



# CONSERVATION AREAS FIT FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Introduction & Planning Policy Overview  
Chambers Conservation Ltd.

## Issue

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 How to use this document

- 1.1.1 This document **Introduction to Conservation Areas for the 21st Century** contains an explanation of the purpose and methodology of the project, together with a general introduction to the context, the planning and legislative framework.
- 1.1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with **Advice on Energy Efficiency Measures in Conservation Areas, a Planning & Practical Guide** [WEBLINK](#) which has been prepared in order to respond to the current climate change emergency, give practical advice on how to improve energy performance of traditional and locally significant buildings without harming their special character or technical performance.
- 1.1.3 In addition to these two documents individual Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans have been produced for each one of the National Park's 14 Conservation Areas. These documents can be found here: [WEBLINK](#).
- 1.1.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the Sustainability document and the individual Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

### 1.2 The Historic Environment of Eryri

- 1.2.1 Snowdonia (Eryri) was designated as a National Park because of its spectacular scenery, natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, which all contribute to its 'Special Qualities'. Tangibly, these 'Special Qualities' consist of rugged mountains, high moorland, wooded valleys, lakes, waterfalls, estuaries, coast, and many traditional and historic buildings and monuments of cultural and historical significance, such as stone monuments, Castles and Abbeys, Farm Buildings along with their walls and boundaries, and a variety of Architecture. All of these contribute to the distinctive character of the built and landscape environment within the National Park. The conservation and enhancement of the built heritage is an important factor when considering development within or adjacent to these special areas.



**01** The Conservation Areas of the National Park are diverse, from coastal settlements to market towns, they represent the wealth of cultural and historic heritage of the area.

- 1.2.2 Those elements of the Historic Environment that have been identified as having special national interest or importance, are designated Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and/or Registered Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes.
- 1.2.3 It is also recognised that, as well as being tangible sources of Snowdonia's cultural heritage and history, the historic assets are also a significant foundation for the prosperity of the economy, employment and tourism within Snowdonia National Park, especially as tourism is one of the main employers. The 'Special Qualities' of the Park are the main attraction, and it is vital to protect and ensure that the Snowdonia National Park Authority continues to consider these Special Qualities as a priority.
- 1.2.4 The preparation of the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are intended to assist the authority and the communities within which the Conservation Areas in understanding their Special Interest and how that can be protected and enhanced. Coupled with the *Advice on Energy Efficiency Measures in Conservation Areas, a Planning & Practical Guide*, the intention is to ensure that they can adapt to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 2.0 The Purpose of the Project.

### 2.1 Conservation Areas Fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- 2.1.1 The project was instigated because the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) who want to establish an ambitious and long-term programme of sensitive enhancement to the Conservation Areas within the Park. This would be supported by offering advice with regard to actions that would contribute to both protecting and enhancing the Conservation Areas and also seek to make them more energy efficient. It is envisaged that this would also help tackle issues of fuel poverty and economic development and raising awareness.
- 2.1.2 This project required the appraisal each of the 14 Conservation Areas within Snowdonia and produce associated management plans which would both seek to fulfil the statutory objectives of preserving and enhancing the areas and also consider opportunities for making them more energy efficient. Engagement with the relevant local communities is also a key part of the



02 The National Park's built heritage includes well preserved medieval towns such as Dolgellau.



03 The landscape and setting is intrinsic to the Special Interest of most of the National Park's Conservation Areas. Here in Maentwrog.

process which has been facilitated through local Community Councils in most cases.

2.1.3 The project also responds to the requirement of the Welsh Government's *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment* (May 2017) which further requires that Local Authorities prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their Conservation Areas and proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas in a Management Plan.

2.1.4 Snowdonia has 14 Conservation Areas, designated for their special architectural or historic interest and home to a large proportion of the National Park's 1900 listed buildings. The Conservation Areas are:

- Aberdyfi
- Y Bala
- Betws Y Coed
- Abergwyngregyn
- Beddgelert\*
- Cymmer Abbey (ger Llanelltyd)
- Dolbenmaen
- Dolgellau
- Harlech
- Llanllechid
- Maentwrog
- Nant Peris
- Nantmor
- Pandy'r Odyn

\* Beddgelert is also protected by an Article 4 direction – refer to Beddgelert Conservation Area Appraisal and the summary below.

### 3.0 Policy & Planning Controls

The overview below relates to Conservation Areas and more general aspects of the historic environment, not in detail to other elements such as listed buildings.

#### 3.1 Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015).



04 Relationship of built heritage to the natural, Betws-y-Coed. (2021).



05 The areas also capture the areas long-heritage as a destination for visitors, the Royal Oak, Betws-y-Coed (2021).

- 3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, places a duty on public bodies to *‘improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in accordance with the sustainable development principle that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’*.
- 3.1.2 It is widely recognised that the historic environment can have a positive impact on people and communities and contribute towards quality of life and well-being. If the historic environment is going to continue to deliver its rich benefits to communities there is a need to identify what is significant and manage change in a sensitive and sustainable way.
- 3.1.3 Essential to maintaining the special quality of a particular area (or any heritage asset) is the positive management of change based on a full understanding of the character and significance of the area. This is underpinned by raising awareness and understanding of the benefits that they can deliver and the skills necessary to do so.

## 3.2 Conservation Areas

- 3.2.1 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and defined in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as *“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*.

### Overview

- 3.2.2 Designation as a Conservation Area has a number of implications. Most importantly, Snowdonia National Park Authority is required to give special attention to preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area while exercising their planning functions.
- 3.2.3 Conservation area designation is not intended to prevent change, but it does mean that the significance of the area, as defined in the Conservation Area Appraisal, is taken account of in decision making.
- 3.2.4 In addition to the general requirements there are also some regulatory controls. These include demolitions, trees and restriction on some permitted development rights.
- 3.2.5 These controls are summarised below, but more detailed guidance can be found in Cadw’s guide to the management of Conservation Areas:



06 Many areas also capture early Welsh Culture and the indigenous rule before the arrival of Edward I, Abaty Cymer. (2021).



07 The period of upheaval after Edwards arrival fundamentally changed the landscape and architectural heritage. Harlech Castle. (2021).

- <https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/20170531Managing%20Conservation%20Areas%20in%20Wales%2028424%20EN.pdf>

### Control over Demolition in Conservation Areas

- 3.2.6 Conservation area consent is required for the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area. There is a strong presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 3.2.7 Consent for demolition is unlikely to be given without acceptable and detailed plans for the reuse of the site, which reflect and respond to the special quality of the area.
- 3.2.8 The Welsh Ministers have directed that conservation area consent is not required for certain works, such as the demolition of a building with a total cubic content not exceeding 115 cubic metres or the demolition of a built boundary feature that is less than one metre high where abutting a highway, waterway or open space, or less than two metres high in any other case.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2.9 Applications for conservation area consent for demolition within a conservation area will require a heritage impact statement.

### Advertisement Control in Conservation Areas

- 3.2.10 One of the purposes of the advertisement control system is to encourage the display of outdoor advertisements which make a positive contribution to the appearance of the environment. There are several Conservation Areas in the National Park which include significant numbers of commercial premises such as Betws-y-Coed or Dolgellau. The kinds of advertisement which require planning consent are subject to a wide range of factors and Advertisement Consent may be required in the 'Area of Special Control' of Snowdonia National Park where the proposal is subject to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992, Schedule 3, Part 1. Refer to:
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/666/contents/made>
- 3.2.11 Signage should be designed to respond to and enhance the special character of the specific conservation area.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/20170531Managing%20Conservation%20Areas%20in%20Wales%2028424%20EN.pdf> p.9.



08 Non-conformism and the importance of the Welsh Language is also reflected in the built heritage. Y Bala (2021).



09 The appraisals identify buildings at risk and the need to ensure a viable future for them. Abergwyngregyn. (2021).

## Trees in Conservation Areas

- 3.2.12 Local planning authorities have the power to protect trees and woodlands by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). In addition, there is special provision for trees in conservation areas which are not the subject of TPOs. Anyone proposing to cut down, top, or lop a tree in a conservation area must give the local planning authority six weeks' notice, during which time the authority can decide whether to protect that tree with a TPO. This requirement does not apply to trees under a certain size, or those that are proven to be dead, dying, or dangerous.

## Article 4 Directions

- 3.2.13 Article 4 directions are additional controls implemented by the local planning authority. They restrict the scope of permitted development rights, often in a Conservation Area. Where an article 4 direction is in effect, a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development, such as the replacement of windows and doors. In Snowdonia, the only Conservation Area which currently has an Article 4 direction is Beddgelert.

## 3.3 National Policy

- 3.3.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 11, February 2021) sets the context for sustainable land use policy within Wales and identifies the need for the promotion of good design.
- <https://gov.wales/planning-policy-wales>
- 3.3.2 Policy on the historic environment is contained within Chapter 6 of PPW, updated in 2016 to reflect the introduction of the new *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment* (May 2017), and now contains national policies requiring that Local Planning Authorities exercise a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character of a Conservation Area and/or its setting when considering development proposals.
- 3.3.3 *TAN 24* supercedes previous Welsh Office Circular 61/96. This provides further policies on the management of all aspects of the historic environment and alters the established principle of control from one of preservation to one of being able to justify alterations within the historic environment.
- 3.3.4 With specific reference to Conservation Areas, In PPW (6.1.6), The Welsh Government's specific objectives for the historic environment seek to:



10 Industry has also shaped the landscape and built heritage. Nantmor (2021).



11 Details such as doors and windows are essential to the special interest in most of the Conservation Areas, Dolgellau. (2021).

- *Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, whilst the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous.*

3.3.5 TAN 24 also refers to Cadw's *Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales* (2011) as a valuable document where applicants and other organisations are strongly encouraged to make use of these Conservation Principles when considering development proposals and other works to historic assets.

3.3.6 Cadw's Conservation Principles document can be accessed via:

- <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/conservation-principles/conservation-principles>

3.3.7 Cadw's Conservation Principles in overview are:

1. *Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values.*
2. *Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital.*
3. *The historic environment is a shared resource.*
4. *Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.*
5. *Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.*
6. *Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.*

3.3.8 These principles are applied when conserving and enhancing/managing a historic asset (or a group of assets), in order to ensure they are conserved and enhanced/managed in a sustainable way. Balanced and justifiable decisions about change to the historic environment depend upon understanding who values different historic assets and why they do so, leading to a clear statement of their significance and, with it, the ability to understand the impact of the proposed change on that significance.

3.3.9 Significance is understood by defining value against four established heritage values:

- **Evidential Value** *is the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.*



**12** Later change can detrimentally affect the special interest, such as uPVC windows, and more appropriate treatments should be encouraged. (2021).



**13** Renewable technology and sustainable retrofit will be essential to the future vibrancy of the historic environment but needs to respond to the special interest.

- **Historic Value** Derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.
- **Aesthetic Value** Derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulations from a place.
- **Communal Value** Derives from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

### 3.4 Local Planning Policy

- 3.4.1 Chapter 4 of the *The Eryri Local Development Plan* (2016-2031) includes the following objectives for Protecting the Cultural and Historic Environment:
- 3.4.2 *To understand, value, protect and enhance the area’s historic environment including archaeological remains and historic landscapes and to promote development that enhances Snowdonia’s built heritage and townscape.*
- 3.4.3 *To protect and enhance the natural beauty of the National Park’s landscape by ensuring that development meets good sustainable design standards and respects the ‘Special Qualities’ of the area and the purposes of the National Park.*
- 3.4.4 In para 4.6 of the LDP, the Authority demonstrates that it is committed to ensuring that Conservation Areas continue to be protected from inappropriate development and that where possible the area and setting are enhanced. Any development within a conservation area should respect its setting and character and will be informed by a series of Conservation Area Management Plans for individual areas to be prepared by the Authority in consultation with the local communities (this project). These management plans will outline the particular ‘Special Qualities’ (or Special Interest) in each of the areas that contribute to its character and outline the proposals for protecting and managing these ‘Special Qualities’.
- 3.4.5 The Local Development Plan also contains policy in respect of the World Heritage Site at Harlech and the North Wales Slate Industry Landscapes World Heritage Site (although the latter was a candidate site at the time of the publication of the LDP).
- 3.4.6 The LDP can be found here:  
<https://planning.snowdonia.gov.wales/policy/local-development-plan/>

3.4.7 The National Park Authority is currently producing Supplementary Planning Guidance Document (SPG) on the historic environment. This document will include guidance on the requirements for development applications affecting historic assets.

3.4.8 The SPG will provide guidance on the assessment and guidance of proposals in Conservation Areas.

### **Cynllun Eryri**

3.4.9 Cynllun Eryri is a Statutory Management Plan. It is a plan that:

- *Identifies what makes Snowdonia a special place— Snowdonia’s special qualities.*
- *Identifies how we and all organisations with responsibility to care for Eryri will work in partnership to protect Snowdonia’s special qualities for the future.*

3.4.10 Cynllun Eryri will help achieve the National Park’s functions and achieve many of the Welsh Government’s objectives and priorities. The most significant of these are the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment Act.*

3.4.11 Cynllun Eryri identifies a key purpose (Purpose 1) for the National Park as *‘Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park’*

3.4.12 Outcome A6 (p.113) states that Snowdonia should become *‘A leading example in Wales of how to care for and champion cultural heritage and the historic environment’*. The document then contains guidance on how this is to be achieved by:

- A 6.1 Support the repair and restoration of Listed Buildings
- A 6.2 Support owners of Scheduled Monuments to better safeguard them.
- A 6.3 Develop and implement landscape scale projects which benefit the historic environment.

The plan gives key actions and partner organisations for each element, as well as parameters for measuring future success.

3.4.13 For more details, the plan can be accessed here:

[https://snowdonia.gov.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Snowdonia-Park-Plan-2020\\_ENGLISH\\_22.09.2020.pdf](https://snowdonia.gov.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Snowdonia-Park-Plan-2020_ENGLISH_22.09.2020.pdf)

## 4.0 Where to Find Out More?

This document should be read in conjunction with **Advice on Energy Efficiency Measures in Conservation Areas, a Planning & Practical Guide**, which gives advice on the importance and benefit of maintaining historic buildings and sites as well as guidance on measures relating to their energy efficiency.

This document also contains further links to other guidance on the conservation, repair and energy efficiency of historic buildings and sites. Below are some general links to key policies and more general conservation guidance.

### 4.1 Welsh Government

4.1.1 <https://gov.wales>

4.1.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is the national policy outlining guidance for making planning decisions. PPW can be accessed here:

<https://gov.wales/planning-policy-wales>

4.1.3 Welsh Government offer a range of documents (Technical Advice Notes) on a range of subjects: <https://gov.wales/planning-policy-and-guidance-for-professionals>

4.1.4 Of particular relevance, Tan 24 (The Historic Environment) can be accessed here: <https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-24-historic-environment>

### 4.2 Cadw

4.2.1 <https://cadw.gov.wales>

4.2.2 Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service. Cadw publish some good guidance on the conservation of historic buildings, and sites, the understanding of heritage and relevant policy context.

4.2.3 Cadw's Conservation Principles as previously referred to:

<https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/conservation-principles/conservation-principles>

4.2.4 Cadw publish useful guidance on Conservation Areas:

<https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/historic-assets/conservation-areas-other-historic-assets>

### 4.3 Historic England

4.3.1 <https://historicengland.org.uk>

4.3.2 Historic England is Cadw's equivalent in England. Historic England provide a range of support and research documents offering advice and guidance on repair, conservation and energy improvement measures.

### 4.4 Historic Environment Scotland

4.4.1 <https://www.historicenvironment.scot>

4.4.2 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is Cadw's equivalent in Scotland. HES, in particular, provide a range of very good support and research documents offering advice and guidance on conservation and energy improvement measures.

### 4.5 Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB).

4.5.1 [www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

4.5.2 The Society for the Protection of Ancient buildings provide excellent advice on conservation and, in particular, maintenance:  
[https://www.spab.org.uk/sites/default/files/maintenance-toolkit/Maintenance%20Calendar\\_4.pdf](https://www.spab.org.uk/sites/default/files/maintenance-toolkit/Maintenance%20Calendar_4.pdf)