LONDONDERRY
Historic City Conservation Area
Boundary Variation
Interim Document
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Preamble

The Department of the Environment originally designated the Historic City area of Londonderry as a Conservation Area on the 25 February 1977. To complement and build upon the achievements of this designation the Department varied the boundaries of the designated area on 06 June 2006 as it is considered to be an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Designation of a Conservation Area introduces control over the demolition of unlisted buildings under Article 51 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, while trees are automatically protected in line with Article 26 of the Planning (Amendment) (NI) Order 2003. In addition designation introduces certain additional limitations on the exercise of permitted development rights contained in the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993.

This interim document is intended for all those with an interest in the Historic City Conservation Area, or those intending to undertake work on its buildings, landscape, streets or spaces. It should be read in conjunction with the Conservation Area Review document published on 10th June 2004 and the existing Conservation Area design guidance. It constitutes supplementary planning guidance and will be taken into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications that lie within, or may affect, the setting of the Conservation Area.

Variation of the designated Historic City Conservation Area involved consultation with Derry City Council, the Historic Buildings Council and the general public. The Department thanks all who contributed to this process, particularly those who provided written comments.
Introduction

Conservation is not a cosmetic exercise. Securing the preservation or enhancement of the historic built environment stems from strong cultural, economic and environmental objectives, the recognition of which is long established in various International Charters.

The character and appearance of a Conservation Area is inseparable from the physical fabric of which it is made. It is important therefore that anyone intending to carry out any work in a Conservation Area which affects its buildings, their settings, open spaces or street scenes consider the implications and see all prospective changes, however small, within the context of their wider impact.

Regional Policy Context


This guidance document has been prepared to supplement the policies of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6) and guidance contained in the Londonderry (Historic City) Conservation Area booklet published on 25th February 1977 and is a material consideration for Planning Service in discharging its planning functions in the varied Historic City Conservation Area.

Applicants seeking planning permission, conservation area consent, advertisement consent, listed building consent or grant aid for work in the Conservation Area should be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account this guidance, including the appraisal of the Conservation Area and how their proposals will contribute to its preservation or enhancement. The Department will also endeavour to ensure that the activities of statutory undertakers and public agencies will maintain or improve the environmental quality and distinctive attributes of the Historic City Conservation Area.
Character Appraisal

This character appraisal sets out to assess those elements that give the Historic City Conservation Area its own character. It highlights the distinctive quality of the Conservation Area whilst focusing on important constituent parts. The character appraisal considers:

• what the area looks like;
• how buildings are grouped;
• how building groups are linked or divided;
• materials or colours; and
• form, massing, scale and proportions.

The city owes its origins to the 6th Century AD Christian Monastic settlement, which was established by Saint Columba within an oak grove on a hill overlooking the River Foyle. The settlement continued to thrive and grow over the following centuries and it was because of its success and strategic location that the town became attractive to the English garrison, established here in 1566. Several attempts were made to break the English hold on the settlement, and in 1608 the fort and town were destroyed by the Irish, led by Cahir O'Doherty. During the Plantation of Ulster, the Guilds of London were granted the City of Derry and in 1613 construction of the new town began and the city’s name was changed to Londonderry. The Honourable Irish Society was entrusted with the role of rebuilding the settlement, which became the first planned city in Ireland. In 1618 the City Walls were completed. Designed by Sir Edward Doddington, they are 1.6 kilometres long and 7.3 metres high. The walls have withstood three sieges and remain virtually intact. The original city gates have been replaced and a further three added, otherwise the layout remains as it was in the early 17th Century.

A number of the buildings in the Conservation Area are listed for their special historic or architectural merit. These are concentrated mainly within the city walls although there are other important buildings at Longtower, Shipquay Place and in the Carlisle Road precinct. All of these make a major contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Carlisle Road precinct (included within the Conservation Area extensions), contains many buildings of particular townscape character and a number of these are listed for their special historical or architectural significance. Buildings along Carlisle Road itself are mostly commercial in nature, built at 3 storeys in red brick or with a painted plaster finish.

Carlisle Circus area at the end of the Craigavon Bridge is particularly important in terms of the appreciation of the historical significance of the city to travellers crossing from the eastern side of the River Foyle. Buildings generally reflect those on Carlisle Road with the large 4 storey brick-built Abercorn Factory building at the junction of Wapping Lane being a significant landmark. The site of the former Tillie & Henderson building (now demolished) immediately across Abercorn Road has an important part to play in preserving the built heritage and any development here should reflect its gateway position. Similarly the area at the east of Carlisle Circus, up to and including the large Hamilton’s Factory building on John Street, has an important function leading into the Historic City area.

The character of the smaller streets is quite intimate, with buildings predominantly two storey in height and domestic in scale. George’s Street and Henry Street contain 2 storey dwellings, mostly painted plaster finish with a number exhibiting brickwork banding around doors and windows which often have rounded heads at ground floor level. Grove Place consists of 2 ½ storey buildings utilising a mixture of dormer window types. Hawkwin Street includes 2 ½ , 3 and 3 ½ storey dwellings, mostly red brick, some with plaster finish. On this Street, close to Carlisle Road, a number of buildings are brick built with plaster banding at ground level and with rounded window heads and surrounding detailing.

Jack Allen Court at the north-western end of Hawkwin Street retains a natural stone wall along its frontage. At the southern side of Fountain...
Street red brickwork predominates on a building at the junction with Hawkin Street and the buttressed wall running east from it.

There are a number of PVC windows within the general Fountain area which detracts from its overall character. The use of painted timber framed windows and timber doors would enhance the appearance of buildings and Planning Service would encourage this.

The Department considers that Conservation Area status recognises the unique contribution of the built heritage of the extended area and will help ensure that this will be sensitively managed in the future.

The rhythm and character of the main streets in the extended part of the Conservation Area are provided by rows of two and three storey terraced properties varying in height with narrow frontages of between 5 metres and 10 metres and with some other higher industrial buildings. Roofs are of natural slate and generally pitched at angles of between 30 and 40 degrees. Vertical emphasis is provided by the narrow frontage widths and the traditional window openings at upper floors, many of which retain their sash windows.

One of the main strengths of the extended part of the Conservation Area is its linear street pattern and continuous frontage punctuated at intervals by streets running northwest to southeast and southwest to northeast. Where these streets enter the main street, corner buildings have been designed and created in a way, which has a unique and significant impact upon the character and appearance of the area. They celebrate their position and are particularly important to the streetscape. Of particular note are statement buildings such as the Abercorn Factory building, Carlisle Road Presbyterian and Methodist Churches and the Former Welch Margetson Factory on Horace Street.

Approaches to Design

The design of new buildings or the extension or alteration of existing buildings in the Conservation Area should be carried out with sensitivity. This requires particular architectural and historic knowledge, judgement, skill and care. The design of any new building should be appropriate to and influenced by its site, the character of the area and the best of the surrounding built environment, while extensions or alterations should not damage or devalue the old.

Design solutions within the Conservation Area can be approached from a number of directions:

- **The REPRODUCTION approach.** This is the most obvious way of maintaining the character of an original building and applies particularly to works affecting a listed building and other locally important buildings. Repairs and renovation works should be in the style of the original building and attention to detail is vital, including correct materials, colours, finishes and external joinery detailing. New work should match and blend with the old in order to achieve an architectural whole, but it should not be the intention to deceive or falsify the historical record as to the age or authenticity of the work. Substantial new work should be made distinguishable only to the expert eye or through appropriate records.

- **The TRADITIONAL approach.** This is the approach often followed for new buildings and extensions to unlisted buildings. It allows more flexibility in parameters of design than the purely reproduction approach. Massing, scale and use of materials should blend with their surroundings, and whilst detailing is still important it need not involve slavish reproduction. This approach should be based on a knowledge and respect of the characteristics of adjoining buildings and sites. The end product should be a building which respects local character, preserving a measure of the uniqueness of the area.
The CONTEMPORARY approach. This is to design an uncompromisingly modern building or extension which can be satisfactorily integrated into the existing historic urban fabric. This approach is the most subjective and controversial. It may be acceptable within the Historic City Conservation Area, but only for a contemporary building which clearly demonstrates its high quality.

The Conservation Area contains a number of Listed Buildings. These are buildings of special architectural or historic merit, and are afforded particular statutory protection. Once a building is listed, the consent of the Department is required for its demolition and for any works of alteration or extension that would affect its special character. Protection includes fixtures and curtilage structures. As indicated above proposals to alter listed buildings should be generally in the style of their period and the Department’s Environment and Heritage Service should be consulted on such matters before any work is commissioned.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for works to the built heritage is available from a number of sources. However, the ongoing situation can be fluid with sources and levels of funding changing. Information on sources of funding for the built heritage of Northern Ireland was brought together for the first time in 1999 in the publication ‘Directory of Funds for Historic Buildings in Northern Ireland’ by the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society in association with the Department’s Environment and Heritage Service.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) launched in April 1998, which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), is the main source of funding currently available within Conservation Areas. This aims – in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors – to create exemplars of conservation practice and management. The existing Londonderry THI boundary is located within the Historic City Conservation Area at present. A number of individual properties have been identified as eligible to receive funding assistance.