.



Plan 1 Proposed amendments to Ferryhill Conservation Area boundary



Proposed addition: 4 – 10 Devanha Gardens West