

BRECON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL Review



**Brecon Beacons National Park
Authority
September 2016**



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Appendices

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to determine from time to time which parts of their area are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate these areas as conservation areas. The central area and historic suburbs of Brecon comprise one of four designated conservation areas in the National Park. The Brecon Conservation Area was designated by the National Park Authority on the 12th June 1970.
- 1.2 Planning authorities have a duty to protect these areas from development which would harm their special historic or architectural character and this is reflected in the policies contained in the National Park's Local Development Plan. There is also a duty to undertake regular review of Conservation Areas to ensure that the designated area continues to demonstrate clear architectural and historic interest and establish whether the boundaries need amendment; and to identify potential measures for enhancing and protecting the Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define the qualities of the area that make it worthy of conservation area status. A clear, comprehensive appraisal of its character provides a sound basis for development control decisions and for developing initiatives to improve the area. It will also enable the development of a robust policy framework for the future management of the area, on which planning applications and other proposals for change can be considered.
- 1.4 The appraisal report follows a format originally contained within advice produced by Historic England on appraisals and management of conservation areas. It also takes account of work developed by Cadw on local distinctiveness characterisation.

2. Review of the Conservation Area Boundary

- 2.1 One of the key elements of a conservation area review is to assess the existing boundary to ensure that the Conservation Area continues to demonstrate sufficient architectural and historic interest. The review also takes the opportunity to consider whether the Conservation Area boundary should be extended.
- 2.2 The existing boundary embraces a large proportion of the Listed Buildings in the town, the most important individual ones and the coherent groups in the commercial core and historic suburbs.
- 2.3 Following an assessment of the areas within and surrounding the conservation area boundary, the following areas have been included within an extended boundary:

Area to the south west of the Cathedral

This addition to the conservation area covers Mill Street; Dainter Street; St Johns Road (north side); North Road and the south east side of Maendu Street.

Mill Street and Dainter Street are characterised by narrow streets with houses that are typically vernacular in style with many set directly along the back edge of the pavement. Both streets have developed in an organic way and have an informal character. A feature of Dainter Street is the attractive informal square in the middle and the pedestrian alleyway lined with cottages that links with Maendu Street. In contrast the housing along St John's Road and North Road are planned terraces and semi-detached dwellings of a later date. These streets are wider with a more spacious character and many of the dwellings set behind boundary walls and small front gardens. Although few of the windows and doors are original, both streets have an attractive and cohesive character.



Mill Street

Area to the south west of Heol Gouesnou

This area is mostly taken up by a car park and two large retail units. The tourist information building is also found here. The area is currently surrounded by the conservation area with the historic town centre to the south west and 19th century housing development to the north east. Although the area does not have any historic merit in terms of the built environment, it offers important views into the conservation area and is seen in the foreground of the historic town centre from the higher ground to the north east. There could be a significant impact on the setting of the conservation area if any of the current uses change and sites become available for redevelopment. It is suggested that this area is included within the conservation area because of its key position and the opportunity for enhancement if any major redevelopment proposals should emerge in the future.

2.4 A map showing the conservation area boundary can be found in Appendix 1.

3. Community Involvement

3.1 This document is part of a consultation on the review of the Brecon Conservation Area and the policies and proposals for enhancing and protecting it. The conservation area review was the subject of consultation with interest groups, specialist organisations and local residents and the revised document will be considered by the National Park Authority for formal adoption.

3.2 The consultation process included a locally held exhibition, details of which was directly forwarded to consultees, and locally advertised. The information was also available on the National Park's website.

4. The Planning Policy Context

4.1 There are several relevant planning documents that relate to Brecon and its built environment:

- **Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update** - Brecon is identified as a Key Settlement within a geographical cluster, including Talgarth and Hay-on-Wye; there is an emphasis on collaboration between communities to support their own needs and on flexibility, entrepreneurship and community involvement in the determination of future growth;
- **Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan** - Since the last appraisal the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority adopted the Local Development Plan in December 2013. The plan sets out policies and proposals to guide development in the National Park from 2007 to 2022. The policies that related to conservation areas and local list buildings are Policy 19 and Policy 18.
- **Policy 19 Development affecting Conservation Areas**
New development and alterations to existing buildings within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and where the design, all building materials, proportions and detailing are appropriate to the Conservation Area. The demolition or substantial demolition of any unlisted building or structure within a Conservation Area that is subject to Conservation Area consent will only be permitted where there is the strongest justification. Where such a building is to be replaced, a contract of redevelopment will be required to be finalised and entered into prior to the granting of conservation area consent.
- **Policy 18**
Protection of Buildings of Local Importance: Development affecting buildings which make an important contribution to the character and interest of the local area as set out on the local list will be permitted where the distinctive appearance, architectural integrity or their settings would not be significantly adversely affected.
- The Local Development Plan identifies Brecon as the Primary Key settlement for the Region. The Plan sets out a 15 year vision for the town and identifies a number of issues and objectives to be addressed in order to implement the vision. Of particular relevance to the conservation area is the objective to respect Brecon's

sense of place. This recognises that development to maintain the town's strategic role has the potential to negatively impact on the town's unique character. Policy B LP1 Brecon Appropriate Development sets out how development proposals will be expected to achieve the Vision for the town. The policy includes a requirement that 'All proposals will be required to contribute positively to settlement character and enhance the quality of the landscape without adverse impact on the wildlife, natural beauty, cultural heritage, environmental assets or biodiversity of the settlement'.

- The Local Development Plan includes a **Proposals Map** showing detailed proposals for Brecon. The map indicates Areas of Archaeological Evaluation, and Scheduled Ancient Monument sites such as the Castle, Christ College and Cathedral and the line of the town defences and other sites within the area of the medieval borough.

The Brecon Beacons National Park- Shop Front Guidance May 2011 provides guidance on shop front design, promoting high quality designs to help preserve the traditional character of the Park's retail areas that make them attractive places for businesses, residents and visitors.

5. Location and Context

5.1 Brecon is situated in Powys, about 12 miles WNW of Crickhowell; 21 miles east of Llandovery; and 18 miles north of Merthyr Tydfil. It lies on an important junction of two major routes, the A470 (T) running more or less north-south through Wales, and the east-west A40. Both roads bypass the town to the south and east. The B4520 runs from the town centre north to Builth Wells. The settlement thus has good links to both the South Wales Valleys, to the English border, and to central Wales.

5.2 The town lies near the northern boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park, almost surrounded by dramatic mountainous landscapes, with the highest peaks to the south (Pen y Fan rising to 886m, Corn Du to 873m and Craig Gwaun-taf to 824m, with the nearby Cribin almost reaching 800m). To the east are the Black Mountains, rising to over 800m at Waun Fach and to the NW are the Cambrian Mountains (Mynydd Epynt). The three mountain massifs are separated by the wide river valleys of the Usk and the Tywi, with a tributary of the Usk, the Honddu, forming a confluence in Brecon town centre, thus underlining Brecon's historical importance as a route centre and a bridging point.

5.3 The town itself is sited on a fairly level, broad river valley, at about 130m AOD at river level, with variations in topography provided by a marked slope down to the river confluence from the north and a pronounced bluff or ridge upon which the castle and cathedral are positioned (at about 150m AOD).

5.4 The area west of the Usk Bridge is a separate but historically connected parish, Llanfaes.

6. Historic Development and Archaeology

- 6.1 There is evidence for some sort of prehistoric occupation on the site of the much later castle, on a bluff formed by the confluence of the Usk and Honddu. Crug Hill, on the Builth Road, is a good example of an Iron Age fort. About two miles to the west of Brecon is Brecon Gaer, possibly *Cicucium*, a Roman fort. Roman roads ran along the river valleys, notably SE to *Gobannivum*, the modern Abergavenny.
- 6.2 The area was part of the Welsh Brycheiniog, and in 1093, after gaining the territory, the Norman Bernard de Neufmarche built a castle, which became the *caput* of the lordship of Brecon. Originally a motte and bailey, the site was developed with a shell keep and small tower on the motte in the late C12 under William de Breos and in the late C13 under Humphrey de Bohun. The bailey ran down to the river and was enclosed by a stone curtain wall, towers and a gatehouse. Part of the great hall (c.1280) survives. The other buildings and structures were largely ruined before the Civil War.
- 6.3 Also in 1093, Neufmarche founded a Benedictine priory of St John the Evangelist Without the Walls, as a dependency of Battle Abbey in Sussex. The church was largely rebuilt and extended in the C13 and C14 and had the expected conventual buildings to the south of the church and a battlemented curtain wall. The monastic use ceased with the Dissolution of 1537 and the church became parochial, being repaired and restored in the C19 and early C20 and, in 1923, becoming the cathedral church of a new diocese of Swansea and Brecon.
- 6.4 Christ College, on the south bank of the Usk, was founded as the Dominican Priory of St Nicholas. The choir dates from about 1240 and there are considerable remnants of C14 conventual buildings. The buildings went through a variety of uses and became a clergy college in the early C19 and a public school in 1853. The church has become the college chapel, several other medieval buildings are incorporated in the school and there are extensive Gothic Revival buildings of 1861-4 and more modern additions.
- 6.5 Brecon (Aberhonddu) grew adjacent to the original priory and castle sites. There were periodic burnings by the Welsh and it is possible that a planned Borough was created after one of these incursions in 1233. The medieval borough had stone walls with ten towers and Speed's early C17 map shows five gates. St Mary's Church was a chapel of ease to the Priory and has C12-mid C14 architectural elements as well as a prominent west tower (1510-20). The walls and gates were largely demolished by 1640-50 but one tower and stretches of wall survive by Captain's Walk and behind Watton Mount. There were four stone bridges across the two rivers, linking town to Priory and Castle. The Act of Union in 1536/43 established Brecon as the county town of Brecknockshire and as a venue for the Assize Courts. A Borough charter of 1556 created a closed corporation, monopolized by local families and it was not until the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act that a wider based, elected corporation came into being.



The cathedral on its ridge

6.6 The post-medieval period was one of economic decline and then consolidation, with evidence of a number of early C17 town houses and the Town Hall, originally of 1624. The town became the cultural and economic focus of a large rural area, evidenced by substantial houses, the market, the development of a cloth trade and, later in the C18, the presence of the military (the Barracks in Watton was established in 1805). The seven arched bridge across the Usk dates from 1563, with later enlargements and rebuilding. The town produced several nationally important figures, notably Hugh Price, the founder of Jesus College in Oxford; the sculptor J E Thomas, a pupil of Chantrey and the creator and donor of the Wellington statue in Bulwark; and Sarah Siddons, the acclaimed actress.

6.7 The town was a centre for Nonconformist activity, with the Plough United Reformed Church, off Lion Street, originating in 1699. The area was noted for Calvinistic Methodism, with The Countess of Huntingdon founding a chapel at The Struet in 1771. This was superseded by the Bethel Chapel, off Lion Street, built in 1853. The Wesley brothers were involved with the building of a Methodist chapel on the junction of Free and Little Free Streets about 1750. The Watergate Baptist Chapel dates from 1806 and Kensington Baptist Chapel from 1823, created by the English speaking congregation splitting from the Welsh speakers of Watergate. On Watton, the Presbyterian Church is of 1872, with Gothic rather than Classical or Italianate architecture. St Michael's R C church was built on Wheat Street in 1851.



Watergate Baptist Chapel

6.8 There were Napoleonic prisoners enlivening the social scene in the early C19. A theatre has been present since at least 1699 and improved premises were created in 1784, behind The Puzzle Tree at Watton. The Castle Hotel was founded in 1809. The C19 saw expansion of the town beyond the medieval core, with planned terraces at Watton, the expansion of the Barracks, the creation of Christ College and a Congregational Methodist College in 1869 on Camden Road and the provision of several private schools and National Schools at the Postern and Pendre, near the later Cathedral and behind Watton Mount. A gaol was built in 1842 and a cemetery on Cradoc Road in 1858. The Town Hall was rebuilt in 1770 and again in 1888. The Market Hall was built in 1857. A severe outbreak of cholera in 1854 produced 57 deaths and stimulated the construction of a new sewerage system in 1865.

6.9 The town had an important function as county town for Breconshire and the major monument was the building of a new Shire Hall in 1839-43, in a suitably august

Grecian Classical style. The local government uses later moved to newer buildings and the Shire Hall became the Brecknock Museum, further underlining the county town character and functions. Tourism became increasingly important in the late C19 and, in 1894, an eisteddfod was organized to raise funds to set out The Promenade walk along the Usk.



Former Shire Hall

6.9 Industrial activity was important, with an early iron industry in the area (a works being established at Priory Groves in 1723) and the construction of the Brecon and Monmouth Canal from 1797-1812, the engineer being Thomas Dadford.



Canal basin

Several tramways were created to nearby industrial sites and the Hay Tramway was opened in 1812. The Brecon and Merthyr Railway arrived in 1863, after prodigious feats of engineering and connections were established to the wider railway network, to Hay and Hereford, Builth Wells and Neath. There were three railway stations, at Watton, Mount Street and Free Street and the northern part of the town centre was dominated by a large stone viaduct. The Honddu had a flannel mill and several corn mills. Brecon's market function became consolidated by reasonable access to the developing industries and communities of the coalfield valleys.

- 6.11 The C20 century saw residential expansion to the NW and NE, the building of a large new hospital and schools and physical changes in the historic core, with an 'in keeping' shopping precinct in Bethel Yard and highway improvements to the north (Heol Gouesnou) and west (Market Street). The railways had all been rationalized to extinction by 1964, the alignment of Heol Gouesnou marking the track bed of the former Neath and Brecon Railway. Tourism has continued to be a major source of employment and income, underlining Brecon's position within the Brecon Beacons National Park. The town's market days (Thursday and Saturday) and farmers' markets provide real 'atmosphere' in the town centre, with increased trade and the full use of the Market Hall.
- 6.12 The town has experienced slow but fairly constant population growth, from about 2000 in the mid C16; 2900 in the 1801 Census; a rapid increase to 5800 by 1851; 8000 by 2001 and nearer 10000 to date.
- 6.13 The **archaeological potential** of the town is significant, particularly in relation to the detailed form of the medieval borough, individual plots, the defences and evidence for earlier structures in the Cathedral and Castle precincts. The great density and continuity of listed buildings, however, places limits on demolition and alteration and will thus constrain archaeological investigation. There is scope for further research on building history and development, from close examination of standing structures. Works such as the construction of extensions, laying cables and pipes, as well as highway schemes could all potentially uncover remains and care will be needed to protect these features as and when they appear.

7. CHARACTER ASSESSEMENT

7.1 Quality of Place

7.1.1 Brecon has a high quality landscape setting with the high peaks of the Beacons in the background. Closer to the town the surrounding undulating landscape of pasture and woodland together with the verdant river valleys associated with the Honddu and Usk also contribute to the town's high quality setting. The countryside infiltrates into the town with the two rivers and their corridors being of high amenity value and historically shaping the development of the town. The Cathedral precinct and the Brecon and Monmouth Canal also add to the important green space within the town.

7.1.2 The town has an interesting and complex townscape with an intimate and densely

developed core, contrasting linear spaces on the approach routes, and a slightly detached and distinct area around the Cathedral. The influence of the medieval borough and the line of the town walls are still evident in the town plan today. Changes in topography within the town add to the variety of the townscape.

7.1.3 Brecon has a large number of **listed buildings** with a particularly high concentration within the town centre. These include surviving features of the medieval borough such as the Cathedral and Christ College. Later development includes large and imposing C17 and C18 former town houses, examples of early C19 planned terraces, Nonconformist chapels, C19 commercial premises and some specialised buildings such as the Barracks in Watton, the Market Hall and the former Shire Hall. There are four **Scheduled Ancient Monuments** in the conservation area: the Castle; Brecon (Usk) Bridge; and two remnants of the medieval defences at Captain's Walk and behind Watton Mount. **Important Local Buildings** that are currently unlisted also add much to the character and quality of the town for example the Coliseum Cinema in Wheat Street. The map in **Appendix 2 identifies these buildings and monuments.**

7.1.4 Distinctive local building materials, such as Old Red Sandstone walling and setted ground surfaces, contrast with the smooth render or stucco of C18 and C19 buildings. Richness is added to the townscape by decorative architectural details such as cornices, door and window surrounds. Other attractive details include iron railings and gates and street furniture such as street lamps, street signs, and C19 post boxes. Traditional shop fronts are an important feature of the town centre.

7.1.5 More detailed information on the setting and character of the town is set out in the following sections.

7.2 Landscape Setting

7.2.1 Brecon's solid geology is from the Lower Old Red Sandstone Group, specifically the St Maughans Formation, dating from about 400 million years. These sedimentary rocks are stained red with ferric oxide but are interbedded with green and grey sandstones. The distinctive anvil-shaped peaks of the Beacons are the results of greater resistance to erosion by harder quartzitic layers.

7.2.2 The splendid high peaks of the Beacons are not so close as to dominate the town and gentler slopes and woodland form a more immediate context. The historic core has developed markedly to the north and NE, with late C19-early C20 and later residential areas on slopes and ridges up to Cerrig Cochion Lane to the east and St John's Mount to the north. To the south, at Watton, beyond the line of the Canal, verdant countryside is evident, with low hills and the higher slopes of the Beacons as a superb backdrop. Similarly, on the south side of Llanfaes, behind the thin ribbon of development, countryside, hills and mountains are visible through the gaps in building and from the Usk Bridge.

7.2.3 The rivers are both attractive features of the central area, both set within rocky channels and bounded by green space, trees and, along the Usk, riverside promenades. The Honddu is deeply incised in an attractive wooded valley that descends from Furnace Gate to The Struet. Extensive woodland at Priory Groves is accessible on foot and provides a pleasant gateway on the Hay Road. Near the

confluence of the two rivers, there are fine views of the Castle and the Cathedral, both set up on higher ground, from Castle and Priory Bridges. The Cathedral is viewed through trees and a particularly pleasant green space in the Bishop Williamson Garden, adjoining the Honddu and The Struet.



The Usk, looking south from Usk Bridge

7.2.4 The Cathedral has verdant grounds, with large trees and a garden to the south, adjacent to the visitor centre and restaurant. Christ College also has a large green surrounded on three sides by buildings.

7.3 Patterns of Use

7.3.1 The town centre is the focus of commercial activity; however, there are two other historic focal points of activity in the Cathedral and Castle. The nucleus of activity in these two areas probably predated the wider settlement. The Cathedral and surrounding area still provides a focus, but it is the town centre where most modern day activity is concentrated.

7.3.2 Brecon serves local residents and those in the rural hinterland as well as visitors to the area. There is a mix of uses within the town centre, although retail uses predominate at ground floor level. The Market Hall in High Street Superior has permanent shop units within the entrance hall with regular markets and special events held in the main hall. Many of the town's shop units have been formed from the ground floor of former houses although there are examples of C19 and early C20 examples of purpose built premises that incorporate storage and living accommodation over. Purpose built banks have been either re-used (The Puzzle Tree was originally the 'West Midlands Saving Bank, Salop') or continue in their original use. Many of

Brecon's coaching inns and smaller public houses continue in use as hotels, bars and restaurants. Overall, the town centre has a vibrant quality with plenty of activity at street level and some businesses such as cafes spilling out on to the street.

7.3.3 Residential use of upper floors in the town centre is beginning to become more prevalent, often reinstating the historic use of the buildings. However, residential uses within the conservation area are predominantly focussed on the 19th century suburbs flowing out from the town centre core.

7.3.4 Public buildings such as the Library, the former Shire Hall, and the Guildhall are found within the town centre although uses that require more space such as schools and The Barracks are located further out. Green, open space used for informal recreation is also found towards the edge of the conservation area such as the canal tow path and river corridors.

7.3.5 Carparks are a significant use of space within the town centre, creating a fragmented townscape where they have been inserted. The largest of the town centre carparks to the north of Lion Street is currently outside of the conservation area.

7.4 Movement

7.4.1 Through vehicular traffic tends to bypass the town; however local traffic makes use of the east – west routes and the northern route along the Struet. At certain times of day the flow of traffic can be quite heavy, creating an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The convergence of routes at the bottom of Ship Street can cause queues of traffic on both sides of the Usk Bridge. The situation for pedestrians is helped by the one way traffic system which takes westbound traffic away from Bulwark and High Street Inferior, and channels north bound traffic away from High Street Superior. There are quieter streets beyond the main thoroughfares such as Lion Street where there is still commercial activity but easier for pedestrian movement.



Pedestrians and vehicles in High Street Inferior

7.4.2 There are a few areas that are pedestrian only such as Bethal Square, a modern shopping precinct and the area surrounding Lloyds Bank where the southern end of High Street is pedestrianised. These areas provide focal points and a haven for pedestrians in the town centre. Some of these spaces also allow some uses such as cafes to make use of the paved areas in summer months, adding to the vibrancy of the town.



Pedestrian area at southern end of High Street Superior

7.4.3 A feature of the town centre are the rear yards, related to former inns or places of worship, which are accessed through narrow side or central passages from the street. Some of these are publically accessible such as Church House, in Lion Street, providing a pleasant route for pedestrians only. Another attractive example is the King Charles Steps leading off Struet. While both of these routes are attractive to use, others such as the pedestrian entry to the Co-op from Lion Street are less pleasant and can feel threatening. The linear routes along the river corridors and canal tow path also provide pleasant and traffic free environments for pedestrians.

7.5 Views and Vistas

7.5.1 The proximity of dramatic landscape surrounding the town and the topography within the mean that there a series of important views within, looking out and looking into the historic core. There are a great variety of views including: panoramic views out to the surrounding countryside; long views along streets such as along Watton; and, short distance views which often evolve as a street curves, narrows, divides or is intersected by an adjoining street or alleyway. Intriguing views inviting further exploration are glimpsed through arched openings or along narrow alleyways.

7.5.2 The key views are identified below:

- The highest peaks of the Beacons from many places in the town centre, notably the area around the Castle and the Alexandra Road higher ground;
- Views of the Canal from the SE approach into Watton and from the bridges over;
- Up and down the Usk, from Usk Bridge, with riverside trees and wider countryside beyond and a fine view of the town centre dominated by the tower of St Mary's;
- The Castle from Castle Bridge and from Watergate;
- The Cathedral from the foot of Priory Hill and Priory Bridge;
- The Cathedral from the eastern end of Postern, with a frame of high stone boundary walls, the imposing bulk of The Deanery and mature trees;
- Into the Cathedral precinct in front of the lych gate at St John's;
- Up and down Watton, with a long perspective of development punctuated by the vertical elements of the Barracks and the spire of the Presbyterian Church.



View towards the Castle and the Castle Hotel from the Usk Bridge

7.6 Settlement Form

7.6.1 The form of the present town centre is influenced by the C13 borough and the line of the town walls which partly survive as standing remains, their line being fossilised by later structures and boundaries elsewhere. The town plan is nucleated with an obvious commercial focal point in the town centre. From the core of the town centre

the streets radiate outwards beyond the historic north, east and west gates linking with the historic coaching routes north to Builth Wells, east towards Abergavenny, and to the west. The form of the town centre has also been shaped by the presence of the two rivers, the Honddu and Usk. This has produced a town centre with a dense pattern of development and relatively narrow streets. However some parts have a more open character such as the triangular space at the east end of St Mary's Church, probably the location of the historic market place, and also at the junction of Bulwark and St Mary Street. The John Speed map of 1610 showing the medieval defences and gates and the street pattern within the walls seems to accord closely with the modern day plan.

7.6.2 In the historic core of the town most buildings are set at the road edge or behind small front spaces, railed and paved in the case of former high status houses. Front gardens are rare because of the density of development in the historic core. The blocks between High and Lion Streets and Bulwark/High Street Inferior and Church Lane and St Mary Street are completely developed over. Most of the town centre core is characterised by organic groupings of buildings, combined in long terraces, although in Castle Street and further out in Watton planned terraces with identical plot sizes are seen. Other examples of formal planning can be seen in Castle Street with the two rounded and pilastered corners at the High Street Superior junction. This rounded or splayed corner is a notable local feature, particularly on early-mid C19 development in areas like Castle Street and Watton.



Castle Street

7.6.3 The historic linear suburbs tend to have wider streets and consequently have a more spacious character, Watton being a good example. There is more evidence of

planned development in these areas. These streets typically have long frontages of terraced housing, organic and planned in their form, usually set near or on the back edge of pavements. There are exceptions with occasional other uses requiring larger precincts set in inward looking squares (The Barracks in Watton and Christ College in Llanfaes, its layout influenced by the original monastic plan and adapted to school use, with a collegiate character set in green space). Watton also has large modern commercial uses on its south side, towards the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, set in areas of car parking or service yards. On the eastern side of the town, the development of the railway in the later 19th century influenced the process of development on Alexandra and Camden Road with a ribbon of houses stretching to the east.



Christ College's collegiate character

7.6.4 Plot shapes and sizes are varied with some interesting variations depending upon location and land uses. The commercial core is characterised by markedly regular rectangular plots largely taken up entirely by development, with few rear yards or gardens. This is particularly evident either side of Bulwark and High Street Inferior. Bulwark, High Street and Ship Street have retained many of their burgage plots but two neighbouring plots have occasionally amalgamated historically to create double width plots to accommodate a particular use. One such example is found on the north side of High Street Inferior. There are one or two larger public buildings, such as the Market Hall and chapels that have required larger plots, that of the Market Hall extending from High Street Superior to Market Street, near the Honddu. Bethel Square, off Lion Street, is a large modern precinct faced by the former Bethel Calvinistic Methodist Chapel and is sited on the extensive yard and stabling facilities of the Golden Lion Inn. The Brecknock Museum, formerly the Shire Hall, is another

example of a large building in an extensive plot. Residential streets, such as The Struet and Bridge Street have fairly regular rectangular plots with rear gardens (except on the west side of The Struet where some houses back directly onto the Honddu). Watton has markedly regular house plots on both sides, the result of early-mid C19 planning and development. Some of the southern plots run down to the Canal but there are also short streets of terraced houses at right angles to the main road and the Canal.

7.6.5 Lion and Glamorgan Streets have some large plots extending to the line of the town walls and these formed the gardens of detached gentry houses, many of which survive but with changed uses. The Cathedral is surrounded by extensive grounds and various buildings that relate to the monastic past or post-Reformation adaptation. There is a substantial run of defensive walling to the east of the church.

7.7 Character Areas

7.7.1 The historic core could be broken down into several **character areas**, each of which has its own spatial development patterns and townscape:

- **Watton** is a distinctive linear space, with elements of regularity and formality and an overall early C19 architectural character; trees are an important complement to the buildings;
- **The Central Core** (Bulwark, Glamorgan Street, Wheat Street, both parts of High Street, Lion Street, Ship and Castle Streets) with a very tight grain of development and several organic spaces created by changes in building lines, notably the area in front of the Wellington statue and the smaller spaces at the southern end of High Street Superior; roads are narrow and defined by more or less continuous building; C18-early C19 building styles but with an earlier underpinning of C16 and C17 buildings;
- **The Riverside** (including Bridge Street and the area around the Castle) with a preponderance of green space and the visual and sensory impacts of water, trees and wider countryside views; Bridge Street has a contrast between its continually developed northern side and the looser grain of development around Christ College;
- **The Struet, Postern and Priory Hill** up to and including the Cathedral precinct, either side of the Honddu, and linked by pedestrian and road bridges; The Struet has the character of a long corridor of smaller houses and cottages set in a verdant valley floor, with occasional glimpses of water and groups of trees; the Priory Hill side has the character of a rather exclusive suburb climbing above the main town, with high stone walls and trees and only occasional glimpses of the Cathedral.

7.8 Scale

7.8.1 The majority of buildings throughout the conservation area range from 1.5 – 3 storeys. Many of these buildings are of a domestic scale and some areas such as the Watton, Free and Little Free Streets have good examples of smaller terraced houses. There are also a large number of C17-early C19 town houses, either detached and up to five bays wide and three storeys high or attached to other development.

7.8.2 Public buildings tend to be larger scale, standalone buildings such as the former Shire Hall and the 20th century Library in Ship Street. These buildings do not stand out as being significantly higher than their neighbours but their width and depth combines with height to give them an overall massing and civic scale which sets them apart.



Brecon Library

7.8.3 The variations in scale within the town help to create an interesting townscape but one that is also cohesive since the differences in building scale are not so great due to few buildings exceeding 3 storeys.

7.8.4 Buildings which sit less comfortably within the conservation area are the modern industrial / commercial buildings with large footprints. Their height does not particularly stand out but they usually lack the vertical divisions created by fenestration or architectural detailing typical of the larger historic buildings, visually breaking up their overall massing.

7.9 Landmark Buildings

7.9.1 Landmarks are important in the conservation area and the most obvious ones are the tower of St Mary's, the bell cote of the RC Church (seen across the river from the Usk Bridge); the Barracks, Presbyterian Church (both on Watton); the Brecknock Museum; Watton Mount (both heralding the entry into Bulwark and the commercial core); the Lloyds Bank block at the junction on High Street Inferior and Superior; the Castle Hotel; the Deanery on Priory Hill; and the Cathedral tower from Priory Hill and Priory Bridge.



Lloyds Bank

7.10 Local Building Patterns

7.10.1 Ecclesiastical buildings with medieval origins

The Cathedral, which largely retains the plan form of its early medieval Benedictine priory (nave, transepts with eastern chapels and a short chancel) and a number of buildings on the southern side that are survivors of the conventual buildings or are later rebuilds that reflect the form and position of earlier buildings. Christ College also retains a rare survival of the chancel and part of the nave of the medieval Dominican friary (in common with many similar buildings, there were no transepts, with a passage between nave and choir) and several medieval buildings that were part of the monastic function. Both churches have gained later additions, the Cathedral clergy houses, church offices and visitor facilities and Christ College the teaching facilities, communal buildings and residential blocks of a public school. St Mary's Church is an example of a large medieval town church (although, originally only a chapel of ease) with a nave and aisles, no division between the nave and chancel and a high, 90', tower. The latter shows Somerset influences, a result of noble patronage.

7.10.2 19th century churches and chapels

St Michael's RC Church is a typical mid-C19 Gothic Revival nave and chancel. Nonconformist chapels tend to conform to local types, ranging from simple preaching boxes with entries from the gable end facing the street, usually debased Classical or Italianate in style, to the elaborate Gothic Revival of the Watton Presbyterian Church, dating from the 1870s.



Christ College

7.10.3 Public buildings

The Brecknock Museum was built as the Shire Hall and contained offices, records and a courtroom, in a sober Greek Revival style. Other public buildings include the Town Hall (of various dates and with a ground floor Mayor's Parlour and, originally, a Magistrate's Court and an upper floor theatre and Assembly Room); the Market Hall (of various dates and with a large public space flanked by lock-up units); and the former gaol at Postern, which retains features like former cells. The Barracks at Watton is an important survival of an early C19 purpose-built group with later C19 additions, including officers' housing, a hospital, cavalry barracks, offices and an armoury (now the Borderers' Museum). At Pendre, the former National (Church) School for Girls and adjoining School House has become a community centre.

7.10.4 Houses

Dwellings vary greatly in type and size with evidence of cellars and accommodation behind or above a shop unit and storage. There are good examples of high status buildings in Glamorgan and Lion Streets. The larger houses tended to be symmetrically planned with a central entrance door but domestic offices like kitchens or business rooms were sometimes placed in an attached wing. Most town houses have changed use and become offices or have had a shop unit placed in the ground floor. Brecon has many examples of C18-mid C19 houses of middling status, usually built in organic or planned terraces, with, typically, a three bay front or two bays with a door and window (doors are often paired). The Struet and Bridge Street have long runs of this type of housing. Planned terraces, up to eight units, are evident in Castle Street and Watton, where two early C19 rows were built for army officers.



Former town houses, Glamorgan Street (top) and early C19 terrace, Watton (above)

7.10.5 Commercial and industrial buildings

These include large, stone former warehouses in St Mary Street (Fryer's Yard, with four three storey wings around a central courtyard, now converted to housing) and in Church Lane, where there is evidence of a medieval building; the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal's channel, bridges and a former Weights and Measures Office

(outside but adjacent to the conservation area boundary); a mid C19 former railway station in Mount Street; the former Brecon Brewery's premises at The Struet; a converted four storey mill at Danygaer; and a former watermill at Watergate.

7.11 Materials

7.11.1 Building materials reflect those available in the immediate area and, later in the C19 and C20, those that were brought in by tramway, railway and road. The medieval and C16 town probably had many timber frame buildings (there is one obvious survivor at No. 20 Ship Street but there is substantial evidence for others in Ship Street, Nos. 5-7 Bridge Street, No. 11 Lion Street Church House, and No. 21 The Struet) or timber with a stone ground floor, seen at the Tithe Barn at the Cathedral. The locally available building stone was Old Red Sandstone sedimentary rock, a fairly intractable material, usually unsuited for ashlar or other fine work but workable to roughly squared blocks, usually spilt and laid to approximate courses but also seen in random rubble form. No. 41 Watton has stones of such thin section to suggest brick coursing. Lintels are often composed of massive blocks (E side of Free Street). Usk House, in Bridge Street, is a good example of a chunky, massive texture produced by large lintels and quoining. The later C19 saw the introduction of Pennant Sandstone from sources like Cefncoedycwmmmer. The sandstones have an attractive range of colours, from mid grey (Cathedral, Watton Barracks), dark orange brown (Castle), purple and green. St Mary's tower has combinations of purple and grey stones. The Barracks has dressed blocks with ashlar trim, as has the High Street entrance to the Market Hall, and Bath Stone ashlar is a high quality and expensive introduction on the former Shire Hall. Ashlar stone, imported, also is seen on later C19-early C20 commercial buildings such as the HSBC Bank in High Street Inferior. Later C19 buildings may have a rock-faced or snecked finish to stonework.

7.11.2 There are examples of colour washed or painted stone rubble but many of the C18-C19 buildings are faced with smooth lime render or stucco, with details like door and window surrounds, pilasters and plat bands built up from the material. There are occasional refinements like finely drawn false jointing to simulate ashlar, wider false 'rusticated' jointing and classical capitals created from stucco. Good examples of the effects obtainable from stucco are Nos. 33-39 Watton. The later C19 Camden Road terrace (outside the conservation area but of importance to its setting) has particularly impressive Classical and Italianate detailing such as long-and-short quoins and moulded door and window surrounds. Pebble dash is also seen, possibly as a later replacement for smooth render. Brick is rare, apart from No. 4 Lion Street and parts of The Barracks. It is unfortunately painted on County House in The Struet and on the corner building between High Street Inferior and Steeple Lane. It appears in later C19 houses, sometimes with patterning provided by contrasting brick colours or it is seen as window and door lintels and wall quoins in combination with stone rubble (Danygaer Mill). The County Library, in Ship Street, is constructed with a concrete framework and has panels of grey brick.



Two principal materials, stone and smooth render, Lion Street

7.12 Architectural Detailing

7.12.1 Windows

Windows and doors are important architectural details that contribute significantly to individual buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area. There are examples of late medieval and C16 stone mullions and C17 mullion and transom windows with lead glazing comes but the most obvious type is the multi-paned wooden vertical sash, with details like the depth of window reveals and the thickness of glazing bars varying according to building age (broadly, windows are deeper set and have thinner bars as the C18 progressed). After 1840, the horizontal meeting rail on the top unit had horns to provide additional strength. Three storey houses may have combinations of window size and sophistication, with Venetian or tripartite windows on ground or first floor and smaller sashes to the second floor, numbers of panes varying from 3/3, 4/4, 6/6 or 8/8, always correctly proportioned according to Classical rules; there are refinements like the pedimented architraves to the tripartite sashes on The Puzzle Tree and Venetian windows with an arched central unit, seen on grander buildings like County House, The Struet and No. 5 St Mary Street. On the higher status houses there are examples of tall staircase windows. On the upper floors of higher status houses and on more humble buildings the 'Brecon Hopper' is seen, an apparent sash but with an inward opening top part. Window surrounds may be plain, flush with the main wall face or projecting and moulded or with raised 'long and short' quoins and

stepped keystones above. Shallow bows, inset into pilasters, are seen on Watton. Round headed windows, either as part of Venetian types or individual ones in chapels like the Watergate Baptist Church have top glazing bars reflecting the shape and radial or spoked bars (the former Bethel Chapel has 'Gothick' round arched windows with intersecting Y tracery). In later C19 buildings, wooden canted bay windows are seen, usually with bigger areas of glass and less subdivision by glazing bars or with 'marginal glazing'. A few mid-C19 buildings with Tudor Revival details have stone drip moulds over windows and mullions with arched heads. Oriels are seen at the Barracks (rectangular) and on the corner of Steeple Lane and High Street Inferior (curved).

7.12.2 Doorways and doorcases:

These are a visual pleasure in Brecon, with a great variety and richness of, in particular, Classical detailing. There are many examples of pilastered and corniced (with supporting brackets) rectangular openings; and closed and open triangular pediments, with semi-circular fanlights breaking into the open types. There are enrichments like the elaborate Corinthian capitals and fluting on Young's in St Mary Street; the triple pilastered doorcases in Nos. 93-4 The Struet and the pair of Ionic surrounds next door at Nos. 91-2. Semi-circular fanlights may have simple radial glazing bars or more elaborate curvilinear patterns. Rectangular fanlights may be enlivened by straight sided geometrical shapes. The mouldings of stucco or timber surrounds may have delicate adornments like dentils or Adamesque roundels. Later C19 buildings may have stucco or brick quoining around doors. There are a few examples of large projecting porches, Classical or Italianate in style, such as on Watton Mount and No. 9 The Struet. The Puzzle Tree has a handsome curved Ionic door surround on the corner of Watton and Danygaer. C18-mid C19 doors are usually of six panels, but later C19-early C20 examples may have combinations of large and small panels.



7.12.3 Shop fronts

Shop fronts are a particular asset to the town, with some bowed and multi-paned C18 examples in the southern part of The Struet; many mid-late C19 wooden types, often with inset doors and canted or curved display windows, richly detailed side pilasters and console brackets, corniced fascia boards and delicate glazing bars, seen along the length of High Street, The Bulwark and Ship Street and the southern portion of The Struet, with some good modern repairs and replicas. Glazing bars may have flat arched tops and the Ardent Gallery on The Bulwark has full round arched surrounds to the display windows. Entrances are often central between a pair of display windows but offset doors are also seen, sometimes with one moulded architrave over door and display window. No. 90 The Struet is a particularly interesting example of double display windows with a central doorway and long architrave over all three elements, the left hand window with later C19 arched lights and the right hand unit with an earlier C19 twelve pane window. The junction of High Street Superior and Inferior, around Lloyds Bank, has a rich assembly of shop fronts, with curved double windows and central door, round columns and dentilled cornice to No. 41 High Street Superior and Corinthian columns and side pilasters, semi-circular headed windows and an enriched dentillated entablature overall; simple but delicate shop fronts to East's Butcher and more decorated late-C19 windows and doors to the side elevations of the bank, enriched with cartouches, rich mouldings and ironwork railings to the windows. There are a number of good modern reproductions of C19 shop fronts, notably the Brecon Pharmacy at No. 7 Bulwark.



7.12.4 Roofs

Roofs are of Welsh slate or clay plain tiles, with occasional decorative ridge tiles. Stone tiles are only seen on some of the Cathedral ancillary buildings. Dormer windows may be gabled, with a hipped roof or of a distinctive curved outline; chimneys are of stone rubble, brick or rendered and pots are cylindrical or of tapered square section. Eaves vary between simple moulded wall tops to bracketed, panelled soffits, and a very rich combination of modillions, egg and dart detailing on ovolo moulding (No. 11 Lion Street).

7.13 Landscape / streetscape

7.13.1 The following types of space have been identified:

- **Tightly defined linear corridors** such as both parts of High Street, Bulwark, St Mary Street, Lion Street, Castle Street, parts of The Struet, the eastern end of Glamorgan Street and Wheat Street; most of Watton may also be included although the degree of 'tightness' is moderated by the width of the highway plus generous pavements and the lessening of visual tension created by various modern entries and yards on the southern side;
- **Loosely defined corridors**, notably the river banks, sometimes closely bounded by buildings and elsewhere with development set back behind gardens or public space; there are also some streets that are less enclosed than the first category because of varying building lines, spaces created by modern planning and highway decisions and the presence of large buildings and groups set in their own precinct that are less constrained by their neighbouring buildings; examples are Bridge Street (with the Christ College precinct on the southern side); Market Street (bounded by a mixture of building groups and car parks); Postern, Priory Hill and St John's (all characterised by varying building lines, differing scales of buildings and the inclusion of areas of green space);
- **Back lanes** which may be tight corridors but have a smaller scale and a lesser commercial importance than main shopping or residential streets, exemplified by Little Free Street, Church, Steeple and Bell Lanes and Chapel Street;
- **Formal spaces** with obviously considered relationships between buildings, contained or enclosed space and greenery or street furniture are confined to the 'squares' within Christ College and the Barracks; the paved space in front of the Brecknock Museum and the space SE of St Mary's Church around the Wellington statue, where the road pattern, paving and seating give a degree of civic dignity; Bethel Square is a modern example of a created space that makes good use of an historic building and respects historic street patterns and building scale;
- **Larger informal spaces** are rare because of the density of historic development but the Bishop Williamson Garden, the garden at Danygaer, Captain's Walk, Castle Square and the precinct around the Cathedral all have degrees of public access and amenity value; the churchyard around St Mary's also provides amenity space on the northern flank of the church, facing the commercial core;
- **Incidental smaller spaces** occur within the town centre where the historic street pattern creates a slight opening out of the building lines, exemplified by two areas north of Lloyds Bank and the junction between High Street Superior and Lion Street and the sharp bend from Glamorgan Street into Wheat Street.

7.13.2 Trees

Trees are an important element of the landscape character and quality of the town, with notable groups in the Cathedral precinct and the Bishop Williamson Garden; around the adjacent Priory School to the north; in the grounds of Christ College; along the banks of the Usk (with formal avenue planting to the north of the Usk Bridge, along The Promenade); on the SE 'gateway' approaching Watton; along the Canal; and on Watton itself, in the form of pollarded limes, supposedly commemorating the 24th Foot's heroics in the Zulu Wars. The Struet has tree groups behind its terraces, on higher ground. There are areas of green space such as the garden on the junction of Watton and Danygaer; trees and grass along Captain's Walk; and the graveyard of St Mary's. Individual trees make telling visual contributions and are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). There are two TPOs within the boundaries of the conservation area: the monkey puzzle at the south end of Bulwark and behind the buildings on the north side of Watton.



Important trees on the south east approach to Watton

7.13.3 Boundaries

Boundaries are important in enclosing and defining space and ownership. Stone walls are usually of random or roughly coursed rubble, with worked quoins and gate piers; capping varies from simple flat horizontal slabs, canted or rounded profiles, regular stone blocks set vertically or vertical 'cock-and-hen' coping. The crenellated walls around the Cathedral add greatly to the enjoyment of the area and the scale of walling along Priory Hill is particularly impressive. The Barracks also has monumental walls and entrance gates, with examples of wall capping ramping up or down to

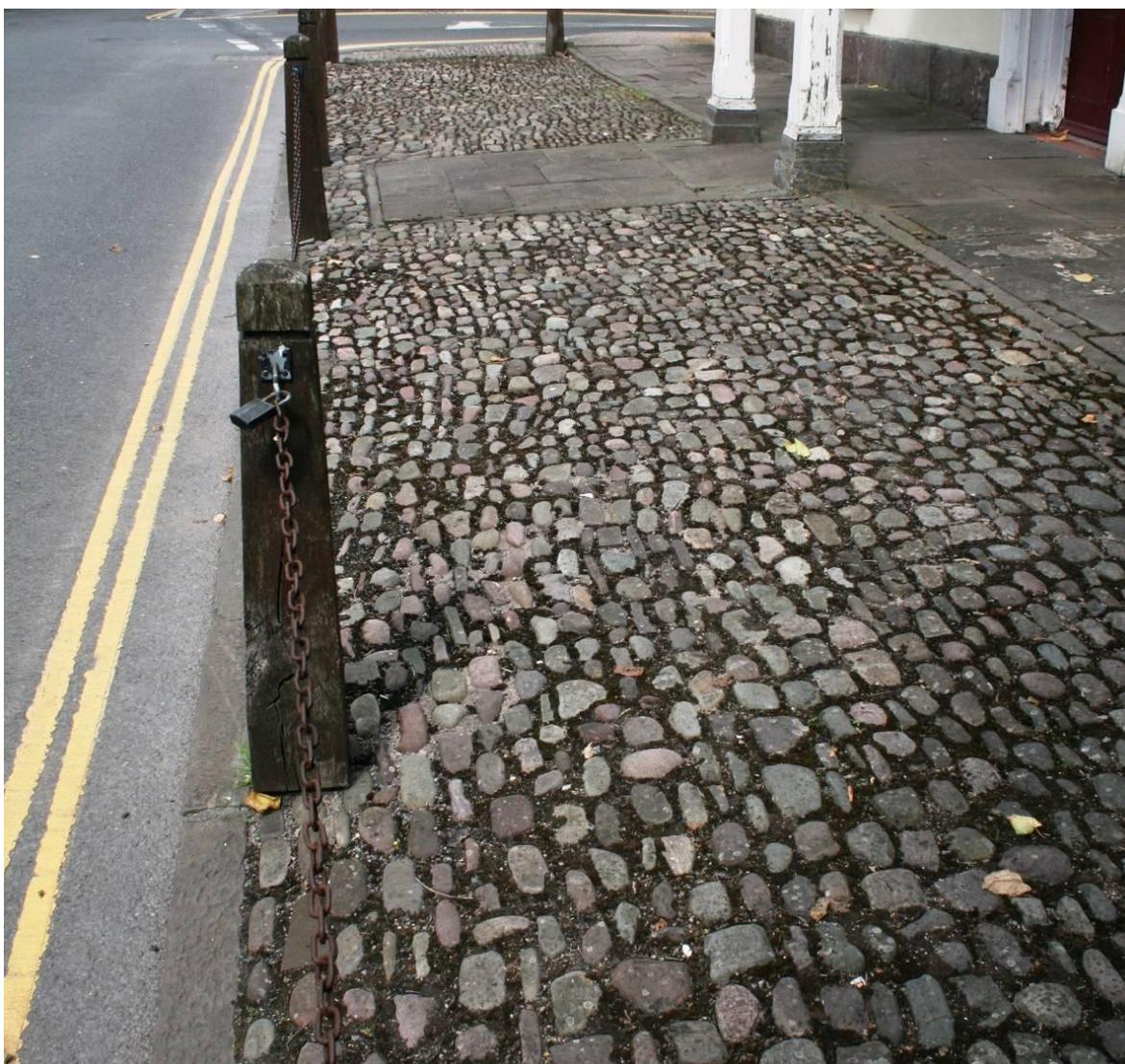
accommodate changes of level. Smaller stone sleeper walls may support iron railings or railings, gates and gate posts may be set directly into the ground. Gate piers are usually of stone or render with pyramidal caps but more elaborate Gothic Revival details are seen in the entrance to Christ College and at the Presbyterian Church in Watton. Iron piers are components of a rich heritage of elaborate iron gates and lamp overthrows, seen in Glamorgan and Lion Streets.

7.13.4 Surfaces

Surfaces include large areas of Pennant Sandstone paving slabs, seen on Watton, Bulwark and High Street Inferior and stretches of stone setts and cobbles in front of buildings along the pavement edge, often forming part of the public realm, seen on the north side of Orchard Street, adjacent to the conservation area boundary; at the entrance to Christ College; in Glamorgan and Wheat Streets; on the east side of The Struet; and up King Charles Steps (37 steps with cobbled setts and stone edging).



Pennant sandstone slabs at Watton

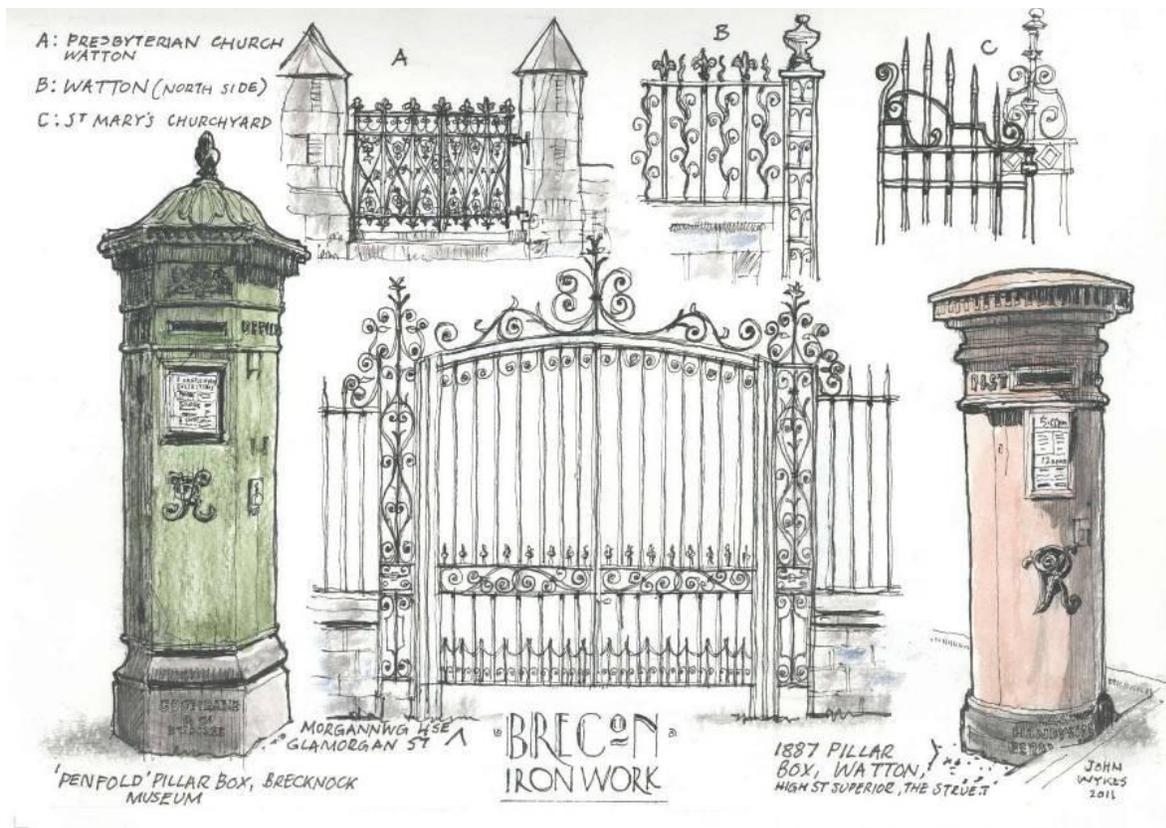


Setted area, Wheat Street

7.13.5 Signs and street furniture

Signs add greatly to the enjoyment of the town, such as blue enameled street signs (Free Street, Lion Street, Buckingham Place); a green-painted 1866-79 Penfold hexagonal post box in front of the Brecknock Museum; a number of 1887-pattern Victorian cylindrical and wall post boxes (Watton, The Struet, High Street Inferior/Superior junction, wall box in Free Street); and many examples of high quality wrought and cast iron work in the form of railings, balconies, gates and lamp overthrows and brackets for hanging signs. Notable examples are two terraces in Watton with honeysuckle detailing to balconies (Nos. 69-72 and 75-80), the railings and gates of Harvard and Morgannwg Houses in Glamorgan Street, those of No. 4 Lion Street, the gates of the Market Hall, the Grecian-detailed railings and gates of the former Shire Hall, the Art Nouveau scrolls and finials to the churchyard gates and rails at St Mary's and modern work at the Cathedral and the Regimental Museum at Watton. In Bridge Street, Ty Henry Vaughan has an arched gate with cut-out lettering above. Lesser domestic railings have typical spear-headed, spiked, arrow headed and

fleur-de-lis finials and combinations of S and C scrolls and spikes are seen in gates, as well as circular and spoked patterns. Grange Guest house, in Watton, has long S scrolls to railings and gates. There are some elaborate scrolled brackets for hanging signs and lamp brackets (Warwick House on High Street, at the Town Hall and the Steeple Lane/High Street Inferior corner). Wall lamps either late C19 or modern replicas are seen in a lane between St Mary's and Glamorgan Streets, in Bell Lane and other locations around High Street. Cast iron bollards are also important bits of street furniture, with cannon-shaped examples at the northern end of Glamorgan Street. A weather vane is seen above the Town Hall. J E Knott was a prominent iron founder in Market Street and he may have produced many of the above objects. K6 phone boxes are seen in Watton, The Struet, Glamorgan Street and St Mary's Street (a particularly impressive group of four). The modern circular plaques, provided by Powys County Council, are useful markers of building and area history and associations.



7.13.6 Other important details include sign writing (Camden Arms, Watton, 'Licensed to Let Post Horses' in the passageway from Bell Lane to High Street Superior and W J James & Co. in Wheat Street) and moulded or individually applied lettering, in a variety of Classical, Egyptian and other fancy Victorian typefaces, seen at the Castle Hotel, George Hotel, Viaduct House (broken), Warwick House, High Street Superior, New House in Bridge Street and the roundel dated 1852 with gold Egyptian lettering on the former Bethel Chapel.

7.13.7 The Wellington statue in Bulwark is an important mid-C19 work of art as well as a prominent townscape feature. There is a relatively hidden bronze group of Boudicca

(by John Thomas of Gloucester) in Glamorgan Street, at the side of the Museum. The area in front of the Museum also has a stone horse trough of 1902. The Town Hall has a prominent projecting clock.



Wellington statue in Bulwark

8. Important Local Buildings

8.1 Important Local Buildings that are currently unlisted add much to the character and quality of the town. They include:

- Three late C19 houses on the south side of Watton, Lindens, Lynwood and Maesllan, with canted bays, distinctive half hips to the dormer windows and pleasant details like front doors and iron gates;
- The adjacent B. Jenkins & Sons three storey stone and brick late C19 building, with evidence of former loading doors;
- Houses on the east side of Free Street (Nos. 18-24), terraced, mid-late C19 stone rubble with large stone lintels, of group value;
- The east side of Landsdowne Terrace, Watton, late C19 with canted bays and coherence as a small group;
- 'Elsie's Footbridge' between The Struet and the west bank of the Honddu, simple iron structure with lattice sides, of visual value;
- Nos. 24 and 25 The Struet, rendered with dormers, porch with 'Venetian' window and bracketed door canopies, modernized but of group value;

- Ty Henry Vaughan Health Centre and Usk House in Bridge Street, the former a three storey, eight bay stone and brick former factory, late C19, well converted, the latter a late C19 stone building with a hipped roof and tall chimneys, both a good introduction to Llanfaes;
- The Coliseum Cinema in Wheat Street, 1925, with a large area of glazing in a chevron pattern, typical 1930's detailing;
- A round arch in Castle Street possibly associated with the Market Hall.



Ty Henry Vaughan, Bridge Street

The Map in **Appendix 2** shows the important local buildings identified in Brecon.

9. Issues and Opportunities

9.1 Impact of new development

The extent of intrusion or damage is an important issue, with impacts of modern development in limited areas and erosion of traditional details on a number of unlisted buildings of group value. **Modern buildings** have differing design qualities, with supermarkets like the Co-op being of low architectural quality and newer development, notably Bethel Square, adding to the qualities of the town. The Morrison's building has been given a sandstone rubble exterior but its large scale and the large areas of parking around it are difficult to assimilate into the townscape. The Aldi building, off Rich Way, is smaller but, again, the impacts of parking, vehicular access and signage have obvious visual impacts. Also on Watton, the car showrooms and the builders' merchants open road frontages (the latter with a low stone wall) dilute the sense of enclosure on the southern side. The Library, in Ship Street, has recently been listed Grade II and is an interesting example of a 1960's building with detailing and materials that are above the general standard of buildings of the period. The Council Offices

behind the Brecknock Museum are an obvious attempt at 'architecture', with careful attention to proportion, symmetry and the use of coursed stone but they are also a little out of context. Christ College has some C20 buildings of indifferent quality but redeems itself with a good recent block on the Bridge Street frontage. The Government Offices on the Free Street curve are also of poor quality. There are also two modern buildings either side of the High Street entry into George Street that are of poor quality, with inadequate scale, building line set-backs, alien materials and detailing.



Modern buildings, High Street Superior

9.2 Other modern development adds to the town: the Theatre (Theatr Brycheiniog), outside the conservation area but related to the historic canal basin, is a pleasant building and the Priory C in W School, north of the Cathedral, is an excellent building. Housing schemes along Heol Gouesnou and The Struet show some awareness of context and do not detract from the historic core. The new scheme in Lion Street, on the site of the Police Station, is a positive improvement to the historic core.

9.3 Conversions of historic buildings are, on the whole, of reasonable quality, evidenced by the former warehouses in St Mary Street, Ty Henry Vaughan in Bridge Street and the various ancillary buildings of the Cathedral.

9.4 Alterations to buildings, both listed and unlisted, are, on the whole, in keeping with the qualities and character of the town, with few obvious replacement uPVC windows and doors that do not relate to historical wooden types. There are a small number of examples of uPVC window that try to mimic sashes and suffer from the usual visual problems of over-thick meeting rails and reflective glazing and a few doors are of the

historically incorrect detail with a radial 'fanlight' set into, rather than above, the door. Free Street has a cluster of much altered mid-late C19 houses with a variety of window and door insertions. The use of modern colours to render facades and woodwork may sometimes conflict with the qualities of individual buildings and with neighbours, seen particularly in parts of The Struet. There are a couple of modern shop fronts in High Street Inferior that have particularly obtrusive colours.



Problems of colours on render illustrated on buildings along The Struet

9.5 The only major **alterations to the historic road pattern** occurred when Market Street and Heol Gouesnou were improved or created, with limited demolitions, mitigated on the corner of Market and Castle Streets by a modern Neo-Classical end façade and a replica building on the approach to Castle Bridge.

9.6 Other environmental and visual issues are:

- Intrusive modern development at important entry points to the conservation area, such as the garage and tyre depot and the builder's yard at Watton and the group of single storey garages on the NW side of The Struet (and a nearby car valeting lot on the opposite side of the street, which is a major hole in the urban fabric);
- Empty retail premises are creating a deadening effect at street level and often the condition of the buildings is deteriorating. This has a significant harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Fly posting on the windows and doors of empty premises is also a problem linked with this issue.
- Underused and poorly maintained sites such as the yard of the Post Office in St Mary Street, which has detrimental visual impacts on Glamorgan Street as well;
- Some untidy rear entries into St Mary Street buildings from Glamorgan Street, with litter and problems with bin storage;
- An unpleasant and threatening pedestrian entry to the Co-op from Lion Street;

- A plastic sheeting and wood first floor extension to the end of Landsdowne Terrace (the conservation area boundary actually cuts it off from the parent building but the structure does affect the whole building group);
- An untidy corner building between Bulwark and Lion Street, with advertising, satellite dish and a wooden balcony;
- The generally bare character of the car park behind Shire Hall, particularly from the Captain's Walk frontage;
- The front space of the Brecknock Museum is rather fragmented and lacks the quality and dignity demanded by the scale and quality of the buildings. Linked to this, Captain's Walk would benefit from the use of stone paving rather than tarmac;
- A bleak paved triangle, with signs, traffic lights, poles and wires at the junction of Watergate and Market Street;
- Underused space on the upper floors of commercial buildings;
- The town centre (particularly Bulwark, High Street Inferior and Superior and Lion Street) has benefited from partial pedestrianisation, traffic calming and management but still seems unduly affected by moving and parked vehicles. There is a long history of alternative schemes and sound reasons for the current system but, for example, the 1974 Town Expansion Plan showed a visually and environmentally attractive paving of Bulwark and High Street Inferior, with vehicles confined to the west side of Bulwark and St Mary Street – is there a case for a future reconsideration of the existing access and flow patterns?
- The modern highway schemes on Market Street and Heol Gouesnou have created areas of open space, either exposing the backs of premises or creating car parks (particularly evident in Market Street, despite the provision of low boundary walls and landscaping) or placing larger car parks and green space adjacent to the supermarkets and Bethel Square development. The whole corridor would benefit from a revision of boundary and landscaping treatments and a 'pulling together' of the various spaces;
- There are intrusive poles and wires in many parts of the town, notably Watton, Bridge Street, Glamorgan Street and The Struet;
- Many buildings, in areas like Watton and Bulwark, are festooned with electricity or telephone wires attached directly to facades;
- Traffic signs can be intrusive, as seen in areas like the entry to Rich Way and the lower end of Ship Street (where miniature stone walls add to the clutter);
- There are over-large lamp standards in Watton and in front of the Brecknock Museum;
- Satellite dishes may be necessary in this part of South Wales but they can be obtrusive on the front elevations of buildings and in narrow streets;
- The 'at risk' condition of a small but important number of buildings is noted below and one very obvious problem is on the NW end of Watton where there is a very poor shop front in a former motor spares premises and obtrusive aluminium windows in the adjoining property; another small site is the untidy yard at the side of the Camden Arms in Watton.



Gap site, The Struet

9.7 Condition of Built Fabric appears to be, on the whole, good but there are a number of 'Buildings at Risk' in the conservation area. The Register lists 29 buildings and structures, all listed with three Grade I, notably the scheduled town wall and tower behind Watton Mount and the Ely Tower and Great Hall of the Castle. Other entries include town centre commercial premises, particularly upper floors, houses, boundary walls and pavement setts (The Struet and Orchard Street). The Brecknock Museum is, perhaps, a surprising entry but the size and complexity of the building may provide maintenance problems.

10. Summary of Issues

10.1 The Brecon Conservation Area is a large and important designation, with a significant number and density of Listed Buildings, some individual buildings of national importance and an overall coherence and character. It appears to have been well stewarded in the late C20 and early C21 by its local authorities and local inhabitants and its functions as a county town, centre for the National Park and a place to live and work are related closely to its historic character and environmental qualities. Modern development has been confined to certain areas and its impacts have been limited and, in some cases, positive. There are examples of poor design and layout and the central area road improvements (which have undoubtedly created environmental benefits in some areas) have produced loss of spatial enclosure and have increased the impacts of parked vehicles.

10.2 There has been considerable investment in the repair and conversion of historic buildings and parts of the town centre have benefited from a general 'facelift' through the use of co-coordinated colour schemes, improved lettering, the removal of eyesores and the introduction of paved surfaces and appropriate street furniture. It is interesting to compare current conditions with those described in past planning documents, especially the 1974 Town Expansion Plan. Many of the aspirations relating to infrastructural improvements, facelift and landscaping schemes and listing of buildings have been achieved in the past 35 years.

10.3 From the current appraisal, a number of issues have emerged:

- There is potential to extend the boundaries of the existing designated area south west of the Cathedral and to include the area south west of Heol Gouesnou which is currently surrounded by the conservation area.
- The town centre still seems unduly dominated by parked and moving traffic and the concept of further restrictions to access and additional environmental improvements should be considered;
- The impacts of the modern highway improvements on adjacent spaces and boundaries should be re-examined and an overall landscaping strategy drawn up;
- With nearly 30 'buildings at risk', there is a need to address specific problems and prioritise any available financial help accordingly;
- Retail premises empty for a length of time are harming the character and appearance of the conservation area and often linked to the deteriorating condition of the building.
- There are a small number of poor quality modern buildings and spaces that would benefit from redevelopment or improvement over time, as and when opportunities occur;
- The 'gateways' at Watton, The Struet and St John's should be enhanced by careful attention to street furniture, signs and overhead wires and careful redevelopment (in the case of two sites at The Struet).

11. Local Guidance and Management Proposals

11.1 Design guidance

- **Layouts** should respect those of neighbouring properties and the wider area, with, normally, buildings set on or close to the edge of the pavement, parallel to the road line or in an L-shape. Any front spaces should be detailed and landscaped to high standards. Vehicular access may be by the use of arched entrances to rear spaces and any parking areas near the public realm should be enclosed and screened by walling of an appropriate height.
- **Mass, scale, outline** are all important considerations with a normal maximum to four storeys (including the use of dormers or roof lights) and the avoidance of single storey buildings (unless there is a compelling design justification). Details should relate to the overall size of the building and its materials and note should be taken of the proportions of Classical architecture in the town where openings are carefully arranged in vertical hierarchies and to rules of proportion. Outlines should normally be enlivened by pitched roofs, chimneys and features like dormer windows. The use of clock towers or cupolas may be merited on public buildings.
- **Materials** should relate to traditional sandstone or render finishes, the stone laid in either rough courses or more carefully dressed and coursed. Render should be smooth or finely textured and the contrasting use of brick dressings may be considered. Roofs should be of slate.
- **Care of materials** is important on listed and unlisted buildings. Lime mortar is preferable to hard cement mortars on repairs and extensions to historic buildings and pointing of stone and brick, on repairs and new-build, should follow traditional details, with flush, recessed or double struck joints, ensuring that mortar does not extend over the surrounding brick or stonework. Existing lime mortar should always be replaced by the same material and advice on composition or techniques should be sought from the Authority's building conservation officer. Stone and brick should never be painted, unless limewash is used, and advice should be sought on the use of clear protective materials.
- **Windows and doors** should normally be of timber, with glazing bar patterns and the thickness and profiles of frames reflecting traditional types, sashes either multi-paned of two equal units or with a smaller upper light, bars should be of slender sections and pane proportions should follow historic examples. The upper meeting rails should only have a modest horn projection where mid or late C19-early C20 buildings are being repaired or new-build attempts to reflect their details. On historic buildings, double glazing should be restricted to timber sealed units of suitable detail or secondary glazing should be considered. UPVC would normally be discouraged but careful choice of good quality products might be allowable on new build or rear extensions. Doors should be of timber, either vertically planked on vernacular, older buildings, resisting any temptation to use over-decorative hinges or door furniture, a single glazed light would provide interior illumination. Panelled doors would normally be of four or six sunk panels, with moulded surrounds or fielded and raised centres, typically two taller ones above a smaller pair, six panel types may have smaller pairs above and below the centre pair and the upper ones may be glazed; semi-circular or rectangular fanlights are an

important asset and should be retained and repaired. Any new buildings should only include ornamental fanlights where there is architectural justification. Typical mass-produced doors with multiple panels and integrated 'Georgian' fanlights should be avoided. All woodwork should be painted and wood stains are unduly dark and unauthentic.

- **Porches and canopies** should reflect local traditions of simplicity and utility, with either flat, bracketed canopies or lean-to roofs on supports. Classical porches should strictly follow the canons of traditional design.
- **Guttering and down pipes** are important details; existing cast iron examples should be repaired where possible and metal products are preferable to plastic ones.
- **Shop fronts** require the highest standards of design and finish. Historic examples should be carefully repaired, using complimentary materials and detailing and new or replacement ones should either attempt to emulate historic examples (with the use of timber, display windows with thin mullions, side pilasters with pilasters, brackets or incised panels, glazed and panelled doors and fascias with moulded surrounds) or, in some cases, a simpler design solution may be considered, without all of the historic detailing, but care should be taken with materials, proportions, colours and signage. The National Park Authority has an approved '**Shop Front Guide**' which is available on-line.
- **Render** it is important to record and replicate and special details such as ashlar scribing and raised stucco bands. Replacement render should always be carried out in a suitable render mix. If the building is of traditional construction then lime render is the most appropriate mix.
- **Colours** are also an important part of the town's overall character. Render should normally be white, off-white or cream and painted timber should be white, off-white or the use of modern 'conservation' colours is acceptable; the use of black, other dark colours or dark stains on windows tend to deaden the effect of sub-divisions such as glazing bars; shop fronts should have more flexibility but the use of bright, discordant colours is discouraged and reflective, shiny surfaces should also be avoided; on shop fronts, sign writing is encouraged and lighting should be in the form of discrete strips or spots above or below the main fascia board. (See NPA's 'Shop Front Guide')
- **Subsidiary units** such as extensions should relate to the parent building in terms of details and materials and lean-tos or gabled roofs, of similar pitch to the main block are acceptable.
- **Boundaries** are particularly important and should be established or recreated in most circumstances, with rubble stone walling from a metre (possibly with iron rails) to two metres or above (for retaining walls). Copings should reflect local styles, with a flat slab finish or vertical slats (of similar size or 'cock and hen'). Brick or rendered walls may be appropriate as long as care is taken in textures and colours.
- **Landscaping** is desirable in most cases, particularly along or adjacent to boundaries and in front spaces. Stone setts, sandstone slabs, brick edging and gravel are all appropriate. Plants and trees should reflect local types and should avoid exotic coniferous species.
- **Highway design standards** are very important determinants of design excellence and sensitivity in historic areas. The Highway Authority is encouraged to continue to work with the NPA and Town Council to maximize the considered use of design

standards, to be flexible where appropriate and to use the most appropriate materials and finishes where financial resources permit.

Management proposals aim to set out priorities for action that the local authorities, Town Council, Cadw, utility companies, landowners and individuals may consider. The proposals include recommendations for enhancement and policies for the avoidance of harmful change. Ideas may be constrained by the availability of financial and staff resources but partnership working will be beneficial. The National Park Authority (NPA) has existing planning powers to remedy such matters as the poor condition of land and buildings, urgent works and repairs notices for listed buildings and unlisted buildings and structures. The Town and Country Planning (General Development Order) 1995 provides permitted development rights for minor building works, with some restrictions in conservation areas. By the use of an Article 4 Direction, permitted development rights may be further restricted. This may be seen as a last resort and the use of awareness raising and positive advice may be the preference.

Appendix 3 sets out a range of proposals in tabular form, with an indication of the lead body in most cases. They include the preservation of historic buildings; the improvement of negative sites and buildings; building maintenance and repair; the control of new development; the loss of architectural detail and minor alterations to historic buildings; public realm issues; the maintenance of the various 'gateways' to the town; the retention of historic floorscape; the protection of green spaces; and tree management and landscape enhancement. Minor and major amendments to the conservation area boundary are also included. From the range of broad ideas, it is hoped that specific improvement projects will be developed.

12 Contact Details

The officer contact at the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is Rosie Burton, or Janet Poole, Senior Heritage Officers, on 01874 620433 or rosie.burton@beacons-npa.gov.uk or janet.poole@beacons-npa.gov.uk.

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14 Glossary of Architectural Terms

Adamesque late C18 Classical style introduced by the Adam brothers and characterised by delicate ornament

Architrave part of a Classical *entablature* or the surrounds of a door or a window

Art Nouveau artistic & architectural style, 1890-1920, with ornament based on plant forms and curves

Arts & Crafts/Queen Anne style late C19 styles based on traditional British building details

Ashlar finest quality worked and carved stone

Bailey the space between the keep of a castle and its outer walls

Baluster small pillar or post

Barge board wooden board protecting ends of roof joists, usually following slope of roof

Bonds (Brick), Flemish, English and stretcher differing patterns of headers (short ends) and stretchers (long faces), with alternating ones in each course (Flemish); alternating courses of the two types (English) and all long bricks (stretcher)

Brecon Hopper a local window type with a side hung casement over a multi-paned sash or fixed window

Burgage plot a sub-division of a planned settlement or part thereof, usually drawn to a standard size

Cambered arch of very flat curvature

Canted bay window ground floor projecting window with splayed sides

Casement window a timber or metal window with side hinges

Classical related to Greek, Roman and Renaissance details

Cock-and-hen coping wall top formed by alternate long and short vertical stones

Composite a Classical Order, with combination of Ionic and Corinthian details

Console ornamented bracket or corbel

Cornice a part of a Classical *entablature*, usually the top

Coping wall capping designed to throw off water

Coursed, laid to courses stone or brick laid in regular layers, with joints lined up

Cupola small dome

Dentil a projecting square block under a Classical moulding

Dormer window a window placed in the inclined plane of a roof, usually in attic space

Dressing window, door or corner detail formed of better quality stone or brick

Drip mould projecting weather moulding above a door or window

Entablature Classical superstructure above columns or pilasters, comprised of architrave, frieze and cornice

Fascia panel/board top horizontal name board of a shop front

Fielded panel door or wall panel with a sunk panel with a raised, projecting centre

Gentry house larger, higher status house, usually of 'polite' architecture

Glazing bar wooden or metal division of a window, supporting individual glass panes

Gothic Revival late C18-early C20 use of medieval pointed-arch architecture and details

Gothick C18-early C19 style that uses medieval detailing playfully and incorrectly

Hipped roof angle created by two sloping sides of a roof

Ionic Classical Order with distinctive volutes or ram's horn capitals

Lintel beam placed over the top of a door or window

Loading door opening on a warehouse or industrial building where goods are taken in or passed out

Marginal glazing mid-late Victorian pattern of window or door bars where the outside panes nearest the frame are smaller than the central ones

Modillion projecting console bracket under a moulding

Motte a defensive earthen mound

Mullion vertical division of a window

Newel post principal post at the angles and foot of a stair

Oriel window projecting upper floor window

Ovolo quarter-round or convex Classical moulding

Pediment triangular gable, from classical architecture

Pent roof lean-to roof

Pilaster shallow rectangular column attached to a wall

Polyfocal with two or more centres or focal points

Quoin larger corner stone or brick, often raised or decorated

Radial glazing bar division of a round-headed window sprung from a common centre

Ramping curved slope connecting two different levels

Random rubble irregular, uncoursed stonework

Reveal the visible thickness of the wall into which a door or window is placed

Rock-faced stone carefully faceted, with a textured surface

Roughcast textured render

Sash window wooden, vertically hung window, with two opening lights, one above the other

Sedimentary rocks produced by successive deposits of granular material and silts in ancient seas and rivers

Segmental arch part of a semicircular curve

Snecked small stones in squared rubble

Stucco calcareous cement or plasterwork

Transom (e) horizontal glazing bar

Tudor Revival C19-early C20 reuse of C16 details, characterised by gables, mullioned windows and debased classical elements

Venetian window arched central window flanked by narrower flat topped windows

Vernacular local building styles, not influenced by national fashions

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - Brecon Conservation Area Boundary



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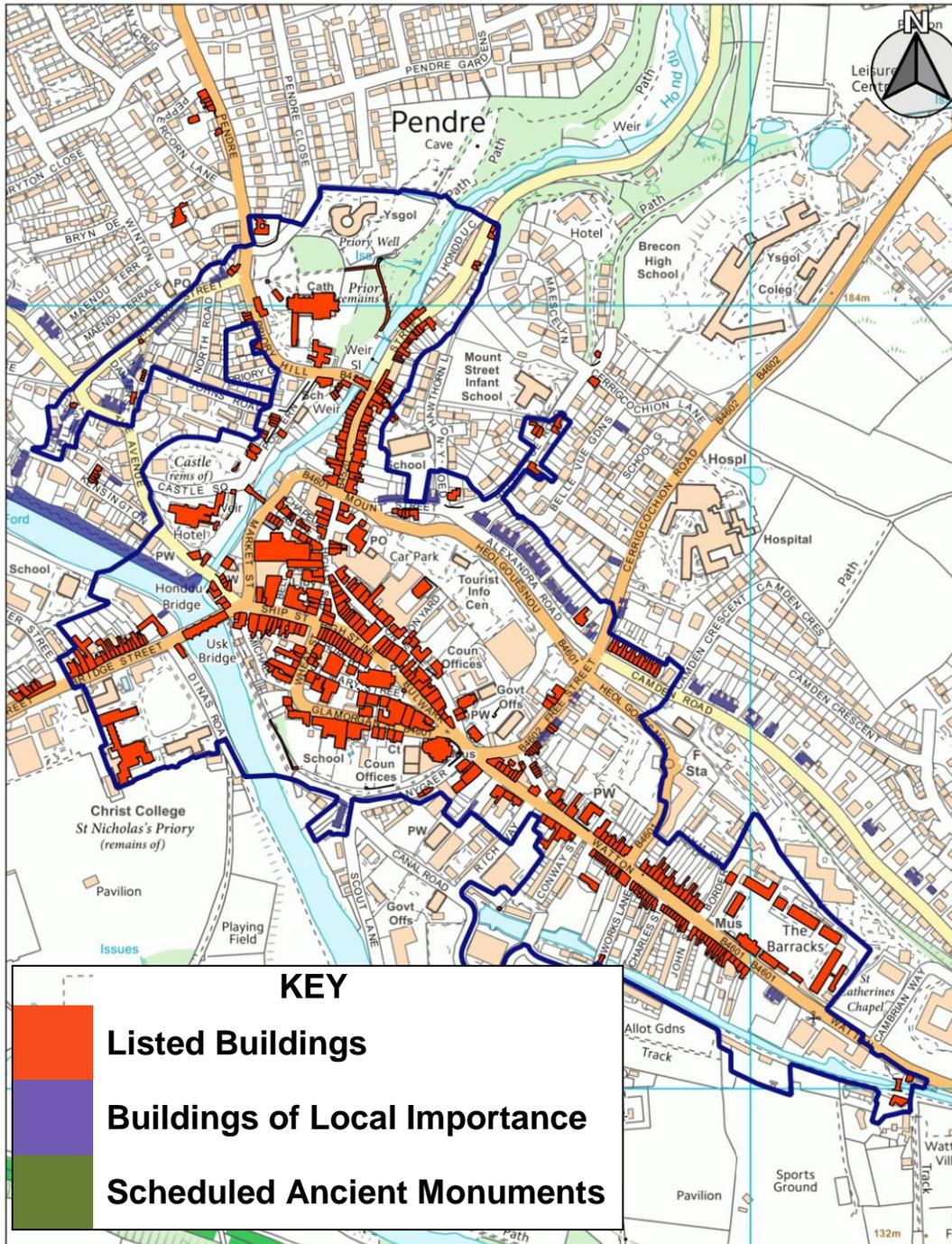
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Appendix 2 – Listed Buildings, Buildings of Local Importance, Scheduled Ancient Monuments



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APPENDIX 3, MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL	COMMENTS/LEAD BODY
<p>1. Preservation of historic buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NPA will review list of locally important buildings & consider if any should be forwarded to Cadw for scheduling</i> • <i>Conservation area consent for demolition of a locally important building will only be granted if demolition is justified against the criteria specified in PPG 15, paras. 3.16-3.19</i> 	<p>The list in para. 8.3 should be used as a basis for consideration and any other suggestions raised in the consultation exercise should include <i>(NPA/Cadw, Local History Society)</i></p>
<p>2. Negative sites and buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will seek to enhance sites and buildings that are perceived to have a negative effect on the conservation area</i> 	
<p>3. Building maintenance and repair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will seek to monitor the condition of all historic buildings in the conservation area and will take appropriate action to secure their future</i> • <i>Depending on availability the Authority will operate a programme of discretionary grant aid to assist with the repair of historic buildings that appear on the Buildings at Risk Register</i> • <i>Support will be given to suitable area regeneration and enhancement schemes where these are judged to have beneficial effects on the visual and economic aspects of the town centre</i> • <i>The sensitive and appropriate re-use of upper floors to town centre buildings will be encouraged</i> 	
<p>4. Empty premises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will work with building owners, the Town Council and others with an interest in the well-being of the town to encourage appropriate and sensitive new uses of both ground and upper floors of</i> 	<p><i>NPA, Brecon Town Council, building owners, Brecon Chamber of Trade.</i></p>

<p><i>empty commercial premises.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where appropriate the NPA will take action to secure the repair of deteriorating buildings.</i> • <i>The NPA will advise building owners on appropriate design for shop fronts and signage.</i> 	
<p>5. Control of new development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Development proposals will be assessed on their effect on the conservation area's character and appearance as identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, together with any other relevant planning policies</i> • <i>The NPA will require a Design and Access Statement in the validation of all planning applications in the conservation area</i> 	<p><i>NPA, Highway Authority</i></p>
<p>6. Loss of architectural detail and minor alterations to historic buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will encourage restoration of authentic architectural features where there is sound evidence of original detailing</i> • <i>The NPA will prepare advisory guidance that would assist the retention and enhancement of the conservation area's historic character and appearance and also raise awareness of the importance of good and sympathetic design</i> 	<p>Para. 13.1 and drawings from this report could form the basis of guidance (<i>NPA</i>)</p> <p>Possible use of a 'design champion' to promote good practice etc. (<i>NPA, Town Council?</i>)</p>
<p>7. Public realm issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will seek to negotiate the undergrounding or rationalization of poles and wires within the conservation area and will encourage boundary and surfacing enhancements where identified</i> • <i>Improvements and additions to pedestrianised areas and traffic calming will be considered</i> 	<p><i>NPA, Highway Authority</i></p>
<p>8. Gateways to the conservation area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improvements to the Watton & The Struet entry points are seen as a priority either through the</i> 	<p><i>NPA</i></p>

development process or partnership schemes	
9. Historic floorscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Historic paving, kerbs and associated gratings and gulleys should be protected and repaired, if necessary, using traditional techniques and materials</i> • <i>Opportunities should be taken to restore or introduce new areas of paving using materials that are sympathetic to historic examples</i> 	
10. Green spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Important green spaces will be protected from development or insensitive public realm works</i> • <i>Support will be given to enhancement works, such as new planting, improvements to boundaries and repair to paths</i> 	
11. Tree management and enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NPA will consider preparing advice about care and maintenance of trees within the conservation area</i> • <i>Support will be given to initiatives for new planting of appropriate native species, particularly on green space and the edges and gateways of the conservation area</i> 	
12. Review of the conservation area boundary	<i>NPA</i>