

Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033

Background Paper

BP38: Heritage Designations



Deposit Plan

May 2024



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd.

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1. Introduction and Scope of Background Paper

- 1.1 This is one of a series of Background Papers accompanying the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). When the Council publishes its Preferred Strategy and Deposit Plan, it must also explain how the policy has been formulated based on the evidence base available to the Council at the time. This Background Paper looks at heritage designations across the Conwy County Borough area (excluding Eryri National Park).
- 1.2 The main sections of the Background Paper address policy context, the general character and architecture of Conwy County Borough, Listed Buildings including those on the 'at risk' register, Conservation Areas, The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd World Heritage Site (WHS) in Conwy town, Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Monuments and Archaeological Sites.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The main national planning policy concerning heritage designations can be found within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) section 6.1 and Technical Advice Note (TAN 24). National planning statute and guidance has changed significantly since adoption of the previous LDP (2007-2022) with the introduction of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act of 2016 with the latest 2023 Act coming into force in the latter part of 2024.
- 2.2 There is now a requirement for local authorities and other public bodies to make use of Historic Environment Records (Heneb - The Trust for Welsh Archaeology will curate the statutory Historic Environment Record on behalf of the Welsh Ministers). There is also a need to undertake Heritage Impact Assessments for developments which require Conservation Area or Listed Building Consent, and produce statements to accompany such applications. This may also apply when development proposals have an impact on the setting of a heritage asset. Historic Assets of Special Local Interest (previously Buildings and Structures of Local Importance (BSLIs) as they are referred to in the Conwy LDP (2007-2022)) is another subject area that is new to the national guidance, as is a criteria based policy on Enabling Development.

3. The Character and Architecture of Conwy County Borough

- 3.1 The north-western part of North Wales which lies within the County of Conwy has an especially rich and varied heritage. This ranges from settlements and fortifications from the earliest times to the late 20th century engineering works of the tunnel under the Conwy Estuary.

3.2 The landscapes to be found in the County are also very varied. The coastal plain accommodates the main towns – Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Conwy, Abergele, Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan. To the south of these towns lies an extensive rural area, encompassing the Conwy Valley with the hills and mountains of Eryri to the west and to the east the vast upland area generally known as the Denbigh Moors.

3.3 Within the County there is a wide range of interesting and unusual structures which make a very significant contribution to the character and appearance of the County. These structures also help us to understand and appreciate the way in which the County has grown and developed from the earliest times to the present day.

3.4 There are marked differences between the western and eastern parts of the County. The Conwy Valley forms a natural border, dividing the more mountainous west and the gentler upland moors to the east. These differences are defined not only by the topography, but also by the different materials available for building. Thus we have the proximity of slate and granite, for example, in the west and the shales and outcrops of carboniferous limestone in the east and along the coast respectively.

3.5 The history of the architectural development of the area reflects the availability of local materials and building traditions. There has been a strong Eryri influence to the architecture of the inland and Conwy Valley areas as would be expected where there was a ready availability of stone, timber and slate.

3.6 Historic timber frame buildings are now relatively few with the vast majority of pre 18th century vernacular architecture being constructed of random stone rubble. Brick was more generally introduced to the County in the 18th century but, compared to the eastern part of North Wales, early 18th century brick buildings are relatively rare with brick only really gaining in popularity once mass production and transport improvements in the nineteenth century had allowed the material to be widely used. Stone remained the building material of choice for many Civic and Commercial buildings such as banks who wished to create a high status or prestigious character.

3.7 The brick and slate buildings quickly overtook stone when commercial centres, resorts and even villages were expanding in the 19th century. Accompanying the use of brick as a mono-chromatic, or polychromatic building material, came terracotta and ironwork details. Much of the coastal settlement expansion in Colwyn Bay and parts of Llandudno and Penmaenmawr were built in characteristic, regionally produced, pressed faced brickwork. Architects created features such as towers to highlight important positions such as corners in the urban expansion plans.

- 3.8 Modern later 19th century architecture in the area was strongly influenced by historical styles and the work of notable architects including Gilbert Scott, Charles Barry and Detmar Blow.
- 3.9 Local architect Herbert Luck-North established a recognisable local Arts and Crafts, rustic theme by using stone slates with a strong character with roughcast or pebble-dashed walls e.g. Llanfairfechan.
- 3.10 The influence of the Classical style is also evident in parts of, for example, Llandudno and Penmaenmawr, where decorated stucco is utilised to create an impression of grandeur and elegance. Modernist architecture using bold white elevation panels and mass-manufactured horizontal windows stand out but few survive unaltered. Ironwork, the hallmark of the Victorian era is still evident, mainly used as decoration or to create stand out features in Llandudno and Colwyn Bay – where canopies provided welcome shade/cover. Metal sheet buildings such as missions, churches and agricultural buildings have not survived well but now the remaining few structures stand out as relatively rare and distinctive buildings.
- 3.11 Historic place names are also important in understanding the character, history and origins of settlements and areas of land. See RCAHMW's List of Historic Place Names of Wales (<https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/>). The List of Historic Place Names of Wales is a useful resource that contains hundreds of thousands of place names collected from historical maps and other sources. This should be referred to when compiling proposals relating to the built environment to ensure continuity with the past, foster a sense of place and maintain the culture of an area.

4. Historic Environment Records (HERs)

- 4.1 Sections 194-196 and 36 of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 require Welsh Ministers to compile and keep up to date an accessible historic environment record for each local authority area in Wales. The Trust for Welsh Archaeology (Heneb) maintains the historic environment records on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. Records such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic landscapes, parks and gardens and scheduled monuments can all be found within [Cof Cymru | Cadw \(gov.wales\)](https://www.cofcymru.cadw.wales/)

5. Listed Buildings

- 5.1 There are 1488 listed buildings / structures within the County Borough planning area and there are a number of pertinent issues facing these which are raised below:

- 5.2 A survey of listed buildings was carried out in 2016 which identified listed buildings at risk. The “At Risk” list will provide the basis from which an action plan can be formulated. Priority will be given to buildings based upon the order in which effective action can be taken and the extent of the action required.
- 5.3 Changes of use that have a harmful effect on the fabric and features of listed buildings and have a debilitating impact on the designated building, or its setting in the longer term, should be carefully examined to ensure there are no alternatives available that would allow the use for which the building was originally designed to continue, or other uses that would preserve its special character and interest.
- 5.4 The objective of preserving listed buildings and their settings needs to be given significant weight when proposals for alternative energy generation and energy efficiency measures are submitted for designated buildings. These measures can harm the special historic or architectural interest and character of a listed building and require careful consideration. Other regulations such as the Building Regulations and provisions within the Equalities Act will also require special attention to ensure that any developments preserve the character of the listed building.
- 5.5 Enabling development may be one way of securing the future of listed buildings where other measures have not been successful. However this is normally a course of action taken when other options have failed to secure the future of the building as certain other planning considerations are overridden in favour of conservation benefits.

6. Conservation Areas

- 6.1 Conwy County Borough Council currently hosts 25 designated conservation areas which are listed below:

- Abergel Town Centre Conservation Area
- Betws-yn-Rhos Conservation Area
- Cerrigydudion Conservation Area
- Colwyn Bay Town Centre Conservation Area
- Conwy Conservation Area
- Gwytherin Conservation Area
- Llandudno Town Centre & Seafront Conservation Area
- Llanelian-yn-Rhos Conservation Area
- Llanfairfechan Town Centre Conservation Area

- Llanfairtalhaiarn Conservation Area
- Llangernyw Conservation Area
- Llangwm Conservation Area
- Llanrwst Town Centre Conservation Area
- Llansannan Conservation Area
- Old Colwyn Conservation Area
- Penmaenmawr (Penmaenan) Conservation Area
- Penmaenmawr (Pen-y-Cae) Conservation Area
- Penmaenmawr (St David's Road) Conservation Area
- Penmaenmawr (Bell Cottages) Conservation Area
- Penmaenmawr Town Centre Conservation Area
- Pentrefoelas Conservation Area
- Pwllycrochan Conservation Area
- Rhos-on-Sea Conservation Area
- St George Conservation Area
- The Close Conservation Area

6.2 Some of these conservation areas or significant parts of them are characterised as having good authentic surviving historic features that still contribute significantly to the distinctive special character of the area. In such cases, the emphasis of policies and proposals should be to preserve their existing special character and features whilst also enhancing special character wherever possible.

6.3 Conversely, some conservation areas have been degraded in character because of widespread small scale inappropriate changes to the external features of buildings, or larger scale new developments that are out of keeping with the character of the area. Where this is the case, the emphasis of policies and proposals should be to enhance the area by reinstating lost historic features, remedying breaches of planning control and enhancing/replacing instances of inappropriate non historic development with more compatible buildings/extensions.

6.4 Conservation areas can be frequently poorly understood and explained to occupiers, users and visitors. The special character of individual areas needs to be analysed and proposals formulated in order to manage future change with a view to preserving or enhancing these areas.

6.5 Conservation area proposals that will be implemented during the Plan period will be contained within management plans that are tailored to the individual

characteristics of each designated area. Some key themes are highlighted below:

- Security measures in commercial/retail areas
- Shop fronts in retail areas
- Advertisements in commercial/retail areas
- Historic uses in commercial/retail and residential areas
- Traffic management and highway design
- Streetscape features
- Minor developments in residential areas
- Additional/infill development within residential areas
- The control and management of permitted development rights in residential areas
- Energy efficiency and generation measures in conservation areas
- Protection of the settings of conservation areas.

6.6 As well as producing individual Conservation Area Management Plans, a generic Conservation Area SPG has been adopted covering topics that affect a wide number of conservations areas, for example, installation of UPVC, a windows guide, new roofs etc. Two further SPGs have also been adopted which guide the reader towards appropriate shopfront security measures and suitable shop front replacement where this is needed.

7. **The Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd World Heritage Site (WHS)**

7.1 The Conwy conservation area contains the thirteenth century castle and town walls that are designated as part of the World Heritage site. This designation confers a pre-eminence to the Conwy town conservation area. The exceptional interest of the town and its medieval defensive structures require particular management proposals that are tailored to protect their fabric and immediate and wider settings.

7.2 The crucial importance of the medieval military architecture and later engineering operations place additional constraints on the conservation area and its setting. These factors need to be taken into consideration when the Council reviews this conservation area. The Council also aims to ensure the preservation of surviving historic structures and that the character of the historic town and its surrounding setting is enhanced when the opportunity arises as well as being protected.

7.3 UNESCO requires the preparation of the Management Plan to guide development of the World Heritage Sites that comprise the Edward I castles and walls of Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech and Beaumaris. A Management Plan has been prepared which includes a defined essential setting zone intended to protect the setting of the World Heritage Site.

7.4 The World Heritage Site designation in Conwy town introduces further aspects that must be considered, evaluated and managed if the objectives of the overall management are to be achieved. The twelve objectives set out in the management plan are listed below:

- Objective 1: Maintain the castles and town walls to the highest national and international conservation standards.
- Objective 2: Conserve, promote and interpret the archaeological heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.
- Objective 3: Safeguard the setting of the World Heritage Site for the benefit of future generations.
- Objective 4: Support and promote local distinctiveness within the World Heritage Site, recognising the characteristics and diversity of each of the four towns.
- Objective 5: Use World Heritage Site status to support sustainable economic diversity and growth in the local and regional economy.
- Objective 6: Provide a visitor experience that is unique and of the highest quality.
- Objective 7: Market and promote the four locations of Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Conwy and Harlech as a single World Heritage Site to ensure a coherent and integrated approach.
- Objective 8: Encourage greater use of sustainable modes of travel as a means of visiting each of the destinations within the World Heritage Site without detriment to the qualities that demonstrate the uniqueness of the World Heritage Site on an international level.
- Objective 9: Raise awareness and promote understanding of World Heritage amongst a range of audiences, including local communities, engendering pride in their unique culture and heritage.
- Objective 10: To develop improved understanding of the World Heritage Site and help better inform its future management.
- Objective 11: Identify, remove and/or mitigate risks to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.
- Objective 12: Recognise the importance of nurturing existing partnerships and the development of new partnerships, as appropriate, to support the continued management of the World Heritage Site.

(Source Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd World Heritage Site, Cadw 2018.)

8. Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens

8.1 Conwy has 4 historic landscape designations and 20 Registered Parks Gardens within its planning area. The register of Historic Landscapes is a non-statutory register which is used to inform decision making and policy at a strategic level. While it is non-statutory, its presence holds weight in planning terms as it is referred to within Planning Policy Wales and TAN 24. It should also be referred to when considering planning applications that require Environmental Impact Assessment, or include issues that are of more than local importance (i.e. called-in applications.)

8.2 It is a statutory duty (of Welsh Ministers) to compile and keep an up-to date register of historic parks and gardens. New development that is proposed within boundaries or within their defined essential settings should not harm the special interest of historic landscapes, parks and gardens. Enabling development proposals within historic landscapes, parks and gardens should be systematically evaluated to ensure these assets are adequately protected. Further background information can be found on Cof Cymru on Cadw's website to see where the historic landscapes, parks and gardens are located. For details on best practice concerning these designations see Cadw: [Understanding registered historic parks & gardens | Cadw \(gov.wales\)](https://www.cadw.wales/understanding-registered-historic-parks-gardens)

9. Scheduled Monuments and Archaeological Sites

9.1 Scheduled monuments (SMs) are nationally important archaeological sites that are protected under the Historic Environment Wales Act (2023). There are 80 SMs in the Conwy planning area and a list of these can be found on Cof Cymru. The effect of scheduling is that proposals to damage, demolish, remove, repair, alter, add to, flood or cover up a SM require scheduled monument consent, on top of the requirement for planning permission.

9.2 Development should be sensitive to the preservation of archaeological remains and national policies stress the need to evaluate sites, record them and preserve those that are most important. When considering proposals on unscheduled archaeological sites, the Council will consult with the Trust for Welsh Archaeology, and take into account the interest and importance of the sites and their settings. Where necessary the Council will require that sites are properly assessed and evaluated before deciding on whether to grant planning permission. Planning permission will be refused if the archaeological site is of sufficient interest to merit protection from disturbance altogether. Preservation and recording of sites may also be secured through the use of planning conditions and agreements.

10. Historic Assets of Special Local Interest

10.1 Defined as 'Buildings and Structures of Local Importance' in the Conwy LDP (2007-2022), national planning policy guidance now recognises the potential for such heritage assets to be designated at a local level. These are referred to as Historic Assets of Special Local Interest within PPW. Since adoption of the LDP, progress is being made in terms of identifying BSLIs/HASLIs via a survey approach. Town and Community Councils and conservation interest groups have been invited to submit possible BSLI/HASLIs to the Council for assessment and inclusion on the local list. This process is currently underway (Summer 2024) and it is envisaged a list will be ready in time for the RLDP examination in public.