

Tain Conservation Area Management Plan

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1.00 INTRODUCTION RO-RÀDH

1.01 Significance of Tain

Tain is significant because of:

- its origins, not as a walled town but as a centre of pilgrimage to the shrine of St Duthac and a place of sanctuary, giving it renown and importance well beyond the region, linked with the almost annual visits of James IV
- its ecclesiastical heritage as a result of the pilgrimages, that gave rise to the core of Tain's early urban grain (St Duthus' Church with clergy residences, with gardens, in the vicinity)
- its status as a royal burgh with special privileges of royal liberty (*'immunitas'*) concerning trade and commerce. It is unusual in having no burgh boundary, instead using the boundary of the *immunitas* (four girth crosses).
- its topography – a distinctive settlement on an escarpment above the shoreline, overlooking the Dornoch Firth
- the unusual number of trees in the conservation area, especially on the north face of the escarpment
- its late Georgian expansion and improvement, a period which included not only suburban housing and new and improved streets but also the Royal Academy, a new jail and courthouse, a new bank and a new parish church
- its status as a historic centre of education – at the time it was built the Academy was the only one north of Inverness. In 1914 this was still the case and boarders from all over Caithness, Ross and Sutherland lived in Tain.
- its reasonably unaltered historic core, with relatively little recent development.



1.02 Conservation Areas

A Conservation Area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable *to preserve or enhance*', defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Conservation Areas were first introduced under the Civic Amenities Act 1967.

Local authorities and Scottish Ministers are obliged to protect the character and appearance of a conservation area and where possible, to take positive steps to enhance it. Any development in a conservation area should *preserve or enhance the character of the area* as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Highland Council area has 30 conservation areas. Tain was designated a conservation area in 1974.

1.03 Purpose of Tain Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP)

This document should be read in conjunction with Tain Conservation Area Appraisal. It supports the aims and objectives of the Conservation Area Appraisal, as well as other national and local policies (listed in section 2) in preserving and enhancing the conservation area. It seeks to provide guidance to Highland Council and to statutory undertakers as well as property owners, businesses, agents and contractors regarding maintenance and repairs of historic buildings and guidance on policies and procedures to be followed when alterations are proposed.

The CAMP sets out best practice for managing change. Change is unavoidable, even in a small town such as Tain, and includes decay (e.g. building fabric) as well as new development. Change must be managed with the aim of preserving and enhancing the character of Tain, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike and for future generations. Realistically this can only be achieved if all stakeholders, including public bodies, private owners and businesses, work in partnership.

1.04 Monitoring and Review

Change in Tain conservation area should be monitored and the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan documents should be reviewed from time to time and as circumstances dictate. In this way issues will be picked up and dealt with in good time and continuity will be maintained.

2.00 POLICY AND CONSENTS

POILEASaidh, AONTaidhean & Stiùiridhean

2.01 National Legislation and Policies

The primary legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 covers scheduled monuments (there is one in Tain conservation area). The Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011 amended both of the earlier acts and gave planning authorities new regulatory powers. The Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014 also amended these acts and introduced new processes for consents. In addition, the Planning (Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2015, The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas (Compensation) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 and The Scheduled Monument Consent Procedure (Scotland) Regulations 2015 apply.

The *Historic Environment Policy for Scotland* (2019) guides the operation of decision making and is a material consideration in the Scottish planning system. *Our Place in Time - The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland* (2014) is a high level framework setting out a 10-year vision for the historic environment. It aims to ensure that the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of Scotland's historic environment is realised in terms of wellbeing for all. The report *Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres* (2013) gave rise to the Scottish Government response *Town Centre Action Plans*. Tain Town Centre Action Plan was prepared in May 2014, following a two-day public workshop with public and private stakeholders.

Under the General Permitted Development Order (2011) householder and non-domestic permitted development rights no longer apply in conservation areas i.e. Planning permission, and listed building consent if necessary, will usually be required for changes, additions or alterations to buildings or the spaces around them. If in any doubt owners should seek clarification from the local authority.



2.02 Local Policy and Planning Measures

Local policies affecting conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments, as well as traditional skills and materials and heritage management are found in The Highland Council Historic Environment Strategy (Supplementary Guidance). The first strategic priority is 'to protect, conserve, preserve, interpret and promote the historic environment, particularly those aspects that are characteristic of Highland and lend distinctiveness to the character of the local landscapes and townscapes.' The Historic Environment Strategy "considers the historic environment to be an asset and not a barrier to development" and is a material consideration in the assessment of development proposals.

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan, Policy 57 on Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage requires that *“future developments take account of the historic environment and that they are of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment bringing both economic and social benefits”* and intends *“a proactive, consistent approach to the protection of the historic environment.”*

Policy 1 of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan aims to protect the vitality and viability of town centres such as Tain and encourages residential uses on upper floors. Tain is included as part of the Ross-shire Growth Area but notwithstanding this ‘the historic core of Tain is key to its character’.

Historic Windows and Doors: Planning Guidance for Listed Buildings and Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas and the Shopfront Design Guide are both material considerations in the determination of applications for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission.

2.03 Consents

Any work that will affect the character of a building in Tain conservation area, such as alterations or an extension, requires planning permission. Repairs on a like-for-like basis do not usually require consent, but owners are advised to check. Re-instatement of historic materials usually requires consent, e.g. replacing plastic rainwater goods with cast iron.

Conservation Area Consent is required for any demolition of buildings in the conservation area. Any work to all trees e.g. lopping or felling requires a Tree Work Application to be submitted and approved by The Highland Council.

Listed Building Consent is required for all proposals to demolish, alter or extend a listed building. This includes internal work as well as external work such as window replacement. Repairs on a like-for-like basis do not usually require consent, but owners are advised to check. As noted above, planning permission may be needed in addition to listed building consent. There will be a presumption against demolition of a listed building.

Alterations to a scheduled monument requires the consent of Scottish Ministers, through Historic Scotland. In Tain conservation area this applies to St Duthus’ Church, Collegiate Church and burial ground.

Advertisement consent is required for signage, awnings, billboards, flags and the like. In addition, alterations, extension and new buildings will usually require a building warrant, issued through the Building Control section of Highland Council.

2.04 Statutory Powers

Where unauthorised works are carried out to properties in the conservation area or listed buildings, current legislation empowers the Council to take measures including the serving of Enforcement Notices, Stop, Temporary Stop and Fixed Penalty Notices. Regular inspections of the conservation area will be undertaken to identify unauthorised works and take action where appropriate. In the case of a listed building which has been allowed to fall into serious neglect, a Listed Building Repairs Notice (with the possibility of a Compulsory Purchase Order) may be served on the property, if the owner fails to take satisfactory action. Urgent works may also be carried out by the Council at short notice with costs being recharged to the owner. Scottish Ministers have powers to direct that the same powers should apply to unlisted buildings in the conservation area.

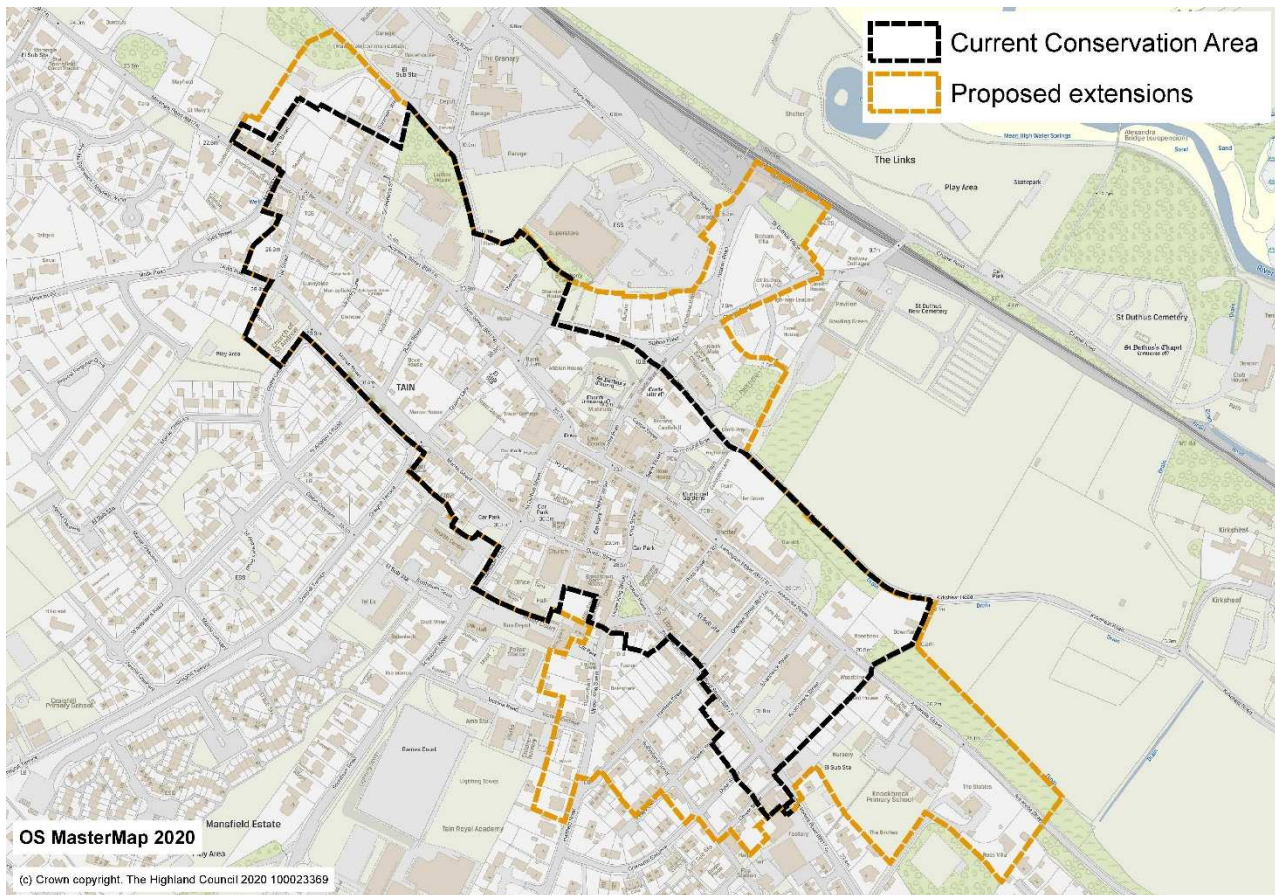
3.00 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS MOLAIÐHEAN SÒNRAICHTHE

1. Boundaries

Review the boundary of Tain conservation area. Four extensions are recommended. These are:

1. a south-west extension to include Hartfield Street, Sutherland Street, Petly Street, Duke Street, Gower Street and Upper King Street
2. a south-east extension to include Knockbreck Primary School
3. a north-west extension at the end of Murray Street and Dunrobin Street
4. a north-east extension to include Station Road, the railway station and Chapel Road.

For analysis of these extensions refer to section 6.00 of the Conservation Area Appraisal. The map below shows the conservation area boundary as existing (black) with proposed extensions (orange).



2. St Duthus' Church

Safeguard the key heritage sites of Tain conservation area, as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, especially St Duthus' Church, Collegiate Church and Burial Ground. Commission the preparation of a conservation plan for St Duthus' that would set out the key principles and guidelines for conserving and managing the whole site. The significance and potential of the site should be understood and recommendations for conservation repairs implemented.

Develop and implement an interpretation strategy for St Duthus' Church and other key heritage sites. Improve signage and information, for the benefit of locals as well as visitors.

3. Tain Sherriff Court including Tolbooth

Examine the future of Tain's Sherriff Court and Tolbooth. This is the town's most prominent building, in terms of its townscape value and listed in category A, also of high architectural and historic value. Examine alternative sites for the court and seek ways to bring the building into greater community use. Commission a feasibility study to examine appropriate (conservation led) options and follow up on its recommendations.

4. Redundant buildings

Actively seek new uses for Tain's redundant buildings. Owners should consider a partnership approach, likely to involve a wide range of stakeholders - community groups, Council services, Council Members and planning partners such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Assistance and advice are available e.g. through Scotland's Towns Partnership. Building preservation trusts or other heritage networks may also be able to help.

- Carefully consider the future of the former Royal Academy. Explore new uses, including re-location of the courts service. Commission a feasibility study to appraise the options. Community acquisition could be explored. A development brief should be prepared, outlining in broad terms a suitable approach to conversion. The brief should highlight conservation-led repair and give guidance on appropriate form, massing, materials and details of conversion, any new buildings and external works.
- Plan ahead for the future of Knockbreck Primary School, expected to become vacant in 2020. Consider new uses e.g. a hostel/bunkhouse, an arts venue, an enterprise/small business hub. Community acquisition could be explored. Commission a feasibility study to look at this and other options. A development brief should be prepared, outlining in broad terms a suitable approach to conversion. The brief should highlight conservation-led repair and give guidance on appropriate form, massing, materials and details of conversion, any new buildings and external works.
- Support the owners of the former Town Hall, Tower Street in finding a new use for this fine building.
- Encourage the owners of 1 Tower Street (former Procurator Fiscal's office) to find a new tenant/occupier.
- Four buildings at risk, including The Grove, are described in Section 4.04 of the Conservation Area Appraisal. Support the owners to repair these buildings and find new occupants or uses.



5. Public Spaces

Improve the experience of Tain town centre for all users by prioritising pedestrians and those using buggies, wheelchairs or mobility aids. Examine where parking for deliveries and short stay is most needed and ensure this is given priority. Alter the geometry of key streets so

that they feel safer and more inviting for pedestrians and also cyclists. Improve street surfaces (including paving) and remove unnecessary clutter and obstructions. Consider the following measures:

- Traffic calming at desirable crossing points on High Street and Lamington Street – widened pavement/narrowed of carriageway, with raised surface on the crossing. In particular the area outside the Royal Hotel and Sherriff Court House has potential for traffic easing measures and upgrade for other users.
- Creation of drop-off points and loading bays at key locations
- Enforcement of current parking regulations and renewal of yellow lines and other road markings where these are illegible e.g. Market Street
- Better designation of a pedestrian zone on streets where pavements are very narrow or non-existent, e.g. a coloured tarmac strip.

6. Shops

Support Tain's unique retail identity by promoting its traditional shops. Encourage owners to maintain, conserve and repair their shopfronts as a way to attract business – focus on joinery, glazing, ironmongery, lighting and signage. Consider a traditional signwriting scheme in the town, which could be undertaken as part of a heritage skills training programme.

Do not permit plastic shop signs or garish shopfronts in the conservation area. Many nationwide retailers now have a 'heritage' version of in-house signage, not plastic, and in muted colours. Where these businesses are present in Tain they should be obliged to use this.

Encourage shops and businesses to keep visibility in their windows, in order to maintain a sense of activity on the street.

7. Transport

Invest in Tain's transport facilities:

- Improve the car parks – upgrade access routes, surfaces, lighting, signage, visitor information, soft landscaping and boundaries.
- Improve signage and pedestrian links from the railway station to the centre.
- Examine whether bus stops are in the best places and whether an improved layout could help access and traffic flow.
- Improve facilities for cyclists - local shoppers as well as visitors by providing extended signage. Install bike racks at key locations near shops and amenities.



8. Trees

Commission a study of Tain's trees and vegetation, to be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced arboriculturist. This should map the trees and give details of their species, possible age and condition. It should assess their significance and contribution to the conservation area. The study should make recommendations for the management of trees in Tain, offering guidelines for yearly, biennial, 5 yearly and 10 yearly maintenance routines. Details of cyclical replanting and recommendations regarding suitable species should be included. For trees in private ownership best practice should be set out. Implement the recommendations of the study to ensure the future of trees and their management in the conservation area.

9. Heritage awareness

Promote heritage awareness of Tain in the local community and beyond. Support efforts undertaken by Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust and Tain and District Museum. Target all age groups, especially schools and the academy. Bring attention to Tain's historic significance in the context of Easter Ross and the greater region. Actively seek to promote Tain's visitor offer using all means possible, including online. Support efforts to improve signage within Tain and create a heritage trail.

10. Views

Protect the sensitive views into Tain conservation area from St Duthac's Chapel and the shore. Protective sensitive views out from the conservation area across the Dornoch Firth. Refer to Section 3.10 of the Conservation Area Appraisal.



11. Archaeology

Ensure an archaeological watching brief during any development in Tain and whenever an opportunity presents, carry out archaeology investigation or surveys, whether below ground or within historic buildings.

Continue the work begun in 2011 to engage the local community with archaeology - Hidden Tain (Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands). Develop this work further to investigate the castle. Engage with children and young people and use archaeology as a means of raising awareness and appreciation of Tain's heritage and identity.

12. Repairs

Provide regular information to owners about maintenance and repair of buildings. Encourage communal effort, e.g. sharing of costs for hire of a cherry picker to reach high gutters. Target prevention of decay (e.g. clearing gutters and weeds), conservation and good quality repairs and where appropriate, re-instatement of detail. Celebrate good civic outcomes e.g. a town awards scheme.

Appendix 1 Boundary Map

