

Agenda Item	<b>5</b>
Report No	<b>ERA/13/21</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Easter Ross Committee

**Date:** 25 May 2021

**Report Title:** *Draft Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan*

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment

### **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 The report summarises the public response to the consultation for the proposed Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) (including boundary amendments) for Tain and asks this committee to recommend that the Infrastructure and Environment Committee approve the reports.

### **2 Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the public comments and agree the Council response.
- ii. Recommend that the Infrastructure & Environment Committee formally approve and adopt the Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including the amended conservation area boundary, at a forthcoming meeting.

### **3 Implications**

3.1 Resource. The proposed boundary amendments will bring a number of properties into the Conservation Area and therefore under stricter planning control. There is therefore potential for the amended boundary to generate a small number of additional planning applications, although this is not expected to be significant.

3.2 Legal. The Council has a statutory duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation, management and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. The adoption of these reports will discharge this duty in relation to the Tain conservation area. There are no other legal implications.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) implications. The CAA and CAMP highlight Buildings at Risk, underused and vacant buildings, inappropriate or negative development and public realm works, poorly managed green space and areas that should be targeted

for future regeneration. Improving the built environment can have wide-ranging benefits across the local community, including generating a sense of civic pride, investment and tourism and improving sense of place.

- 3.3 There are no Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications arising directly from this report.
- 3.4 Risk. Although conservation area designation places a range of statutory duties on the Local Authority, in this case the CAA and CAMP reviews, revises and refines an existing designation. There are no new risk implications associated with the recommendations of this report.
- 3.5 Gaelic. In line with Council policy, Gaelic headings are included throughout.

## **4 Background**

- 4.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 provides the current legislative framework for Conservation Areas. Under the 1997 Act, The Council has a statutory duty to determine which parts of their area merit Conservation Area status and the Council is required by law to protect Conservation Areas from development that would be detrimental to their character.
- 4.2 The 1997 Act defines a Conservation Area as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The 1997 Act places a statutory duty on the Council to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation, management and enhancement of Conservation Areas. These are referred to as Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans.
- 4.3 Tain conservation area was designated by Highland Regional Council in 1974. The draft reports (attached as appendices) are the result of the first formal review undertaken of the Conservation Area since this designation, and the first time an appraisal and management plan have been developed for Tain.
- 4.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was drafted by a conservation-accredited conservation architect on behalf of the Council. Council officers from across the planning service (including the conservation officer and planning officers from both the development plans and development management teams) have been involved throughout the process and have been instrumental in developing the final draft as presented at this committee.
- 4.5 Members supported the proposal that the *draft* Tain Conservation Area Appraisal for a 12-week public consultation at their Ward Business Meeting (WBM) dated 12 December 2020.

## **5 Consultation Process**

- 5.1 The public consultation was launched via The Council’s consultation portal on 18 January and closed on 12 April 2021. This was widely publicised, with a public notice placed in the Northern Times and the Ross-shire Journal, promoted social media posts and notification, by letter, to all properties (totalling 508) within the existing *and* proposed Conservation Area boundary. Other agencies, including Historic Environment Scotland, as part of a stakeholder group, were also invited to comment.
- 5.2 The stakeholder group, consisting of Tain Museum, the Community Council, Tain & Easter Ross Civic Trust, Scottish Civic Trust, Tain Development Trust, Seaboard Centre, local

Ward Members as well as Members of the North Planning Applications Committee, were all notified of the consultation, invited to share the consultation within their own contacts, and asked to comment.

- 5.4 Due to Covid-19, the draft documents were not available as paper copies and public events were not permissible during the consultation period. To counteract this, a longer consultation period of twelve weeks was agreed at the WBM, rather than the usual six-week period, at the request of Members.

## **6 Consultation Response**

- 6.1 A total of two representations were received (<1% of the Conservation Area's population). The Tain & Easter Ross Civic Trust (T&ERCT) representation (also circulated to Ward Members, the Chief Executive, Tain Community Council and the Scottish Civic Trust) was supportive of both reports and the proposed boundary changes, although it argued that in some areas the proposed revised boundary should be extended further than proposed. The response also highlighted a small number of errors in the text regarding dates and named architects and highlighted where buildings had changed use or become redundant since the reports were first drafted. The second representation was an objection to one of the proposed boundary changes but following correspondence the issue raised was resolved and the objection was withdrawn. One further email enquiry was received requesting maps of the boundary changes but no follow-up representation was made.
- 6.2 The main issues raised are summarised below, along with a recommended Council response.

## **7 Comments Made/Issues Raised: Conservation Area Appraisal**

- 7.1 T&ERCT provided updated information and included a progress update on the renovation of the former Town Hall/Picture House and its potential new use as a cultural centre. This has been noted in the report.
- 7.2 T&ERCT suggest that the *Carnegie Library* is included as a building at risk due to the uncertain future as a consequence of the proposed new Tain school campus. It is acknowledged that this may, in due course, result in the building requiring a new use. However, given that the building is currently occupied, it is not considered at risk at the present time. However, the reports will be updated if and when the situation changes.
- 7.3 T&ERCT suggest that *The Post Office in Lamington Street* should be added to the list of at risk buildings as it is no longer in use as a post office, but is now in part use as a sorting office and part use as a hairdressers. The change in use has not resulted in the building being at risk and it is not proposed to amend the report.
- 7.4 T&ERCT suggest that *Clydesdale Bank, Market Street* should be added to the list of at risk buildings. This branch has closed, and the building is currently unoccupied. The building has been added to the under-use/vacancy section of the CAA, but the condition of the building remains good and as such it is not considered at risk. It will however be monitored, and the report updated as necessary.
- 7.5 *The former Free (or Associated) Presbyterian Church, Upper King Street, and Queen Street*: the building was put up for sale in 2019 and is no longer in ecclesiastical use. It has recently been sold and is not therefore considered at risk at the present time. The status of the building has been updated accordingly and its condition will be monitored.

## **8 Comments Made/Issues Raised: Conservation Area Boundary**

- 8.1 T&ERCT are supportive of the proposed conservation area boundary extensions: the south-west extension of the early 19th century “New Town”; a south-east extension to include Knockbreck School; a north-west extension at the end of Murray Street and Dunrobin Street, and a north-east extension to include Station Road, the station and Chapel Road.
- 8.2 T&ERCT propose three additional extensions:
- a. Extend the proposed north-east extension further to include *St Duthac’s Chapel*, currently designated as a scheduled monument. Given the distance from the conservation area, it is not considered practicable to include the chapel without also including intervening areas of limited architectural/historic interest, including the modern burial ground and part of the railway line. Furthermore, the scheduling provides a significant level of protection for the chapel itself. Whilst it is not proposed to extend the conservation area as suggested, or include the chapel as an exclave, we do recognise the advantages of conservation area designation to lever in additional grant funding. In this case, however, the current designation does offer funding opportunities for the building from HES and others.
  - b. Extend the proposed north-east extension further to include two bee boles in the historic stone boundary wall. The existing proposed north-east extension includes this substantial stone boundary wall and the bee boles contained therein. No further adjustments are therefore necessary. The description of the north-east extension has however been amended to reference both of these important features.
  - c. Extend the proposed north-west extension further along Morangie Road to include the three villas of Mayfield (Category B listed), St. Mary’s and Lauderdale. The merits of extending the conservation area to include these buildings was considered at length and, on balance, it was decided to not propose their inclusion at this time, in part due to the distance from the town centre and in part due to the different character of this part of Tain. However, if Members wish to pursue this option, there is sufficient architectural quality to merit a further extension and the proposed boundary could be successfully amended as suggested.
- 8.3 The planning authority has a statutory duty to assess Conservation Areas to ensure they accurately represent what is of architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The appraisal process has concluded that the proposed boundary amendments – which take in buildings that are unique and reflect the varied architectural styles – are of architectural and historic interest, add value to the Conservation Area and therefore should be included in the Conservation Area. This assessment is set out in more detail in the Conservation Area appraisal and it is recommended that the proposed boundary amendments are adopted without change.

## **9 Comments Made/Issues Raised: Conservation Area Management Plan**

- 9.1 The only comments received on the management plan were from T&ERCT. Overall, T&ERCT were supportive of the management plan and have made several suggestions of other key issues to include. Many of the suggested additions are already adequately covered elsewhere in the reports or in existing supplementary planning guidance and advice, such as *Windows and Doors in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas: Planning Guidance*, and the *Shopfront Design Guide*. Other issues, such as ensuring extensions

are of a suitable scale and massing and are constructed in appropriate materials will be addressed on a case by case basis, as part of the planning process.

- 9.2 The management plan has, however, been amended to reflect the suggestions made regarding the quality of the public realm, benefits of better heritage signage and more regular monitoring and enforcement of the conservation area, where appropriate.

## **10 Next Steps**

- 10.1 Subject to Member agreement, the *draft* Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be presented to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 for final adoption.
- 10.2 Subject to Members agreeing to adopt the reports in September, Scottish Ministers will be notified of the boundary changes and an advert will be placed in the Edinburgh Gazette, as required by relevant legislation.
- 10.3 Although there is no statutory requirement to do so, should Members wish, all properties within the Conservation Area boundary (as amended) will be notified of any changes by letter.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure & Environment

Date: 27 April 2021

Authors: Andrew Puls, Acting Environment Manager/Conservation Officer  
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# Tain Conservation Area Appraisal

## Measadh Sgìre Glèidhteachais Baile Dhubhthaich

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April 2021

For the Highland Council Circulation to Committee



**TAIN CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**  
**MEASADH SGÌRE GLÈIDHTEACHAIS BHAILE DHUBHTHAICH**

- 1.00 Introduction, Purpose and Justification**  
**Ro-ràdh, Adhbhar agus Firinneachadh**
- 2.00 Location, History and Development**  
**Suidheachadh, Eachdraidh agus Leasachadh**
- 3.00 Character and Appearance**  
**Caractar agus Coltas**
  - 3.01 Setting
  - 3.02 Street Pattern and Topography
  - 3.03 Buildings and Townscape – Character Areas
  - Character Areas**  
**Ceàrnan Caractair**
    - 3.04 Centre
    - 3.05 ‘Little Tain’
    - 3.06 Academy
    - 3.07 South East Tain
    - 3.08 South West
    - 3.09 Building Elements and Details
    - 3.10 Spaces, Trees and Landscaping
- 4.00 Negative Factors**  
**Nithean Mi-shoirbheach**
- 5.00 Archaeology**  
**Àrc-eòlas**
- 6.00 Specific Issues - boundaries**  
**Ceistean Sònraichte – crìochan**

**Appendix 1** Historic Maps  
**Eàrr-ràdh 1** Mapaichean Eachdraidheil

**Appendix 2** Analysis Maps  
**Eàrr-ràdh 2** Mapaichean Mion-sgrùdaidh

## **1.00 INTRODUCTION**

### **RO-RÀDH**

## **1.01 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE**

### **Date of Appraisal**

The appraisal was carried out between January and July 2016 and was subsequently updated in December 2020 and April 2021.

### **Purpose of Appraisal**

There are 30 conservation areas in Highland Council's area. Tain Conservation area was designated in 1974. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance<sup>1</sup>. Planning authorities are required to determine where this status is merited.

1 - as defined in Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. The Act provides for the designation of areas as distinct from individual buildings.

Designation is the first step in demonstrating a commitment to positive action for the safeguarding and enhancement of character and appearance. The planning authority and the Scottish Ministers are obliged to protect conservation areas from development which would have adverse effects on their special character. Local development policy for Tain is set out in the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan. Consideration of planning consents for conservation areas should refer to current national and local historic environment policy and guidance notes.

2- NPPG 18, 31

In order that all parties concerned are aware of the elements that should be protected or enhanced an Appraisal is necessary to "seek to define the area... and key elements that contribute to its character and appearance"<sup>2</sup>.

This document reviews Tain Conservation Area in the light of developments and changes which have come about since its designation some forty years ago. The merits of the Conservation Area as well as the negative factors are described and analysed. Issues of management are examined. The method used follows guidance given in Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71.

This appraisal is intended to be a document which will inform management of the area and help to identify strategies and opportunities. It will be the basis for formulating proposals for enhancement of the area and future policy making within the local authority. It will also act as a tool for public consultation on development and preservation issues and could be helpful for partnership funding applications.

It is noted that many of the broad issues that came to notice in the preparation of this document are already highlighted in Tain Town Centre Action Plan, adopted in November 2015.

In addition to Highland Council and general public consultees, there are a number of other organisations with an interest in Tain and its built heritage, for example, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Civic Trust and in particular Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust.

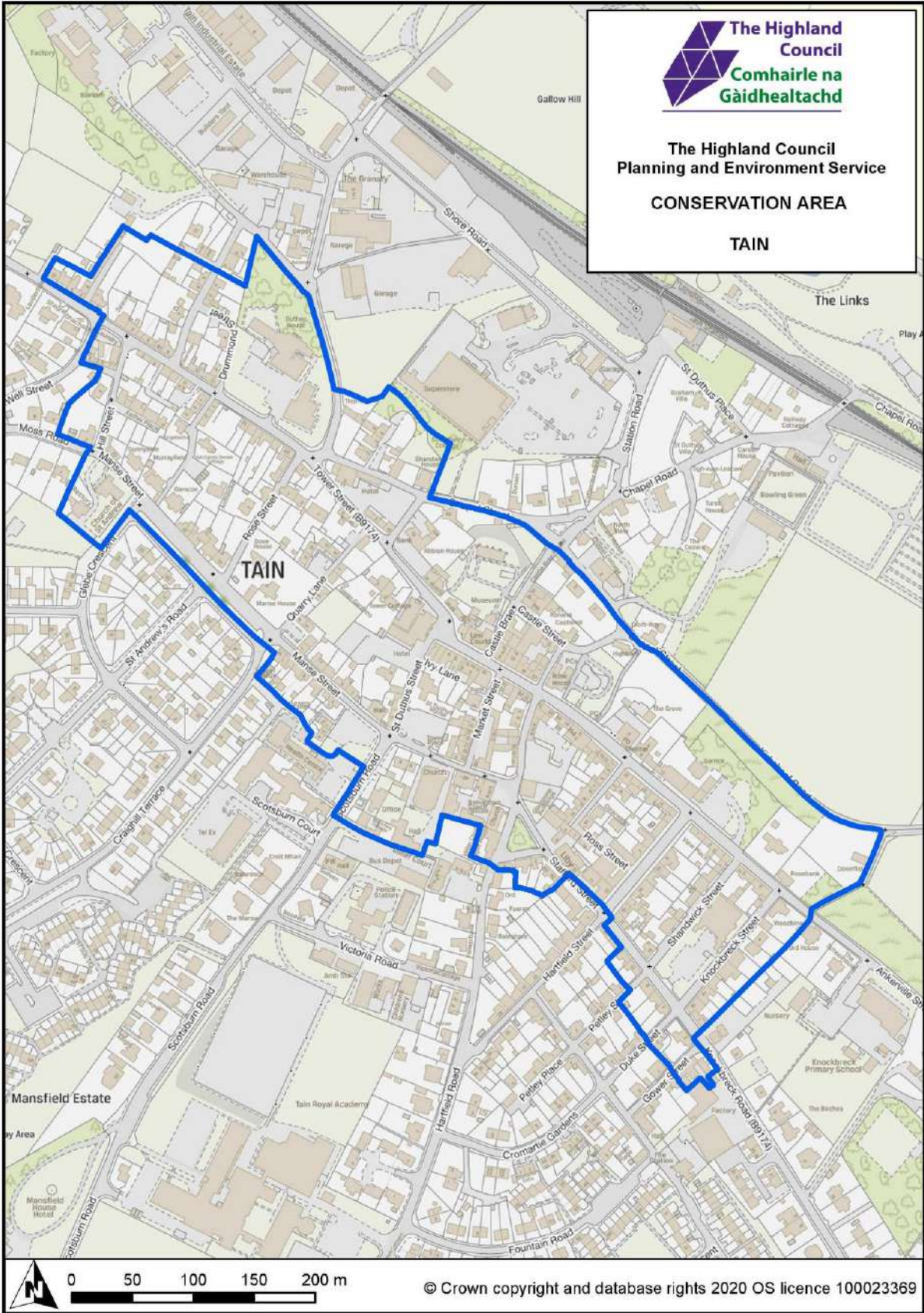


### **Tain Conservation Area Management Plan**

In the accompanying document, Tain Conservation Area Management Plan, proposals are formulated for revisions to the designation and enhancements to the existing buildings and spaces.

### **Tain Conservation Area Boundary**

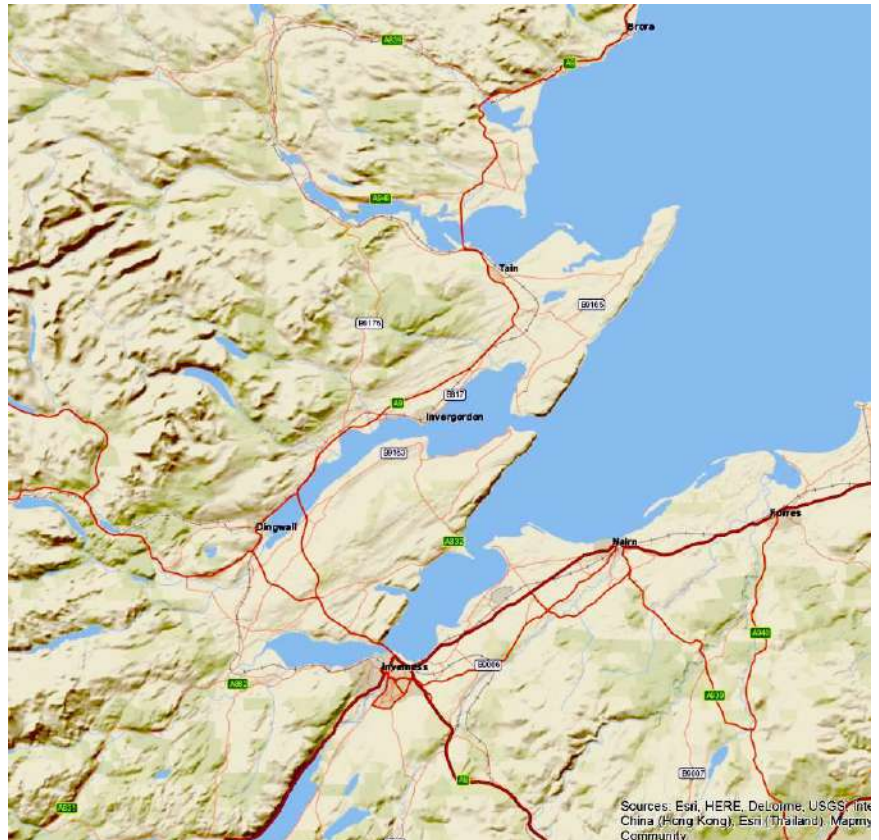
The current boundary is shown below:



## 2.00 LOCATION, HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT SUIDHEACHADH, EACHDRAIDH AGUS LEASACHADH

### 2.1 LOCATION

Tain is located on the south side of the Dornoch Firth, 34 miles by road from Inverness. It lies at point where road and rail routes are forced close to the Dornoch Firth by the hills to the west and at the western end of the Easter Ross peninsula, a large anvil shaped area of fertile farmland.



Tain Community Website notes that *“Tain is a small but thriving town with a population of around 3,500. It is the focal point for an extensive rural area stretching from Edderton in the west to Portmahomack in the east and Nigg in the south”*.



## 2.2 HISTORY

### Origins of Tain

\*The town's Gaelic name is quite clear, Baile Dubhthaich, Duthac's town

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Survey

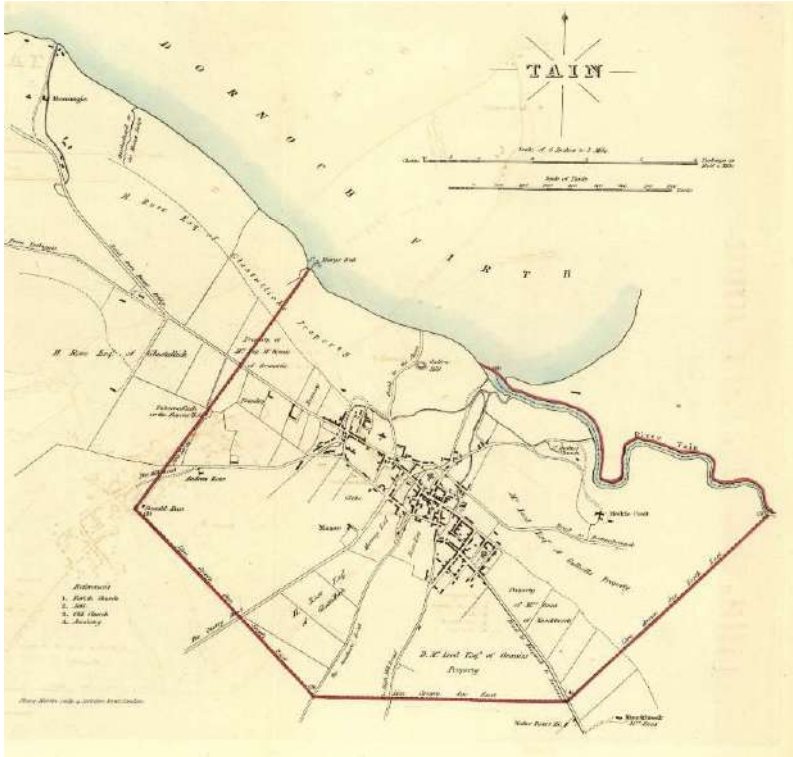
<sup>2</sup> Undiscovered Scotland

<sup>3</sup> Community Website

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia

St Duthac is the patron saint of Tain\* and the origins of modern Tain can be traced back to him. Duthac is thought to have been born in Tain in about 1000 although one source<sup>4</sup> states that he died in Tain. He was educated in Ireland and went on to become a renowned preacher who attracted a considerable following. He was known as the Chief Confessor of Ireland and Scotland (Dubtach Albanach) He was regarded as sufficiently important for his death to be reported in "The Annals of Ulster" for the year 1065.

Tales of miracles soon grew up around the memory of Duthac. In June 1253 St Duthac's remains, said to have been uncorrupted by the passage of two centuries since his death, were returned to Tain and buried in the original St Duthac's Chapel, said to be built on the site of his birth. Its ruins lie on the north east side of the town, in the old town cemetery and near the golf club. This first chapel rapidly became a place of pilgrimage and of sanctuary<sup>2</sup>.



Tain was sufficiently important to be recognised in a Royal Charter of 1066, granted by Malcolm III. The charter confirmed Tain both as a sanctuary, where people could claim the protection of the church, and an "immunity", whose resident merchants and traders were exempt from certain types of taxes. These important ideas carried through the centuries and led to the development of the town as it is today<sup>3</sup>. This sanctuary was marked out with four 'girth' crosses which later came to form the boundary of both the parish and the area under the control of the Burgh.

The plan left is the Boundary Commission plan of 1832 relating to the Great Reform Act

### Early Tain

The above accounts suggest an established community in Tain by 1000 but little is known of the earlier history of settlement.

While there is no archaeological evidence of prehistoric settlement in Tain itself, there are many sites recorded in the surrounding area and it is reasonable to assume extensive settlement in the area during the prehistoric period. Even the origin of the name Tain is uncertain. It may come from the Norse "Thing", a place of assembly, or from an older root meaning water or river.

It is likely to have been part of the Pictish kingdom centred around the Moray Firth. During the 9th century northern Pictland was subject to conquest and colonisation from the Norse pressing south from Orkney through Caithness and Sutherland and Scots moving north via the Great Glen. A strong kingdom of Moray was established. The Burgh Survey suggests that from the 9th to the 12th centuries Ross was a disputed frontier zone alternately controlled by Norse or Scottish warlords, who were often closely related, until the Scottish crown consolidated its hold on the area in the 13th Century.

Malcolm III was King of Scots from 1058 to 1093. The Orkneyinga saga reports that Malcolm's first marriage was to the widow of Thorfinn Sigurdsson, Earl of Orkney and also a grandson of Malcolm II. Malcolm III's marriage to Ingiborg (generally assumed to have died shortly before 1070) secured him peace in the north and west – perhaps an important factor in terms of the charter of 1066 and the confirmation of Tain as a settlement at that time.

## Later Medieval Tain

<sup>1</sup> Burgh Survey - Collegiate Church built between 1370 and 1458.

<sup>2</sup> Historic Scotland List Description - The Treasurer's Accounts for 1504 mention 3 churches in Tain, and the present roofless burial enclosure is likely to represent the remains of the chapel then standing in the churchyard. It appears to antedate the collegiate church (it is possibly of c1300) and may have been the earlier parish church of Tain, superseded by the latter's construction in the late 14th century<sup>5</sup>.

The first chapel rapidly became a place of pilgrimage and of sanctuary, though the latter was marked more in its breach than in its adherence. Robert the Bruce's family took shelter here, in 1307, en-route to Orkney during his exile. William Earl of Ross captured them, ignoring the sanctuary, and handed them over to Edward I.

The endowments made by William in 1321 in restitution led directly to the foundation of the church that is still at the heart of the town today (William died in 1372). This may have been the parish church of Tain or the beginnings of the collegiate church<sup>1</sup>.

In 1427 a clan feud led to the burning down of the old church (at the links) and the hurried completion of the collegiate church. Duthac became an official saint in 1419 and his relics were translated to a shrine at St Duthus Collegiate Church. A college was founded in the church in 1487 at the instigation of James III, although this act may only have regularised an existing situation<sup>2</sup>.

The Collegiate Church then also became the focus of pilgrimage, and in the years around 1500, King James IV visited every year for 20 years. (James died at Flodden in 1513).

A secular town appears to have developed around the Collegiate Church with the High Street becoming well defined. While there remains a lack of certain records, it is reasonably well established that the vicar and his chaplains located their houses and manses outwith the busy High Street around the west end of the town. Tain is unusual for a town with medieval origins in not having constraining town walls – probably the result of the established wider sanctuary area marked by the Girth crosses. The town was not laid out in the more traditional pattern of narrow burgage plots running off a main street. Development appears to have been more piecemeal and determined more by the geographical constraints of the gradients and the burns to east and west.

## Reformation and Upheaval

It appears that by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century spiritual life sunk to a low ebb with a rapid turnover of presentees to the provostry and prebends of Tain. The climate of uncertainty saw the effective closure of the shrine and collegiate church even before the formal establishment of the new Protestant regime. The prohibition on the mass, pilgrimages and the veneration of relics following the Reformation Parliament of 1560 rendered much of Tain's function redundant. Provost Nicholas Ross transferred St Duthac's relics to kinsman Alexander Ross of Balnagowan; however, they subsequently vanished.

Several religious figures had been pluralists and there were some married priests. One, John Thornton legitimised his sons. By the eve of the Reformation, local lay interests had already secured a substantial proportion of the ecclesiastical properties and after 1560 there was a brisk trade in properties including control of endowed chaplaincies – ie lands that gave each chaplain income. For example Walter Ross (son of

Thomas) consolidated land holdings becoming one of six significant landowners of Tain.

Of Tain's trio of liturgical buildings – parish church, collegiate church and chapel down by the links – only one would be kept as the reformed parish church. The chapel at the links became ruinous and the smaller parish church was abandoned in favour of the larger collegiate church.

### **Burgh Status**

The local laird (Alexander Ross of Balnagowan, as provost of the collegiate church assumed the role of de facto provost of Tain) took over the chapter house for use as the schoolhouse. Ross also used the seal and referred to a 1439 inquest and royal confirmation of 1487 in an attempt to deny Burgh status, maintaining that no tenements in Tain were held in free burgage; however, in 1564 Ross lost his case (before the Lords of session) and was ordered to hand over seal to the bailie and community of Tain. This victory was the first step in the community securing recognition of its status as a self-governing, privileged trading community on a par with Inverness.

In 1580 Inverness challenged Tain and other northern towns over usurpation of trading rights. The Convention of Royal Burghs held against the other seven as these were not enrolled as Royal Burghs but registered a question mark against Tain. Final resolution came in January 1588 when King James VI provided Tain with a royal charter 'confirming' burgh status. This charter rehearsed in full the tradition that the community had received burgh status anciently from James's predecessors and noting that records had been destroyed by 'barbarians and certain rebellious Ersch subjects'. It explains the apparent paradox that Tain is said to be Scotland's oldest Royal Burgh, yet the charter of 1066 pre-dates the founding of Royal Burghs in their more familiar form by David I during the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

### **An era of upset and decline**

Despite the upheavals of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, there is evidence of a healthy trading situation; however this appeared to go into decline towards the end of the century with concerns about competition from elsewhere. In 1604 Tain sought help from Convention of Royal Burghs to repair the shore. The Burgh secured a new charter from James VI in 1612 confirming existing privileges and adding new, in particular the control of the mussel scalps. In 1628 Dornoch became a Royal Burgh - another indication of the loss of sea trade from Tain where the shallow waters and sand banks restricted vessels and limited their size.

In 1638 Tain's support for the national Covenant was monetary rather than military; however, with the royalist resurgence under the Marquis of Montrose, the Earl of Sutherland summoned covenanters to assemble at Tain to campaign against Montrose, although military action took place further south.

When in 1647 Charles I and the Scots agreed to act against English parliamentarians in return for the introduction of Protestantism in England ('The Engagement'). Opinions were divided between covenanters and engagers. A troop of 'engagers' was quartered in Tain at the Town's expense. In 1647 and again in 1649 Tain applied for relief to

the Convention of Royal Burghs. By then the opponents of engagers were in power in Scotland but opposition to the new regime found support in Easter Ross. In 1650 Montrose landed in Caithness (on behalf of the exiled Charles II) but a Government force had assembled at Tain and marched out along the south side of the Dornoch Firth, meeting and defeating Montrose at Carbisdale. Montrose was captured and held briefly at Tain on the way back (at the Ark) before being taken to Edinburgh and execution.

In 1651 Charles II landed in Moray, and another army was raised, with support from Tain (Ross of Balnagowan). The Scottish army was defeated by Cromwell at Worcester and Charles II fled into exile. Ross was captured and died in captivity. Scotland was then conquered by the parliamentary Army and General George Monck occupied Inverness. When in 1652 Cromwell sought to impose political settlement on Scotland (by incorporating it into the commonwealth) a further uprising took place in 1653 when a small force landed in Caithness, mustered at Dornoch and joined forces with the Earl of Glencairn (the uprising being referred to as Glencairn's Rising). This force was defeated at Lochgarry and Cromwell's forces then ravaged the north, quartering a force under Colonel Morgan on Tain and Edderton.

The effect of these upheavals on Tain appear to have been severe and in 1654 the Burgh petitioned the Convention of Royal Burghs about the excessive burdens compared with large burghs. In 1655 Tain petitioned to be removed from roll of Royal Burghs but before deciding this, the 'decayed' town was to be visited by representatives from the Convention.

At that time the 1657 stent roll revealed a community of 15 merchants, 9 shoemakers, 5 tailors, 4 masons, 4 weavers, 2 dyers, 2 skimmers, 1 baxter, 1 bowyer, 1 peat caster, 1 saddler and 1 wright. The surrounding estates would normally have provided much work for this community, but two decades of warfare and punitive fines had severely depressed the economy of Tain. The burgh survey notes that some relief was derived from the salvage of a Dutch merchantman driven onto sands near the town in 1660.

In 1692 *' a great part of the building of this poor place is waist and turned ruinous ... many families had quit the town ... and the kirk steeple, council and prison house of this burgh are so ruinous and demolished'*. Several years of poor harvests and famine blighted the 1690s. Although there was income to the town's common good from its mills and customs most of the town's income was spent on the town's officers and schoolmaster and the town was indebted to local landowners.

Setbacks continued – a storm damaged the Tolbooth tower in 1703. The Town petitioned the Privy Council for help but in 1706, before work could begin, a fire burned down a large part of the town and the upper storeys of the tower were demolished.

By 1706 Tain had become the centre of a new presbytery although the area was home to several dissenting landowners. There were political tensions between the Mackenzies and Rosses for control of Tain. The Rosses eventually dominated and controlled the town for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of political and religious tensions troops were quartered all over Easter Ross extracting what they could from the local



population.

The Jacobite rising of 1715 saw the inhabitants of Tain summoned to oppose the Pretender and a delegation was sent to the pro-Hanoverian Earl of Sutherland to assure him of Tain's loyalty. 50 armed men were sent to support the Hanoverian cause but in October 1715, the Mackenzies outfaced the Hanoverians at Alness and the government withdrew from Ross. James VIII was proclaimed at Tain market cross. Seaforth's forces then moved south to join with the main Jacobite army, allowing the Earl of Sutherland to recover Ross and round up Jacobite sympathisers.

Although more political infighting followed – after 1721 there were several years of disputed town elections – fortunes began to improve. David Ross of Balnagowan led the campaign to build a new tollbooth and Alexander Stronach was commissioned as mason, but with irregular money supply the work was not completed until 1733. That the town could provide a substantial new manse in 1720 was a sign that fortunes were changing.

1745 again saw the area split along clan lines. Although main events happened to the south, Prince Charles Edward Stewart ordered the Earl of Cromartie to occupy Tain and move on into Sutherland. The inhabitants of Tain were 'greatly distressed' by the Jacobite army being quartered in the town for several weeks 'and exacting money and necessaries under all pretences'.

The government set in place punitive measures against Jacobite sympathisers. A chief target was Episcopalians, for example, in 1746 John Stewart, the Episcopalian minister in Tain reported his meeting house had been burnt down and house stripped.

1747 saw the abolition of heritable jurisdictions including the bailie of Tain (for which compensation was paid). This is seen as marking the end of the medieval immunity of Tain.

### **1750-1840 Economic revival**

In trying to understand Tain today it is important to understand the medieval foundations of the town. At the same time there is a realisation that very little built structure from before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century survives. During more than a century of religious and political upheaval Tain had suffered much. A visitor in 1760, Bishop Pococke, found Tain still a poor town. Even nine years later another visitor commented that Tain was '*distinguished for nothing but its large square tower, decorated with five small spires*'.

The region became a focus for recruitment to the British Army, for example during the global conflict of the Seven Years War (1756-63). One consequence was that young soldiers saw the potential of emigration. In addition to military services the later 18<sup>th</sup> century saw significant emigration from Ross & Cromarty exacerbated by agricultural changes. The introduction of sheep in 1781 generated much hostility (as sheep were introduced into glens to replace cattle leading to higher rents and the disruption of traditional lifestyles). 1792 saw popular efforts to drive

sheep out of Ross known as the Ross-shire sheep riots, the only widely organised protest against sheep farming and the clearances. It was a well-organised attempt but was met by troops and the ringleaders were arrested. It was a period of political unrest and Tain raised 'Tain Royal Volunteers' in 1794 (disbanded by 1803).

Agriculture was the mainstay of the local economy, for example, there was significant, direct exporting of grain by landowners (but due to the lack of a harbour most of this trade took place elsewhere, for example, Cromarty).

\* A 1695 Act of Parliament allowed local landowners to effectively divide common land between themselves.

Throughout the 18th century fairs were held four times a year. Gentry also assembled and included Edinburgh lawyers, the grandest being Lord Ankerville, an example of the growing connection between Easter Ross and Edinburgh. Laird-lawyers maintained estates in the north but spent much time in Edinburgh. The enlightenment influence introduced improved farming methods leading to increase in prosperity for the local landowners who had also appropriated/parcelled out much of common land between them during 18th century\*.

Although for much of 18th century Fortrose was considered the capital of Ross, Tain had a larger population and was located in a wealthier area. Dingwall came a poor third but continued to challenge Tain's position. The Court of Session confirmed Tain as the head burgh of Ross-shire in 1784 and again confirmed this in 1829. Despite this there was a limited growth in the service-based economy.

There were some attempts to establish linen manufacture from 1736 onwards but with limited success, although this may be the origin of 'little Tain'. Although weaving was not successfully established spinning thread survived for a period. A Highland Society gold medal was given in 1785 in recognition of Morangie weavers for woollen manufacture, but this also seems to have been short lived and by 1790 it was noted that the only manufacturers are 'spinning of flax and tanning of leather'.

During this period, despite little industrial growth Tain continued to serve as the administrative and commercial centre for Ross.

### **Rebuilding and Expansion 1750-1840**

The 1758 window tax register suggests that there were several large houses at that time. With increased prosperity the fabric of Tain began to be rebuilt. The Burgh Survey notes that by the later 18<sup>th</sup> century the town centre was being modernised - 'several old houses that were ruinous have been rebuilt ...some of them 2 and 3 storeys high'. The Tolbooth and Town House were repaired between 1778-80 (and the Mercat cross moved because it was obstructing traffic). By 1781 a start had been made to paving streets. In 1791 the Bank of Scotland opened a branch in Tain.

The Parish school remained in cramped premises in the churchyard (its poor quality commented on in 1765 – 1791) until a site to the west of the town centre was gifted by Lord Ankerville. The foundation stone of the Academy was laid in 1810 and it opened in 1813. It was designed by James Smith of Inverness.

The new parish church was built 1811-14 also to a design by James Smith

but was not universally liked.

A new jail and courthouse were built next to the Tolbooth tower in 1825-26 but were destroyed by fire in 1833. The south side of the High Street was largely rebuilt between 1820-1840. Several of the substantial 3-bay houses noted in later chapters were also built in various parts of the town in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as many of the small scaled 3-bay dormered dwellings.



By the 1830s Tain seemed set to be the dominant community in the district north of the Cromarty Firth. Further bank branches opened – the British Linen Bank and the Commercial Bank.

In the early 19th century there were some further attempts to develop manufactories in the area at the links but again this seems to have been short lived. Even when a licensing change in 1820s saw a distillery operating in Tain in 1826 but it did not last more than about a year.

By 1837 the only manufactories were an iron foundry and a brewery out by the Morangie burn and also a woollen mill at High Mills; however, the town retained a significant niche position as a provincial craft centre – silversmiths, pewterers, gunsmiths, clockmakers, etc.

The 1832 Town Plan gives an indication of how much had been developed by that stage – see extract left.

### Suburbs

A new town to the south-east was first proposed by Donald MacLeod of Geanies in 1788 and the Town Council bore the £80 cost of bridging the gully of Polcalk Burn, opening up the east end of High Street. A contract the following year noted that the houses were to be built of clay with stone dressings – this might help explain the unpretentious, artisan nature of the houses at the south end of Ross Street and along Lamington Street.

A second wave of development began in 1827 when land owned by McLeod of Geanies was feued out, establishing the present grid iron pattern.

At the same time development moved north west along Academy Street and from Little Tain in the other direction, almost linking the settlements.

### Townscape

The growing amount of development or redevelopment between 1750

and 1840 confirmed Tain's steady transformation into a prosperous town, although it was noted for irregularity of its layout. In 1825 it was described as 'an old town and irregularly built' and also in 1837 it was noted that 'every man seems to have placed his house just as happened to suit private convenience'. The early 19th century development west of the town centre shows a lack of order with houses built as short cul-de-sacs or as short terraces along the main road.

At the same time a certain amount of 'straightening out' took place. The south side of the High Street and its progression into Lamington Street and Ankerville Street is very regular.

### **Infrastructure**

The infrastructure of the area remained poor until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Tain lay on the only road north and the Dornoch Firth was crossed by the Meikle Ferry about 4 miles west but after a ferry disaster of 1809, Bonar Bridge was built (by Telford 1812-13). Meanwhile, between 1803-21, a parliamentary road was built from Perth to Wick, passing close by Tain. By 1837 there were 20 miles of public roads.

1808 saw the establishment of the first regular carrier between Inverness and Tain and in 1819 a mail coach service from Tain to Thurso started. The growing transport network confirmed Tain's role in the region's commercial and administrative life.

By 1825 Tain had 12 resident gentry – five writers, three surgeons, two banks, two inns, a bookseller, printer, and several others.

### **1844 Change of Status**

By an 1844 Act of Parliament Dingwall replaced Tain as County Town. The Burgh Survey comments that this resulted in Tain 'standing still' rather than decaying or advancing. It remained 'a post town, seat of trade, a royal burgh, capital of part of Ross-shire' and it ushered in a long era of quiet stability. The evidence on the ground is quite different from this in that Tain continued to prosper and a great many buildings date from the latter half of the 19th century until the early years of the 20th century. Andrew Maitland and his architectural practice Andrew Maitland & Sons did much to transform Tain in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century,

Andrew Maitland was born in Keith in 1802 but in 1842 he settled at Tain. He appears to have progressed to the status of architect through the building trade and experience as an inspector of works. Two of his sons became architects, James (born 1845) and Andrew II (born 1847). They joined the firm in the 1860s, and were made partners in 1875, the firm becoming A Maitland & Sons. Andrew Maitland Senior retired in 1892 at the age of ninety and died at Esther Place, Tain, on 24 May 1894. The practice was continued by his sons. Andrew II, was Provost of Tain from 1897 until he died in 1898. James continued the practice and was joined in partnership by Andrew's son Andrew Gordon (born 1880). James Maitland was Provost of Tain from 1910 until 1921.

Despite the loss of County Town status, the Maitlands (and several other architects) designed many substantial buildings that continue to contribute to the character of the town.

A significant event was the replacement of the Town House that was

destroyed by fire in 1833. The new Courthouse, design by Thomas Brown was built in 1848-49 and extended west by Andrew Maitland in 1873.

Following the 1843 disruption the majority of church-goers and minister (Charles Calder Macintosh) left the parish church and erected a wooden church on a plot in Queen Street. This was replaced in stone and a manse added in 1848 and in 1891-92 an imposing replacement built. Designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons, it dominates the skyline to this day.

There were several other changes in the religious landscape – the Episcopalians built an iron church in Manse Street in 1880-81, later replaced in 1887 by St Andrew's Episcopal Church designed by Ross & Macbeth. The Parsonage designed by Alexander Ross was added in 1898.

The Old Collegiate church had fallen into disrepair and was restored between 1859–1882 by architect Robert Matheson. Further restoration in 1896 by Hippolyte Blanc, demonstrated a conscious effort to restore Tain's heritage.

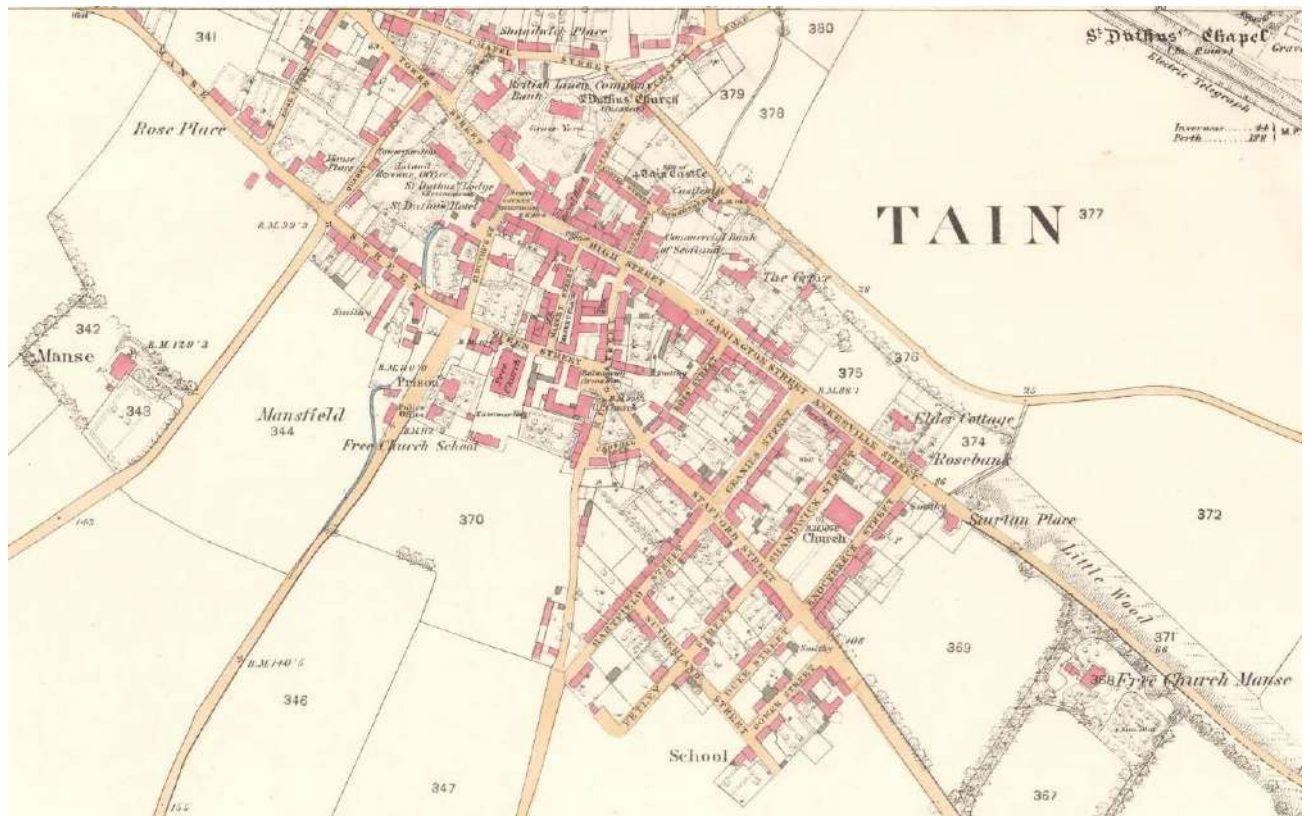
In 1864 the railway arrived in Tain. The station (of that date) was designed by Joseph Mitchell. In addition to transformed connections for business and industry, the railway encouraged visitors to experience Tain, including the links and golf as attractions. Not surprisingly the Royal Hotel was rebuilt by Andrew Maitland & Sons in 1872.

The privately funded Public Hall next door in Tower Street, also designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons followed in 1874-76.

Market Place was formed at 'some point in mid-century' and became through street. It was dignified by the 1878 Clydesdale Bank designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons.

### **The Town Plan of 1878**

The Town Plan of 1878, overleaf, gives a detailed picture of Tain at that time – well through a building phase but with some significant additions to come, but most of these would be by replacements of older buildings or infilling of gap sites. The size and shape of Tain remained relatively stable over a long period.



Tain's irregularity was not in favour in Victorian times. The widening of King St. and St. Duthus St. were carried out during the later 19th century. Elsewhere commercial interests prospered. These included the Glenmorangie distillery, a key business rebuilt by Andrew Maitland & Sons in 1888-89. While in the lower town they designed the slaughterhouse (complete with castellated Tudor detailing) circa 1875 and a large warehouse in 1884. Both properties are listed (C and B respectively).

A number of substantial villas were built at this time. 'Murrayfield' in Manse Road, another Maitland design, is typical.

As part of a national educational programme, denominational schools closed and the new Knockbreck Parochial School was built in Ankerville Road in 1877. Designed by A Maitland and Sons it was enlarged and altered in 1908, also by the practice.

The Royal Academy's roll increased and a new hall, designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons, was added at the rear in 1896. In 1914 it was still the only secondary school north of Inverness.

The new masonic Hall was built in Queen Street in 1895.

Building work continued into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Andrew Carnegie financed a re-working of the public hall in 1902 and in 1903 the Carnegie library was built in Stafford Street.

The above building activity is evidence of the prosperity of the community. At the same time attention was paid to the infrastructure. In 1871 a copious water supply was installed and in 1877-1884 a drainage system.

The First World War, the general strike, 1929 crash and prohibition in the

United States of America all affected Tain and seem to have made the town 'stand still' more than its loss of county town status. Glenmorangie shut between 1931 and 1936.

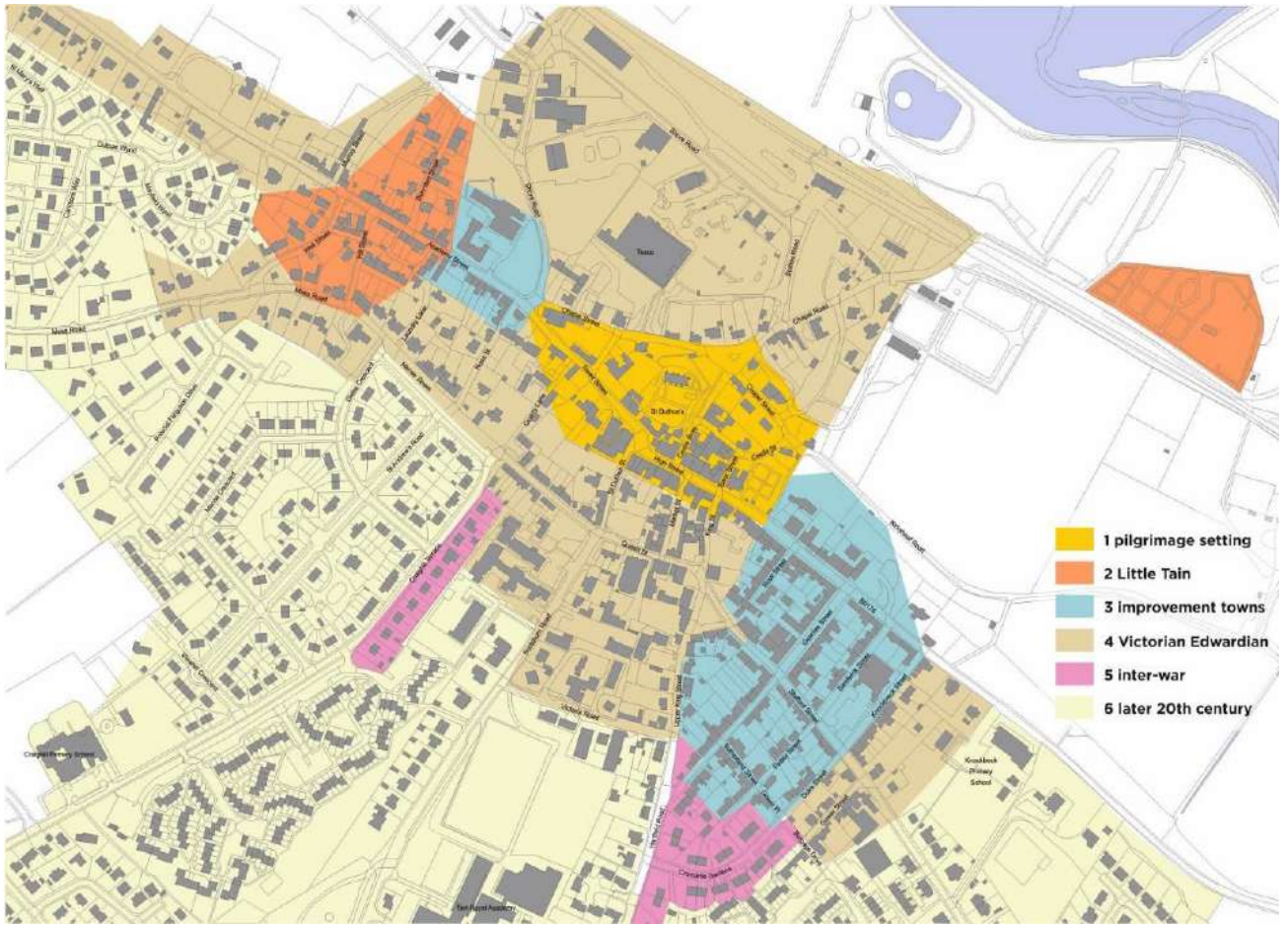
There has been very little new development in the town centre since the Edwardian period and in many ways Tain offers a snapshot of a late Victorian/Edwardian county town (in all but name). The map below shows the extent of Tain in 1911.



Interwar housing development expanded Tain to the west. During the Second World War many Royal Air Force and Army personnel were stationed in the area. Military structures, including huts, control towers and runways, mostly derelict, can still be seen. The village of Inver and its surrounding area was completely cleared in 1944 for secret D-Day landing exercises, causing enormous disruption to the lives of the local people.

More recent development has greatly increased the footprint of Tain, although most of this is in the form of housing developments with new schools, including the 1969 relocation of Tain Royal Academy to Scotsburn Road. The A9 by-pass almost created a new limit to the town, although that has been breached recently with further development on the south west side. The centre of Tain has continued to serve the expanding town as well as its traditional role in serving the wider hinterland of Easter Ross and areas to the west and north; however the recent opening of large supermarkets at each end of the town and a large supermarket in the centre may affect the town. Hopefully they will strengthen the town as a regional destination with the high quality shops restaurants and cafes in the centre offering a unique experience that the supermarkets cannot match.

## SUMMARY – PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT





### 3.00 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE CARACTAR AGUS COLTAS

#### 3.01 SETTING

Tain occupies a plateau on top of an escarpment that rises about 1½ mls to the north west and continues south east for a similar distance. A relatively narrow coastal strip separates the escarpment from the sea until the River Tain enters the sea creating a minor estuary at which point the shorelines turns north east alongside a large low-lying area.



Ordnance Survey 6" to a mile, published 1911

Inland, the hill of Cnoc an t-Sabhail rises to about 300m to the south west of the town giving, with its forested lower slopes, some degree of shelter. The road from the north via the old Meikle Ferry, 4 miles to the west, which joins the road from the west from Bonar Bridge through Edderton, is also forced near the coast at this point and follows the top of the escarpment up to Tain.

The railway follows the lower coastal contour while the modern A9 skirts the town to the south west to then follow the traditional route up to the point where it swings north to cross the Dornoch Firth (a little further east than the Meikle Ferry).

Thus, Tain lies on an historic route to Sutherland and the north west and also, in the days of small vessels that would take the ground, it had modest sea access. Perhaps more significantly it lies at the west side of a large area of fertile ground forming the Easter Ross peninsula and which continues south towards the Cromarty Firth and towards Dingwall. Historically the small estuary and a low rise beside it became the site associated with St Duthac and it retains the ruins of St Duthac's Chapel and a churchyard. The top of the escarpment appears to have provided a better location for the town, which developed on a small promontory between two burns which cut into the slope.





St Duthuc's remains were moved to a new church at the site of the parish church at the top of the escarpment in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the town continued to develop as a major pilgrimage centre. As the town received a Royal Charter in 1066 giving it the status of an immunity it was not constrained by town walls but rather by the topographical constraints of the site, in particular the Polcalk burn which formed the eastern edge of the town until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was bridged over; however west of the Polcalk burn the smaller burns did not appear to limit expansion. 'Little Tain' appears as a distinct settlement on Roy's plan of 1747-52 sitting astride another small burn.



Engraving showing view of Tain. Insc: 'The Town of Tain'; 'Drawn on the spot by J. Clark and Engraved by Robt Havell'; 'London, published by Smith Elder & Co., 65 Cornhill, 1828

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century view of Tain, left, illustrates the points noted above – the town is viewed from across the River Tain with the ruin of the old St Duthuc's Chapel on the rise, centre right, with the tower of the Tolbooth beyond and just to the left, unencumbered by the later, high extensions. Cnoc an t-Sabhail rises behind the town with the Dornoch Firth just visible at its foot on the extreme right.

The magnificent new building on the far left is the recently built parish church.



RCAHMS

This aerial view is from the north west, looking south east, with the shore of the Dornoch Firth on the left, inland from that is the railway. Old St Duthuc's Chapel is in the wooded churchyard between the shore and railway. The lower ground adjacent to the railway is occupied by the town's industrial quarter, with some dwellings in the wooded area. The line of the escarpment runs from bottom left (near the railway) straight up in this view until it kinks left close to the top – it is marked by a line of trees. The new A9 curves round the town to the right.

### 3.02 STREET PATTERN AND TOPOGRAPHY



Left is the current plan showing the extent of the conservation area with contours. The old St Duthuc's Chapel is on the extreme right, beside the River Tain. Tain's irregular form is unlike most other Scottish Burghs (where High Streets and long burgage plots prevail) and owes everything to its medieval origins as a pilgrimage centre. Although largely hidden from the main streets it is St Duthac's Church and churchyard that give Tain its purpose and generate the form of the town centre.

The original roads are most clearly seen on the 1832 plan. The main route is from the north west, leading in directly to the Tolbooth, while the road from the south east enters Tain by what is now Stafford Street to meet King Street at Cadboll Place, with King Street then leading steeply down to the High Street. From Cadboll Place, Queen Street, then Manse Street lead north west, but then have a narrow link down to the main road via Hill Street. Queen Street is higher than the High Street so the links down - King Street, Market Street and St Duthuc's Street - as well as a number of smaller lanes, are all quite steep.

Tower Street kinks round the Tobooth to meet the High Street.



1832 Great Reform Act Plan



Tain Museum Image Library

The High Street stopped at the Polcalk Burn, only being extended into Lamington Street in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The curious chicane from Stafford Street via Geanies Street to Lamington Street only became a route into the centre when the town was developed to the south east in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ankerville Street did not connect to the east until later. The town's industry and commerce were (and remain) located on the lower ground with a steep direct route up to the High Street by way of Castle Brae. Horse drawn carriages and carts probably used the gentler gradients of Chapel Street or Shore Road

Many of the streets are restricted in width at certain points, for example Tower Street as it approaches the centre, which may not have been a significant issue when the town was a pilgrimage destination but would have caused congestion as traffic increased, although this 1895 photograph, showing Manse Street without much by way of pavements and the two overleaf from circa 1900 also show quiet streets.



Tain Museum Image Library



Tain Museum Image Library



Streets running south east to north west are generally reasonably level but the two main arteries are at different elevations and the High Street with its extensions is significantly higher than the lower level at the foot of the escarpment. These changes in level lead, particularly where there is a change in direction, to some interesting elements of the townscape. The smaller streets and lanes running south west to north east all have steep gradients. All tend to have relatively small-scale buildings sometimes with idiosyncratic siting and sometimes with small side lanes or closes such as Esther Place or Munro Place adding variety to the layout. Another major factor in the irregular layout is the number of large plots close to the centre, for example between St Duthus Street and Quarry Lane and also the blocks further west. See aerial view over.





### 3.03 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE - CHARACTER AREAS

#### Defining the areas



Section 2.00 explained the historical development of Tain. The earlier parts (the original town, pilgrimage setting) and 'Little Tain' related to the physical constraints of the site and to a large extent these have remained a defining feature of the character of Tain; however, the bridging over of the Polcalk Burn and expansion of the town to the south east during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries removed a natural edge to the historic medieval core of the town. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century development moved uphill from the High Street and spread along the ridge to the south west. While the ecclesiastical and domestic elements along Queen Street and Manse Street created a more suburban area, the effect on King Street and, in particular, Market Street was to expand the commercial town centre beyond its original medieval origins.

The extension to the north west, also during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, linked the areas on each side of the original Royal Academy, but adapting to existing buildings and lanes produced quite distinct areas, while during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century a commercial area (perhaps with some earlier beginnings) grew up between the railway and the foot of the escarpment to the north east, again with distinctive built character.

In conclusion, while the commercial town centre has expanded beyond

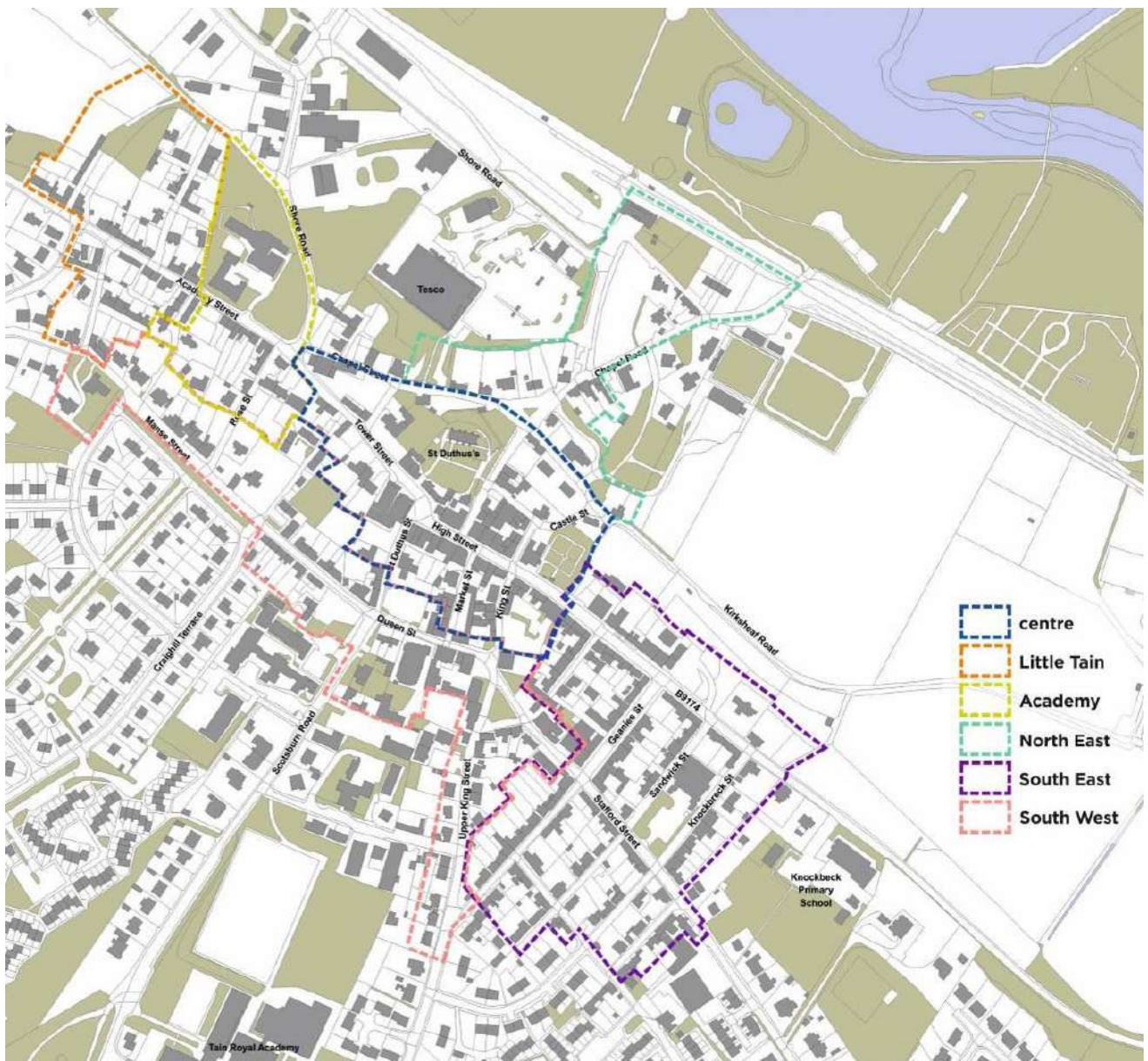
the original and there is some blurring of edges between areas, the pattern of development remains strong and it is logical to examine Tain in terms of these character areas:

- Original town & pilgrimage setting
- Little Tain
- Academy
- South eastern 'new town'
- 19<sup>th</sup> century Tain, south west

The last area is largely outwith the conservation area.

- Victorian Tain, the commercial north east.

Buildings and townscape are examined area by area in the following sections.



### 3.04 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE – TOWN CENTRE

Approaching from the south east the first impression is of a traditional, bustling High Street lined with a mixture of public and commercial buildings, dating, with the exception of the Tolbooth, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It appears to be surviving well with much of its 19<sup>th</sup> century character retained. Historically the location of the Kenneth Murray Monument marks the original extent of the town – it is built up from the valley of the Polcalk Burn, the steep gully of which constrained the original town centre, bridged over in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Approaching from the west a slightly different character emerges, the Tolbooth forming the visual end stop of an almost suburban street with buildings dating from a wider period. The main street takes a significant dog-leg around the Tolbooth with the Royal Hotel occupying the corner and providing the visual stop from the east.



#### Key Buildings and Townscape Elements



**St Duthac's Collegiate Church (St Duthus's Church, Collegiate Church and burial ground) – A listed, Scheduled Ancient Monument**

The first chapel by the links rapidly became a place of pilgrimage and of sanctuary; however events in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century led to endowments made by William, Earl of Ross in 1321 in restitution and led directly to the foundation of the church in the heart of the town, probably what became the parish church of Tain.

Duthac became an official saint in 1419. Following the burning down of the old church (at the links) in 1427 and the hurried completion of the collegiate church, his relics were translated to a shrine at what became St Duthus Collegiate Church. Formally, a college was founded in the church in 1487 at the instigation of James III, although this act may only have regularised an existing situation. The Collegiate Church then also became the focus of pilgrimage. In the years around 1500, King James IV visited every year for 20 years. (James died at Flodden in 1513). The two churches are surrounded by a burial ground containing a number of 18<sup>th</sup>



century graveslabs. The church was re-roofed circa 1752 and later restored, by Robert Matheson in 1849-82 and Hippolyte J. Blanc in 1896. The retaining wall to the graveyard, with late 19<sup>th</sup> century spearhead railings, to Castle Brae and the 19<sup>th</sup> century lodge give the churchyard the feel of a Victorian cemetery; however the Collegiate Church is a significant early building and close examination reveals graveslabs of much earlier date (there are 17<sup>th</sup> century mural monuments in the walled enclosure).



The churches and church yard occupy a promontory advanced slightly from the rest of the escarpment. Tall trees now occupy the bank and obscure the site from below, but it would have been very much more visible before (see J Clark's view of 1828).

The lower of the two photographs, left, shows how the High Street and Tower Street buildings butt right up against the churchyard and it appears certain that the secular town developed in close relationship to the church, giving rise to the irregularity of the streets. The Tolbooth is prominent amongst these.

#### **Tolbooth 1706-1733 – A listed**

The tolbooth replaced an earlier tolbooth of 1631 that had collapsed in 1703. The rebuilding of the tolbooth was started by contractor Alexander Stronach and was completed, along with a two-storey council house, by 1708. The bartizans were added to the tolbooth in 1733.

The massive, solid structure has dramatic presence in the town and is visible from many directions. Until the appearance of the Queen Street Church tower in 1891-92 it was the dominant feature on the approach to Tain and was noted as a defining element by travellers in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century at a time when much of the rest of the town was run down and in poor condition.



#### **Court House 1848-49 & 1873 – A listed**

It is one of the earliest court houses in Scotland to use Scots baronial detailing (as design of court houses in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century tended towards neoclassical or Renaissance styles). Tain Sheriff Court was constructed in two significant phases. The first was designed by architect Andrew Maitland and built in 1848-49 to replace an 1825 building which had burnt down in 1833. The arched entrance at the base of the Tolbooth tower, on the High Street elevation, is contemporary with the 1840s courthouse design and originally served as its principal access. The second phase of construction was in 1873, with the addition of the four-bay block facing Castle Brae designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons.

Together these buildings give a sense of civic purpose and gravitas to the town centre and are a key element of the townscape. Unfortunately, while fulfilling their function in the administration of justice, this means that community use the buildings for wider community/civic purposes are limited. While contributing significantly to the townscape they do not contribute significantly to the civic and cultural life of Tain.



#### **Market Cross - Scheduled Monument**

Tucked in the corner between the tollbooth tower and courthouse is the Market Cross, category B listed.



### The south side of the High Street

It may be that the original marketplace occupied a wider space outside the Tolbooth; however, in the early 1800s the south side of the High Street was rebuilt with a series of good quality properties comprising dwellings above shops. They also adopted a rigid, straight building line that eventually continued along Lamington and Ankerville Streets. The earliest of the group appears to be 5-9 High Street, with the list description suggesting that it was built by William Murray in 1817 as an encroachment on the marketplace. 1-3 High Street followed a decade later and the grander 11-15 a further decade on.



11-15 High Street, circa 1840, B-listed



5-9 High Street, 1817, B-listed



1-3 High Street, circa 1830, B-listed

These three buildings contribute greatly to the townscape and show an interesting enrichment of style as each decade passed. This variety has been achieved while maintaining quality and a similarity in form and scale. While alterations have taken place (the fenestration patterns in particular have changed, for example 1-3 has later 4-pane windows and canted dormers) it is significant that the original openings and stone piers have survived and the rhythm of the ground floor openings and piers contributes to the character of the street.

The corner buildings to Market Street are less successful although maintain the interesting variety of the High Street. The Royal Bank of Scotland at least follows the scale and cornice lines of the adjoining earlier building (11-15) and turns the corner competently into Market Street, but its mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century plain detailing and frosted glass windows make it a little detached from the commercial life of the street. On the opposite corner, the B-listed 23-24 is an impressive, almost over-scaled, Georgian composition, slightly compromised by the commercial needs of the ground floor shop fronts. Interestingly the rear has a rounded harled stair tower. This and the harled gable contrast with the High Street elevation to the point of looking like two different buildings.



The remaining buildings at the east end of the High Street are less notable but revert to the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century pattern of shops at ground floor with first floor accommodation and attics with small dormers or rooflights. There are a number of tri-partite windows which may be later alterations to the original. With the exception of enlarged shop windows at nos 27 and 31 the ground floor openings are largely original, helping to maintain the historic character of the High Street.



The former Post Office in Lamington Street, a category Grade B listed Maitland building of 1911-3 is now in shared use as a sorting office and a hairdressers.



The next building along could be seen as visually marking the end of the High Street, but is, in fact, 1-5 Lamington Street and could also be seen as marking the start of the eastward expansion. One of the difficulties in assessing Tain is the seamless way that, in several places, one street merges into the next.

It is C listed and of the same period as 11-15 High Street and has some similarities, although the parapets and dormers are more flamboyant.



Diagonally opposite the Highland Council offices mark the east ward end of the High Street on the north side. The building dates from 1828 and was formerly the Commercial Bank. It is B listed and a substantial composition, although John Gifford described it as *'ineptly detailed, with the rusticated quoins of the corner and windows colliding'*. Despite this it has presence in the townscape and provides a civic use in the High Street. It is particularly important in terms of providing a defined end to the High Street above the valley of the Polcalk Burn, now a rose garden commemorating the 1066 charter from King Malcolm III.

Moving west along the north side, the next building on the Bank Street corner opposite the Council Building is described by Gifford as *'a late Victorian gable-ended block whose canted corner is heavily corbelled out to the square'*. Next to that is the 1896-97 Andrew Maitland & Sons



French Renaissance styled, three storey block, built for William Ross, Jeweller, shown overleaf, left. Its boldly consoled entrance and elaborately detailed top storey is in marked contrast to the earlier commercial buildings on the south side of the High Street and says much about the aspirations of building owners and architects at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the economic circumstances that could support such buildings.

It sits in contrast also to the adjoining late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century half timbered, harled block currently with the Co-operative at ground floor, looking quite out of place in northern Scotland (although designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons) but at least reflecting the diversity of ideas current at that time and of more interest than the poor quality block adjoining, of around the same date. The oriel windows with modern replacement glazing and the modern, over-sized shop front create a building that lacks the quality of detailing or the integrity of the other High Street buildings.



### Royal Hotel, B-listed

A Maitland and Sons, B-listed, 1872, French Gothic design, occupies the prominent site at the end of the High Street, terminating the view from the east and giving the High Street a sense of enclosure. Gifford describes it as *'gabled and gableted Gothic; across the centre, a stone verandah topped by cast ironwork. At the N end, a steeple stepping out to join the Town Hall'*.

Taken together with the Tolbooth and Court House and the buildings opposite this creates a strong sense that this is the centre of the town.

### Streets to the South of the High Street

The commercial and civic character of the centre continues to a certain extent up Market Street and King Street which rise uphill from the south side of the High Street.



#### King Street

King Street appears originally to have been the main entry to the town from the south, although the northern section is shown on the 1832 map, and particularly on the 1878 town plan, as quite narrow. Some of the earlier buildings have survived at the south end where two, rendered, dormered vernacular houses give an idea of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century scale (although a corner building has been removed).



Further down a gabled 19<sup>th</sup> century building with its ground floor shops (with unfortunate, wide modern shopfronts) marks the transition to the commercial centre, although the next building is a plain 20<sup>th</sup> century building of domestic scale, but with widened shop windows (currently a clothing shop) maintaining the commercial nature.



Although the east side starts (at the south end) with a distinctive late 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial building (with a corbelled entrance almost identical to that at 18 High Street) unfortunately it now stands in isolation, as most of the east side of King Street was demolished and the area is now taken up with a car park.

As well as introducing surface parking into the town centre the area opens up the rear of properties that were not intended as public elevations and destroys the tight urban grain. It marks one edge (or rather corner) of the town centre.



Towards the High Street end a remnant of the east remains, much altered and run down and with an unfortunate response to the new open space – with what was probably once a mutual gable, chopped off and infilled with poor quality timber weatherboarding and a modern shop front. It now appears empty and in poor condition.



### Market Street

Market Street makes a more positive contribution to the town centre although it did not exist as a street at the time of the 1832 Great Reform Act plan. Perhaps the loss of the traditional marketplace encouraged the creation of the mid 19th century arcaded single storey market building, set back with courtyard in front, unfortunately filled with cars, but nonetheless creating a meaningful urban space, helped by the occupancy of the restored market building. The undated photograph (late 19<sup>th</sup> century?) from Tain Museum Image Library is captioned *“It is not clear whether some kind of market is being held or a public meeting of some kind but the photo shows what the old marketplace was like. The arched and wooden gated market stalls or stances in the background used to be rented mainly by merchants, such as the Grocers, John Gallie & Co, who had other shop premises in the town, presumably to benefit from the custom of those attending the markets. These stalls were converted in more recent times and are now “proper” shops”.*



Tain Museum Image Library

The visual connection from the High Street also works well with the steep rise revealing the elaborate Clydesdale Bank (built as the North of Scotland Bank) and the tower of the Queen Street church beyond.



### Clydesdale Bank

Andrew Maitland & Sons 1878 richly detailed free renaissance bank has a presence in the street greater than its physical size and retains its original detailing, including the ornate cast iron railings and cresting to the roof. At the time of writing, the bank has closed and the building is unoccupied.

Opposite the bank is an elaborate Victorian Gable with finials and three arched openings, set on an otherwise plain building.



Set back beside the bank is a small building with traditional dormer windows but an altered, wide garage opening at ground floor. The Burgh Survey identify this as a surviving early building (16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century).

The upper part of the street has a



terrace of good quality 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings built or adapted for commercial use at ground floor, The third in the row (15-17) with more recent widened openings.

The butchers shop presumably predates the market as it appears to have fronted onto Queen Street; however, openings in the gable link it in to Market Street and the gable closes off the street visually. The poor quality extension and fan unit detract from what has become a good quality urban space.

### St Duthus Street

Although it appears to have been one of the older streets leading into the centre, buildings have been removed adjacent to the Royal Hotel to form a car park and only one significant building remains on the east side.



The character of the street is related more to the lower density of development along Manse Street. Only part of this street is included in the Town Centre Character Area.

### Streets to the North of the High Street

#### Bank Street

A short, narrow street leading steeply downhill to Castle Street. The Highland Council office and rear extension tower over the east side, the extension appearing to have incorporated earlier shops at ground floor, now blanked off and infilled with stonework.

Opposite, two commercial premises, one a funeral director, discreetly housed in what looks like an earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century storage building and next to a traditional house with gabled dormers, though the ground floor is much altered with a more recent wide shopfront. The view is terminated by the gable and rear wing of Castlehill (see Castle Street, below).





### Castle Brae

The 19<sup>th</sup> century town plans do not feature this as the street seen today, in fact the 1878 Town Plan shows the High Street buildings continuing across the entrance to the street although a pend is probably indicated. The same map shows the building running down the hill on the west as the Royal Hotel, so perhaps this does not reflect Andrew Maitland's rebuilding of the Royal Hotel on its present site (formerly the St Duthus Lodge and St Duthus Hotel) in 1872 and his extension to the Court House in 1873. The bartizaned corner block gives way to a much plainer wing on Castle Brae, but still of a scale commensurate with its civic purpose.



On the opposite, east side of the street there is a mix of buildings. The gable to the gallery with its five arches, two narrow first floor windows and prominent barge boards and chimney is in marked contrast to the mock Tudor half timbering next door while the earlier building that is now the Railway Hotel juts out to enclose the street. These buildings continue the character of the town centre some way down the street.

Seen from the north end, the street is less urban with the trees, walls and railings and steps of the churchyard on one side and a garden on the other; however the street is an important approach to the centre and its quite mixed character helps reinforce a sense of arrival.



### Castle Street

This is a relatively short street and perhaps serves best in containing the rear of the High Street. The Railway Hotel perhaps started life before the railway came as a typical late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century three bay house that was either then extended or took over an adjoining property. An upper floor window has been enlarged. The harling is in poor condition and the paintwork somewhat garish. Much could be improved; however, the building is part of the Town centre and brings some activity to the street.



Castle Hill is a substantial house, actually facing east onto its garden so that the gable and rear wing form the visual stop to Bank Street. It is a C listed building with some interesting detail but suffers from having been pebble dashed and the loss of its original windows. The conservatory on the east side detracts.

The remaining buildings on the south side start with the gable of the Bank Street shop and a modest, dormered 3-bay house, possibly early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but then a modern storage/garage building of little merit other than of being in scale with the street. Unfortunately the last building in the terrace has been removed at some stage and the space opposite the Railway Hotel given over to car parking, weakening the urban fabric at this corner.

### Streets to the west of the Tolbooth



#### Tower Street

Although there is a change of scale and atmosphere as the corner is turned round and down into Tower Street, the area remains part of the centre in terms of activity and use and forms an important gateway into the heart of the town from the west, as shown in the photograph left.

The entrance to St Duthuc's is of significance – easily missed at first and poorly paved, it is almost ignored by the tall tenement to the east but the single storey commercial building on the west makes a good attempt at turning the corner into the entrance.



The tenement (24-28) is reasonably well detailed and is B-listed, described as 'mid 19th century terrace, raised to 3 storeys circa 1870-80'. Its scale suits the location opposite the very tall gable of the Royal Hotel; however, the older, small, 2-storey building squashed between it and the Tower is almost lost between its large neighbours.





The Victorian tower of the Royal Hotel seems to want to compete with the Tolbooth in height but has been positioned on the axis of the gateway to St Duthuc's churchyard dominating the view south. Fortunately (as it is much less distinguished) this position means that it cannot be seen well from other viewpoints. It is a compromise stylistically – the lucarned spire like roof and top of the tower suggest something ecclesiastical, but lower down it is swallowed into the need for accommodation within the hotel and loses its form.

#### Former Town Hall

The tower also eclipses the intricate façade of the former B-listed Town Hall next door. It was also designed by Andrew Maitland & Sons and built 1874-76 as a private profit-making venture. Bought by the Town Council in 1902 it was upgraded and reopened in 1903 (financed by Andrew Carnegie). It was converted to the Town Hall Cinema in the 1920's, re-named in 1937 as the Picture Palace. In 1954 it was being operated by Caledonian Associated Cinemas Ltd. and Cinemascope was installed. The Picture House had gone from listings in the late 1960s.



The owners, the Tain Heritage Trust, in conjunction with the Tain & Easter Ross Civic Trust and the Tain & District Development Trust, are currently restoring the building for future community use. The façade is complex, as the list description makes clear:

*“Renaissance former Town Hall. Ashlar 2 storey, 2 bay gable front to Tower Street with recessed centre entrance at head of flight steps under convex columned and arched arcade supporting balcony. Large round arched opening above; narrow side bays with windows in recessed panels to ground floor. Mullioned and transomed to ground floor: circular tracery to 1st floor windows under hoodmoulds with arcaded gable. Pinnacles above, and central niche. 5 round headed 2-light mullion and transom windows set in oblong recessed panels to west elevation. Slate roof with tiled cresting”.*

#### South side of Tower Street



The tight urban form becomes more broken and there is a mixture of buildings from different periods.

The C listed, suburban looking, pair of semi-detached villas at Tower Gardens, each 3 storeys with paired, canted centre bays with decorative friezes and Cumbrian fish-scale slate roofs are set back with a front garden behind a low wall and hedge were designed by Thomas Munro in 1902. Together with the trees planted near the street, they almost conceal the earlier (1830s) single storey 3-bay house tucked in between them and the former Town Hall. This is noted on the 1878 Town Plan as the Inland revenue office.



The next building, also described as Tower Gardens is a substantial early 19<sup>th</sup> century three storey building facing east onto a private courtyard separated from the street by a low wall (with gate piers) and railings, now in poor condition. The gable and wall are set out right onto the present road edge and the rear, west facing elevation sits directly on Quarry Lane.

While the gardens of these three buildings form a green interval in the

street, the overall effect is to signify a break from the tightly knit urban pattern of the town centre.

The gardens of these properties originally extend well to the south west and are still extensive despite some later infill on Quarry Lane. They typify the way that development in Tain, even quite close to the centre, by not being constrained by traditional town boundaries or burgage plots could expand into the generous space available allowing substantial house to be built on large plots over a long period.



No. 3 (C listed) and no. 5 (B listed) Tower Street return to a more traditional pattern by being built directly on the street. No.5 is given in the list description as “Mid/late 18th century”; however, its detailing looks older and, the Burgh Survey notes “indicate a late 17<sup>th</sup> /early 18<sup>th</sup> century date”.

It has similarities to a property known as ‘The Ark’, illustrated in the Burgh Survey and where the Marquis of Montrose was lodged after his capture following his defeat at Carbisdale in 1650. The Ark stood on the corner of Morangie Road and Hill Street and was demolished around the 1960s. The Burgh Survey postulates that it may have been one of the medieval manses.

After no.3 another gap in the street frontage is a result of Tain’s irregular development – Munro Place is a short terrace off Rose Street, facing south but with back gardens running down to Tower Street.



#### **North side of Tower Street**

Returning to the corner building at the entrance to the churchyard described above, the next building returns to a form familiar along the south side of the High Street

16-18 Tower street, B listed, circa 1860 is a 2 storey and attic pair of shops and dwelling above. It has notable details – ‘architraved windows at 1st floor with bracketted cills, cornice and die parapet with 3 out of 4 urn type finials. 3 original piended dormers; corniced end stacks’ – and maintains the urban feel of the town centre at this point.



14 Tower Street, the next building, breaks the pattern being set back behind garden walls with railings but is a substantial building. It is B listed, designed by George Angus, 1845 and built as the British Linen Bank (now home to the Bank of Scotland). It is a classical, regular composition of polished ashlar fine architectural detail to windows, door and other elements. The near contemporary single storey wing on the west gable is marred by a modern porch. Research on 14 Tower Street has been carried out as part of the Scotland’s Urban Past project.



The next short terrace returns to the more urban pattern and the architect's and insurance broker's offices maintain a commercial use although their scale drops to that of the more domestic expansion of Tain. 8-12 is more finely detailed, with its gabled dormers, in contrast to its neighbour, no.6.



The much-altered St Duthus hotel has remnants of detailing, such as the blocked up chamfered windows and crow stepped gables that suggest that it is of 'some antiquity', perhaps late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century like its near neighbour opposite (5). The modern extension, box dormer, plain glass openings and fire escape stair on the gable all detract from what should be an interesting early building. The 1878 Town Plan shows the building sitting in its triangular plot which is shown as garden, sadly now lost to a poorly finished car park. Research on St Duthus Hotel has been carried out as part of the Scotland's Urban Past project.

## The northern perimeter

### Chapel Street

Chapel Street cuts diagonally up the escarpment immediately to the north of St Duthuc's churchyard and probably represented an easier gradient for horse drawn transport than the shorter steeper streets. Visually, it contains the town centre, although in many ways seems separate from it; however, for completeness it is included here.



It reaches the higher level close to Tower Street (giving rise to the St Duthus Hotel's triangular plot) and has very much of a 'backlands' feel due to the high walls and infrequent buildings.

At this point the north side of the road is a mixture of converted domestic and storage buildings and new houses – a recent development that fits in with the scale and irregular nature of the layout in this area.



A little further down is the substantial, B-listed, Shandwick House, dated 1849, but with extensive later additions to the rear (Andrew Maitland & Sons in half-timbered mode?). It is given more prominence now that a new pedestrian route to the Tesco store has been created.



As the road continues to drop, St Duthuc's Church and the wooded slope of the escarpment begin to dominate, although there is a house with garden and garage tucked in under the bank.

From the new walkway on the existing conservation area returns to the centre of Chapel Street. Although there are houses on the north side of the street these are examined separately.



The area around the junction of Chapel Street and Castle Brae is quite broken up – to the north of the next section of Castle Street the ground was shown undeveloped on the 1878 Town Plan and what is there now is recent. On the south side, and within the conservation area, there is a substantial two storey, traditional corner building mainly facing south onto its garden and relatively blank to the road, followed by an untidy garage then two modern bungalows that pay no respect to their setting, although at least the thick stone boundary wall has been retained to mark the boundary.



The area occupied by the bungalows is shown as open or garden ground on the 19<sup>th</sup> century plans and the 1878 Town Plan notes it as relating to the site of 'Tain Castle', showing a cross nearer Castle Street than Chapel Street.

Despite the local tradition of the presence of a castle at some early period, the authors of the Burgh Survey could find no evidence to support its existence. Following the publication of the Burgh Survey, Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) initiated a project entitled "Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) and the Remembering Hidden Tain Project" which explored possible areas for investigation including some that might help establish some evidence of the castle.

The wall then wraps round the site and returns up Crammond Brae to join Castle Street. An attractive cottage sits, somewhat in isolation, at the corner.

### **Conclusion**

The town centre is a complex area with several components and a key element almost hidden from view (St Duthuc's churchyard). Around the edges it is difficult to decide where the centre ends and the more residential areas begin, but that is part of the character of Tain with substantial buildings on large plots occurring right into the centre. The High Street has a distinct, traditional High Street character, lined with shops and public buildings and the commercial nature of the centre continues into several of the side streets, in particular Market Street. The character begins to break up along Tower Street, but there are sufficient commercial uses, despite the gaps in the urban form, to justify including it within the town centre character area.

### 3.05 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE – LITTLE TAIN

Roy's Map of 1747-52 shows "Little Tain", identified as a cluster of buildings to the west of, and separated from the main settlement. The Burgh Survey suggests that Little Tain developed as a distinct weaving community (relating to efforts to introduce linen manufacturer from flax in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century) although noting that the name appears to have gone out of use by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time the Burgh Survey notes that, because Tain was not constrained by town walls or conventional boundaries, some early development of substantial dwellings took place to the west, including the building known as 'The Ark' which stood on the corner of Hill Street and Academy Street until its demolition in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The first detailed map of 1832 shows this area in a way that suggests that buildings developed along the west side of the burn, following its curving line, intersected by more regular, and probably later, development along both sides of the road leading north west out of Tain with a third group formed by a street with lanes off to the north east and finally some irregularly located buildings partly on road corners.

Of the first group, the southern section along the west of what is now Well Street has been largely replaced with modern dwellings although some 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages remain. The curve of the street reflects the course of the burn.



Ardross Terrace remains as a reminder of the modest cottages of Little Tain, set at right angles to Well Street and some distance back from Academy Street (the current open space being the site of 'The Ark').

Back on the main road, Academy Street turns into Morangie Road at the bottom of Well Street and the more ordered buildings along the north side reflect the later expansion westward of Tain, although there is a mixture of building heights, scale and building lines.



Murray Street has a very narrow entrance off Morangie Road. The four single storey terrace cottages, stepped down the slight incline, have distinct character and good detail. The street name is carved in an outband of no.3. The row ends in a tower house style dwelling of recent construction.



The enclosure at the south end of Murray Street gives way to an informal space with trees opposite the cottages perhaps reflecting the line of the original burn (the Matach Gully).



The group of buildings comprising Dunrobin Street and Drummond Street with small lanes off is similarly a small enclave with access from a narrow entry off Academy Street and there is a mixture of house types and periods.

The first house on the right faces Academy Street but is set well back from the terraces on the pavement. It has the appearance of a later 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage style house but could possibly be a modified older building.



On the left is the only listed building in this group, the B-listed Dunrobin House (no. 4) described as *"circa 1800, 2 storey, 3 bay with centre door; harl pointed rubble, tooled dressings; harled gables; later glazed timber porch"*. It has raised, cement-based ribbon pointing and has lost the original astragals from its windows.

Further north two terraces, each of two cottages face each other across the narrow street and appear to be survivors from the 18<sup>th</sup> century "Little Tavn".



They are modest in scale and have been altered over time, although the white painted no. 3 retains small window openings. No. 6 (white harled cottage) has a very large rear extension, just visible in the photograph (near right).



There is a small lane to the west behind no. 8 with a further two cottages, one reasonably original in form (although with more recent windows) while the other is almost overwhelmed by its box dormer and modern garage.



At the north end of the street are two blocks of stone-built flats, possibly built by the local authority (1930s?), now with modern windows and the block on the east extended with a large pebble dashed wing to the north. Currently these are excluded from the conservation area. (Refer to section 6.0.) While rather plain and larger in scale than the older houses, the buildings at least reflect the street pattern and provide containment to the north end of Dunrobin Street. The garden wall of the eastmost block turns the corner and continues into the boundary wall at the rear of the former Tain Royal Academy.



Returning to Drummond Street, there is a substantial dwelling on the corner with Dunrobin Street, possibly early 19<sup>th</sup> century and possibly originating as two houses (the arrangement of door and window with paired windows above might indicate an original division). Now altered, with modern PVC windows and a large concrete tile roofed extension to the east.



Drummond Street then turns south alongside the west boundary of the original Academy, with a modern two storey house sitting slightly awkwardly on the corner before the last house (no.2) which has the appearance of the rear outshoot of the Academy Street building.

Academy Street, west of Drummond Street shows an interesting collision between the informal layout of "Little Tain" and the more orderly, later expansion of Tain along the main road.

The buildings along the north side have a consistent building line; however, they vary in scale and style, possibly representing development of individual plots over a lengthy period.



No 12, C listed (far left) dates from the earlier/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a substantial 2 storey and attic, wide 3 bay house, although abutting the similarly sized no.2 Drummond Street

The adjoining house, also substantial, is a later 19<sup>th</sup> century house with gable dormers and large tripartite windows at ground floor.





After the gap at the south end of Dunrobin Street (and the set back house) there is a continuous terrace of seven cottages, the first two and a half storeys and the remainder single storey with dormered attics – the dormers in a variety of styles and periods. Some of these may be quite early buildings (late 18<sup>th</sup> century?) relating to ‘Little Tain’.



Further west, after the gap at the end of Murray Street, the building line continues with the row of houses in Morangie Road, described above.

The south side of Academy street, west of Drummond Street is a more complex mixture with a number of buildings built onto the street frontage, while others are gable to the street. The first building also epitomises the tendency in Tain to give short streets and terraces individual street names – while the gable is on Academy Street, the rear (west) elevation bears a street name “Laundry Lane” and the east elevation is labelled “Vine Place”.



Similarly, the next building to the west is also gable to Academy Street but set back and with access off a cul-de-sac labelled Murray Place. The building has modern porches; however, the stone ridge capping suggests that it may be a largely reconstructed earlier building.

Although suggestive of the informal layout of Little Tain and although the 1832 plan has one building at right angles to Academy Street, Laundry Lane is not featured on the plan and the buildings appear to be of a later date. Back on Academy Street there is a run of buildings on the street, one detached single house then two short terraces with a lane giving access to the rear between the terraces.



The houses are one storey and half, generally significantly modified, with wider window openings, modern windows and different render and paint finishes (although the detached house retains a stone frontage). They are coherent when seen as a group with the similar terraces opposite and both sides of the street appear on the 1832 plan.



Beyond this group, the urban grain breaks down along the south side of Academy Street. The gables of the traditional buildings (the photographer’s studio appears on the 1832 plan) are set back from the street and reflect the 20<sup>th</sup> century demolition of The Ark, while beyond, the south side of Morangie Road (outwith the conservation area) has modern houses set back in large plots.



The remaining buildings in this area relate to Hill Street and also appear on the 1832 plan. At the top, south, end of the street the corner building follows the angle between Hill Street and Manse Street. It appears to be a single dwelling, although an altered former door on the Manse Street elevation suggests that they were originally two dwellings. The style and scale are consistent with the buildings lining Academy Street. On the opposite corner there is a substantial two storey house, B-listed, dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Further down Hill Street is Esther Place, a terrace of four substantial dwellings running at right angles to Hill Street. The first house has a substantial rear wing and has been altered with oriel windows at first floor. It is stated to have been the home of Andrew Maitland although the terrace is likely to be early 19<sup>th</sup> century, appearing on the 1832 map.

### **Conclusion**

“Little Tain” is a complex area with good surviving evidence of the separate working community. This is overlain by the buildings of the slightly later westerly expansion of Tain built in an orderly manner along the main road west, while a number of other dwellings are sited almost at random, although probably reflecting access lanes and plot boundaries. Overall the impression is of a more informal area with its own distinct character – part of the ‘irregularity’ that, historically, was a noted feature of Tain, but in its own particular way.

### 3.06 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE – ACADEMY

#### Introduction



Roy's map of 1747-52 shows a clear gap between Tain and "Little Tain" and the map of 1832 indicates a largely open space; however, by this date the original Academy is shown. A 'Town Trail' plaque affixed to the railings gives the following:

"Education has long held an important place in Tain. In 1634 there was a *Musick and Gramour* School offering reading writing, vocal music and arithmetic. By 1780 Latin book-keeping and geography had been added to the curriculum. By 1800 the Grammar School had become overcrowded with *no place for the scholars to play except the churchyard where they were apt to break the church windows and injure themselves jumping over the gravestones*. Landowners wanted to create in Tain a modern school that would attract students from all over Ross, Caithness and Sutherland and provide its scholars with *a good education founded on morality and religion.*"



Lord Ankerville, a prominent local landowner donated land and the County and Burgh both contributed financially. In 1808 a crown charter was granted in the name of George III by which time £8,000 had been raised largely through the efforts of Hugh Rose of Glastullich.

Tain Royal Academy was duly opened on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1813 with a Rector, 3 teachers and about 130 pupils. The syllabus included *English, French, Latin, Book-keeping, Algebra, Geometry, Navigation and The Elements of Fortification and Gunnery*".

Additions were designed by A Maitland and Sons in 1896 and also D MacPherson and Sons, Dingwall, 1935. By 1969 the school had again become overcrowded and the Academy moved to a new building in Scotsburn Road. The building became a resource centre for the elderly residents of Easter Ross.



The building is described as a "Simple late Georgian classical façade, 2 storeys, 7 bays. Ashlar frontage, rubble flanks with Ashlar dressings, centre Doric pilastered doorpiece with decorative fanlight and paired panelled doors with reeded detailing. Wide outer bays advanced with triparties in ground and 1st floors; 1st floor windows linked by moulded cill course 12-pane glazing. Mutule cornice; paired cornice stacks; piended slate roof".



For a couple of decades after it was built the Academy must have been an impressive building set within spacious grounds. Occupying a prominent position on top of the escarpment it was also highly visible from the lower ground to the north east. Something of this can still be seen.

The railings and mature trees dominate Academy



Street and give this part of the town its distinct character. Unfortunately the more recent later additions to the building occupy much of the former open ground and their temporary quality and appearance detract from the original Academy and its historic setting.



In terms of character, the closely-knit centre reaches No.3 Tower street after which there is a gap in the street frontage, a result of Tain's irregular development. Munro Place is a short terrace off Rose Street, facing south but with back gardens running down to Tower Street (although a modern replacement has been turned around to enter off Tower Street, creating an unfortunate break in the street frontage).



A further oddity is the B listed former Procurator Fiscal's Office, built as the office of Andrew Maitland & Sons in 1893-94. The list description gives *'Cottage-sized building in Maitland's distinctive picturesque style, with decorative barge-boards and timber-framed, painted walls, slated roofs with deep eaves and red ridge-tiles'*, while Gifford is less flattering stating that it *'seems to have escaped from the seaside'*.



The buildings along the south side of Academy Street perhaps reflect the infilling of the street frontage from both ends over time. The building at the corner of Rose Street is a substantial earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century house with some distinguishing architectural features (its stone gable chimneys, tripartite windows and stone banding to the openings and front corners) but is flanked by much smaller scale, possibly earlier dwellings. Perhaps the presence of the Academy raised the status of Academy Street and encouraged investment – after the small cottage another pair of houses reflect the more imposing scale. Sadly, the box dormers detract from the appearance of the stone built, 3-bay house on the left.

Beyond this is a one and a half storey, probably later house, followed by a gap before the gable of Vine Place/Laundry lane. Although Academy Street continues west the buildings from the gap westwards have been considered under the Little Tain character area.

### 3.07 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE – SOUTH EAST TAIN

#### Introduction

A new town to SE was first proposed by Donald MacLeod of Geanies in 1788 and the Town Council bore the £80 cost of bridging the gully of Polcalk Burn opening up the east end of High Street. A contract the following year noted that the houses were to be built of clay with stone dressings – perhaps referring to the modest nature of house sat the south end of Ross Street and along Lamington Street.



1832 Great Reform Act Plan (extract)



1878 Town Plan (Extract)

A second wave of development began in 1827 when land owned by McLeod of Geanies was feued out, establishing the present grid iron pattern.

The 1832 Plan is of interest in showing the pace of development. Ross Street, Geanies Street, Hartfield Street and Stafford Street are shown quite substantially built up whereas further east there are several gaps, mainly along the east side of Geanies Street, in Shandwick Street and Knockbreck Street, indicating that development was continuing.

The 1878 Town Plan shows the area more or less complete and much as seen today, although there have been additions along Ankerville Street and a few replacement buildings or modern infills. Tain has, of course expanded greatly to the south and east in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; however, these areas are outwith the conservation area.

The area around Hartfield Street, Petley Street and Sutherland Street are currently excluded from the conservation area; however, the maps show that most of the buildings in that area are contemporary with those included in other streets. In view of this, the area has been included in the assessment.

There are a number of building types within the area, although within each type there are many similar examples. In view of this examples are shown to indicate the character of each street.

Perhaps a key driver in attracting residents was the building of the new parish church in 1811-14, to a design by James Smith. The two plans show it occupying most of the block between Shandwick Street and Knockbreck Street with its entrance off Stafford street, giving a large open area to the south.

### Lamington Street and Ankerville Street



One of the difficulties of identifying properties in Tain is the tendency for multiple street names with several streets changing name along their length without obvious reason (when observed today). The continuation of the High Street to the east is a good example where the High Street merges into Lamington Street, then a little further along becomes Ankerville Street. Clearly the bridging of the Polcalk burn was the reason for the first change as, effectively a new street was created. The point of change is now marked by a substantial building, the C listed nos. 1-5 (confusingly the street sign on the building beside the door to no.1 is "High Street"). Built around 1830-40 it appears to be later than the adjoining building. A small building is shown on the 1832 map – perhaps the presence of the burn directly underneath deterred development until this confident building was erected – more a reflection of the growing mid-19<sup>th</sup> century prosperity than the more domestic expansion to the south east.



The adjoining building to the east is likely to have been an earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century house (similar to many in Tain) later altered to include shop premises while its neighbour, leading to the corner of Ross Street appears slightly earlier still.



Beyond Ross Street the 1832 map shows a solid terrace of development, again of sizeable houses, with the first three altered to include shop premises at ground floor. The last building in this row is the gable of a Geanies Street House, perhaps suggesting that the focus of development lay in that direction.



Across the street there is a substantial C listed house with shops at ground floor, noted as earlier/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, flanked to the east by a row of smaller scale cottages, the east-most of which has been subsumed into the commercial premises that link to the large modern shed which terminates the row.

Although the gap of the valley of the Polcalk burn (now a formal garden) gives a greater transition from the built up High Street the character of this part of the street belongs more with the commercial centre than the suburban south east, perhaps reinforced by the route of the main road

out to the south east which turns up Geanies Street.



On the 1832 plan Ankerville Street appears only to serve the houses fronting it along two blocks as it peters out to a dotted line (footpath?). By 1878 it has become a road. Perhaps its initial unimportance led to the first houses beyond Geanies Street turning their backs onto the street with their main facades facing south and labelled as View Place (with Geanies Street on the gable and Ankerville Street on the rear). Beyond there is a small extension then a more conventional early 19<sup>th</sup> century house on the corner of Shandwick Street but facing Ankerville Street. This is C listed and noted in the list description as *“Corner site with Shandwick Street, No 1 Ankerville Street, feued by John Clark (also in Shandwick St) on 1827 “map of Newton of Tain; Donald Macleod Esq of Geannies”*



Beyond Shandwick Street, the next block comprises two dwellings, the first possibly having started as two houses facing onto the street but now combined into a large dwelling with a former doorway built up and access taken from Shandwick Street into the garden side. Its neighbour is a familiar style - a substantial three bay house, although it appears to have subsumed a smaller corner house (a blocked-up doorway can be seen close to the mutual gable).



Beyond Knockbreck Street the character changes markedly. The corner house (which marks the current limit of the conservation area) and the third house are substantial later Victorian villas in large plots while the middle house (middle photo below, shown as Sturton Place on the 1878 map) is earlier, although not on the 1832 plan. The Victorian villas have features in common with ‘Murrayfield’ opposite the Episcopal Church in Manse Street and reflect the prosperity and confidence of Tain in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Beyond these houses Knockbreck Primary School sits in a raised position. It is category B-listed and its list description begins *“A. Maitland and Sons, 1877. Additions and alterations, also A. Maitland and Sons, 1908. Sneck coursed rubble, stugged dressings, large single storey rectangular complex. North elevation; 5 central bays with tripartites flanked by outer gabled bays. ....”*. A short distance further east is the Golf View Hotel, shown on the 1878 plan as the Free Church manse, although its access is from Knockbreck Road (a continuation of Stafford Street). Both buildings occupy the plateau at the top of the escarpment, their raised positions being more to do with Ankerville Road dropping down the escarpment as it heads north east.



Consideration of Lamington and Ankerville Streets has also to include the two houses shown on the 1878 plan as Elder Cottage and Rosebank, the former being built on a terrace half way down the escarpment and the latter (which is listed) endeavouring to make use of the steep slope by including a basement with a bridged-over basement area giving access.

Lamington Street and Ankerville Street are an important part of the expansion of Tain to the south east, yet at the same time have a character that is distinct from the grid of streets of which they form an edge. The streets seem to look several ways – Lamington Street as a continuation of the commercial High Street, while some of the houses on the first part of Ankerville Street aren't sure which way to face, to the street and distant views or to the south and the growing suburb in that direction. Further along, the later additions enjoy commanding sites but have little in common with the houses in the main grid of streets.



### Ross Street

Although Ross Street appears to fit in with the planned expansion to the south east and is the first street encountered, it is much narrower than the grid of streets starting with Geanies Street and may owe its origins to the bridging of the Polcalk Burn in 1788. At the south end, the right angled turn in the street is to accommodate cottages that actually face south onto a courtyard behind the Carnegie Library and may pre-date Ross Street. At the north end the three storey corner building handles well the transition in scale from Lamington street into Ross Street and the change in level is dealt with by an elegant forestair and railings serving the aediculed front door.



The next terrace is of two storey house with dormered windows to the upper floor, reducing scale, while further south the buildings reduce to single storey cottages.

Unfortunately the east side of the street is a mixture of gaps, workshops and cottages. The corner cottage (at the south end) is a traditional one and a half storey 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage with dormered first floor windows while its neighbour is a modern pastiche.

The eastern leg of Ross Street accommodates sheds, a sub-station and gardens and is very much a 'backlands' area with none of the character of the built-up streets.





**Geanies Street**



Geanies Street forms the core of the grid of streets set out in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the plots are shown in the listing notes as having been feud out in 1827 and the purchasers seemed to cover a broad social spectrum, clearly with different ambitions and resources. For example, no. 5, left, B-listed is noted as “Site feud by Mr Daniel Ross of London, 1827 - map of Newton of Tain Macleod Esq of Geannies”. While the smaller house with dormers (bottom left) is perhaps more typical. The west side of Geanies Street is shown developed by 1832, although there is an unfortunate more recent shop on the corner of Ross Street, while there are significant gaps on the east side including towards the north end where the large garden of View Place and more recent shop (below right) break up the street frontage to some extent.



The top (south end) of the street has continuous frontages and with a few shops and the gable of quite a substantial elegantly designed corner building, fronting onto Stafford Street but with a splayed corner. Unfortunately the ground floor has been altered and tiled in black.





### Stafford Street

This is the other key street in the area and, like Geanies Street, is wide. It provides direct routes into the town from the south east, either by carrying on into Cadboll Place or by turning right down Geanies Street.

The two corner shops (Hartfield Street and Geanies Street) each have a gable onto Stafford Street and form a visual termination of the street. Although it carries on into the centre, the building lines in the last section have been compromised by the modern buildings on each side of the street. These are considered under the South West character area.



Turning east the south side of the street is consistently lined with two storey houses of similar type and date (most appearing on the 1832 plan with a couple of later infills showing by 1878). These are all substantial houses representing the quality that was being achieved in Tain in the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century. Three groups are category C listed (nos. 4, 6 & 8, no. 10 and nos. 14-16).

Nos. 14-16 have been converted to flats with entry at the rear from Hartfield Street, the front doors now windows although retaining the stone opening.



On the north side, the first block is defined by its two corner buildings, the first, to Geanies Street a handsome large scale 3-bay, 2 storey and attic building with prominent band course at first floor window head; however it is ruined by the insensitive alterations to enlarge the ground floor windows and cover this part of the elevation in black tiles. The second is a simpler gable to the Shandwick Street House but maintaining the street line. These two manage to anchor the grid plan of the area, despite the gap between which is partly a garden (to the Shandwick Street house) and partly a courtyard to the corner group at the top of Geanies Street. This arrangement is shown on the 1832 plan and would have suited an Inn or suchlike, but the history of this group has not been investigated.



The next block is entirely taken up with the frontage of the former parish church, now the St Duthac's centre. Built in 1811-15 to a design by James Smith of Inverness (who also designed the Academy) it was intended to be seen, like the Academy, in the setting of extensive grounds. It is B-listed and described as "*Late Georgian Gothick ..... piended slate roof. Modern harled additions; modern Fife stone porch to Shandwick Street. Low coped rubble wall with cast-iron spearhead railings; quadrant walls and gates to Stafford Street*

*Notes: Modern additions of no architectural interest."*



The building and its grounds are important elements in defining the character of the south eastern suburb. They give status and gravitas in a way the smaller scale terraces of houses lack and, as noted, the presence of the church would have been a strong draw to those considering taking a feu in the area.



Beyond the junction of Stafford Street with Knockbreck Street and Duke Street the character of Stafford Street begins to break down. On the south side a late 19<sup>th</sup> century house with its garden takes up the whole block from Duke Street to Gower Street and breaks the line of buildings, although maintaining the building line (the plot is shown on the 1878 plan as having a Smithy). The street then turns into Knockbreck Road and there is an earlier-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century group of buildings returning up Gower Street, looking distinctly like a house and farm buildings but now a house and commercial use. The buildings maintain the street frontage and form an 'end stop' for the conservation area.



On the north side three cottages, one with more recent alterations terminate the conservation area. Unfortunately the bay window and link roof extension and the altered dormers are out of character with the building. The cottages are shown on the 1832 plan.

Both plans show a field next to the cottages. The western edge of this has been given over to areas of hardstanding behind the house on Knockbreck Street with the former filling station providing a poor contrast with the buildings of the conservation area.

### Shandwick Street and Knockbreck Street

Given the significance of the church it might have been expected that substantial properties would be built facing the building and its large open forecourt. However, the 1832 map shows that, apart from a clutch of buildings at the Ankerville Street end, Shandwick Street is undeveloped along its west side while Knockbreck street has buildings at each end and the middle, but significant gaps. It is not until 1840 that an imposing building appears in Knockbreck Street – in one of the gaps. It (no. 10) is B-listed and the list description notes *"Excellent detailing and workmanship to masonry. All broached dressings with narrow margin drafts"*. Although the unlisted (and much altered) no. 8 and the C listed nos. 12, 14 and 18 are substantial dwellings they are not ostentatious. The list descriptions note that nos. 12 and 14 have a date of 1803, pre-dating the church.





At least one gap remained for a long time, assuming the early 20<sup>th</sup> century pair of semi-detached houses are the first to be built at that location. The original railings form an attractive edge to the plot. Opposite, what appears to be modern is a much-altered earlier cottage that appears on both the 1832 and 1878 maps.



The (former) church and its various halls dominate the west side of the street. The Duthac Centre also dominates Shandwick Street, indeed more so, as the halls and Fyfestone porch are built right onto the street. The west side of the street, starting from the Ankerville Street end has a good group of early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, starting with a single storey and attic cottage, raised up and with a steep entrance flight of steps and a small, raised garden (which take up the pavement) followed by three similar two storey houses with gabled upper floors, the first with a forestair, again occupying the pavement. All four houses in this group are listed in category C.



Further up, in the middle section, are two modest single storey and attic cottages, much altered and with porches and the first with a large extension to the side. There are large gaps on each side, used as run-ins/drives.

The last building on the corner with Stafford Street, no. 13, is a sizeable two storey, B-listed early 19<sup>th</sup> century house, more in keeping with the scale of development that might have been expected in this location.

Shandwick Street and Knockbreck Street are interesting in that they display a character common to this area – development over a reasonably long period, with owners keeping to building types and a small palette of house types, but each plot reflecting the resources and aspirations of the owner. The irregularity of the house types gives a liveliness to each street.

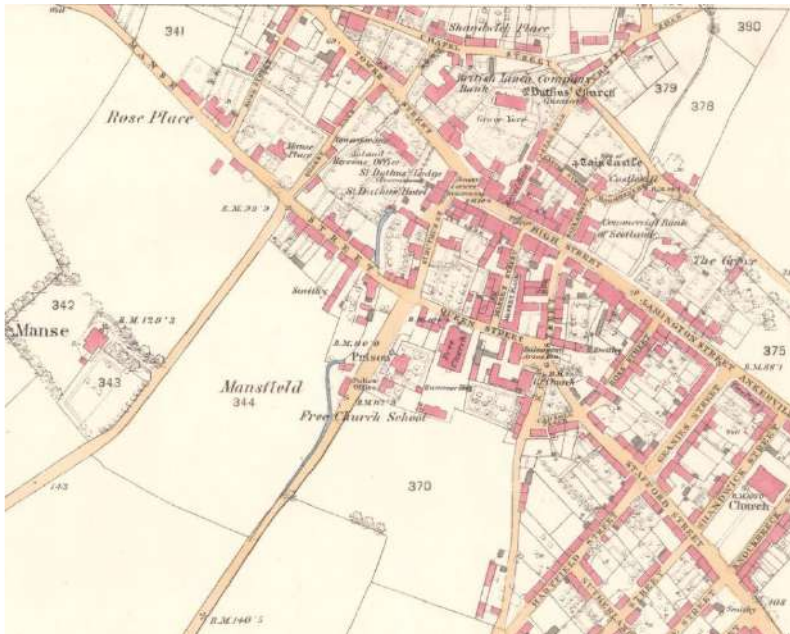
### 3.08 BUILDINGS AND TOWNSCAPE – SOUTH WEST

#### Introduction

The Burgh Survey identifies the area running along the south west side of the town as largely Victorian expansion and this has been followed in terms of defining a character area to the south west; however, it is not a consistent or homogenous area and a significant number of buildings are pre-Victorian. In fact it contains buildings from different periods and can



1832 Great Reform Act Plan (Extract)



1878 Town Plan (Extract)

be seen as a series of smaller areas united only by having a major east-west route running through them.

The 1832 plan (top) shows, for the most part, very little development. A manse and glebe occupy a large area to the west while land labelled 'Murray Esq' is undeveloped except for buildings along most of its northern edge. Similarly land labelled 'Ross Esq' is also largely undeveloped apart from a few buildings along King Street and Queen Street. By contrast Stafford and Hartfield Streets are shown quite substantially developed. Although perhaps part of the eastward expansion of the town in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, this group has, at a later period, been altered significantly by the formation of Cadboll Place, loss of earlier buildings and later replacement buildings, in particular the Carnegie Library. For this reason it is considered in this character area.

By the time of the 1878 map it can be seen that the major developments and consolidation around Queen Street and the first section of Manse Street have, in effect, expanded the town centre southwards although this group lacks the tight cohesion of the town centre proper and is therefore considered here. The western section of Manse Street remains undeveloped along its southern side (with the two buildings shown in the 1832 map remaining). The substantial villas that were later added to the existing buildings on the north side would have looked out across fields.

The character area is assessed in terms of its component areas.

### 3.08.01 Upper King Street, Cadboll Place and Stafford Street (first section)



The point where King Street (now Upper King Street) meets Queen Street appears to have been a main entry point into Tain, perhaps with King Street losing importance to Stafford Street as the town expanded to the east, particularly when the route was straightened by forming the north side of Cadboll Place.

The Balnagowan Inn, a C listed building from the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century is set back from King Street and takes advantage of its key location, mainly when viewed on the approach from the east (as the setback diminishes its relation to Upper King Street).

The triangular open space, shown with a burn traversing it in 1832 is in its present form in the 1878 map and makes a positive contribution to Tain, contrasting with the tight urban spaces of the centre.



The buildings on the south west and south east sides are good, well-built examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The former Free (now Associated) Presbyterian Church (B listed) has good quality fine detailing; this is no longer in ecclesiastical use and at the time of writing is understood to have been sold on the open market. The adjacent C listed Alpin House is well sited to take advantage of the open space.



No. 6 Cadboll Place is the plainest, but earliest building of the three on its side and is listed in category C. The other end of the terrace is a familiar style within Tain while the central, later Victorian house has more flamboyantly detailed gables and gablets and occupies a central position in relation to the space.



Unfortunately the townscape falls apart on the north side. Perhaps the presence of the burn deterred development, but the present mixture of gables and set back, modern, shed-like building with frontage parking do not follow the building line and detract from the streetscape.

The realignment of the street revealed a small courtyard behind the Carnegie Library, the cottages backing on to Ross Street.



The Carnegie Library itself, built in 1903 continues in use as a library. It is a symmetrical composition with a hipped roof with tiled ridge and finials, a strongly detailed central doorpiece and strongly modelled cornice and window surrounds. Surprisingly, it is not listed. Potential plans to create a new school campus, with the inclusion of a new library, may lead to an uncertain future for the building, which may result in it becoming redundant and requiring a new use.



The remainder of this section of Stafford Street (within the character area) is a mix of some reasonable quality older buildings (the office next to the Carnegie Library significantly altered) and modern intrusions that are out of keeping with the character of the area. Both are set back off the building line and the poor quality building on the south side has a row of car parking in front.



Running south from the triangular open space, the first 200m or so of Upper King Street has a number of good quality later 19<sup>th</sup> century houses all of which are outwith the conservation area. The quality of the houses is consistent with contemporary examples in other parts of the conservation area.

### 3.08.02 Queen Street and East section of Manse Street

Turning the corner into Queen Street, the street itself, and the wider area is dominated by the Queen Street Church. It can be seen from many places in the town and its tower is visible in distant views from the links and surrounding countryside.

Built as Tain Free Church, now Church of Scotland, this B listed, Italianate building was designed by Andrew Maitland and Sons, and built in 1891/92. It is described as *"Ashlar frontage, dressed and coursed rubble*



*flanks and rear, polished ashlar dressings. Rectangular church with ornate pedimented 7 bay north frontage to Queen Street with tall open campanile at NE angle. 3 centre bays flanked by giant fluted pilasters supporting entablature and pediment. Wide centre entrance flanked by ionic columns supporting segmental pediment”.*

The building has the scale of one of the large urban churches in Edinburgh or Glasgow and was clearly built to have a striking presence in Tain. Perhaps it was anticipated that larger scale development might follow in the immediate area. The building at the top of King Street (thought also to be Andrew Maitland & Sons) suggests how this might have begun to take place. However, the buildings adjoining the church and lining the street opposite are small scale and quite undistinguished while the modern flats immediately adjacent to the east are particularly bland. Queen Street itself is narrow and the setting of the church suffers from a lack of public space in front. In fact the only sizeable open space is the car park diagonally across the road, shown on the 1878 Town Plan as garden. While allowing the church to be seen from a little distance, the space does not contribute to the setting of the church and somewhat takes away from any aspirations to urban development at this location.







The hinterland of the church is also low key. The area to the side and rear is small scale but works as a courtyard setting for the church halls at the rear.



Civic uses were also built in this area (before the church) with the police station and jail built some way up Scotsburn Road, within the conservation area but not particularly contributing to the streetscape of this area. Curiously the Prison is shown on the 1878 Town Plan complete with a garden and "summerhouse".

Heading west there is a gap in the frontages on the south side, perhaps relating to the burn shown on the plan (the older buildings now missing). On the north side another Andrew Maitland & Sons building is the Masonic Hall, built in 1895. The buildings lining both sides of Manse Street are consistent with the pattern of expansion along principal roads seen elsewhere in Tain - dating from different periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a range of scale but built to the street line. Five of the group are listed buildings, nos. 5, 6, and 8 and 10 are substantial 3-bay houses while 12, 14 and 16 are of a smaller scale. It appears that plots were developed individually to suit aspirations and budgets, resulting in a variety of scale and detail. The south side of the street is relatively consistent; however, the north side has a greater variation in scale and the last plot, at the corner of Quarry Lane has been redeveloped with modern housing with a parking area in front, breaking the urban pattern at this point.



### Manse Street – western section

The south side appears as undeveloped in the 19<sup>th</sup> century maps and the housing scheme to the south (and outwith the conservation area) was probably built on a 'greenfield' site, set back somewhat unnecessarily behind a parallel secondary road which changes the character of Manse Street in this area, although providing space to the south of the mainly substantial dwellings on the north side of the street.



The most significant of these is the former manse, B-listed and described in some detail as: *“built by local tradesmen led by Alexander Stronach in 1719-20, repaired in 1820-22 and altered later in the 19th century, 2 storey and attic house 3 bays with middle bay slightly off-centre. Harled, ashlar margins; later 19th century bargeboarded porch screening door with lozenge glazed fanlight. 12-pane glazing; 2 piended dormers; ashlar margined end stacks; slate roof. Single storey stable block with gable to street; rubble; ridge stack; apex ball finials; slate roof. Low coped retaining wall with cast-iron spearhead railings and matching pedestrian gate. Later channelled gatepiers with moulded cornice and square caps; coped rubble garden walls”*. Manse House was studied as part of the Scotland’s Urban Past Project.



It is indicative of the aspirations of the town at a period of growth and when religion and education were significant aspects of civic life.

The manse and garden ground occupy a whole block following which is a pair of earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, category C listed, again substantial and built close to the road with minimal front gardens enclosed by low walls with railings.

Beyond is a pair of more modest semi-detached dormered houses, probably mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, built onto the street line.



These are followed by three substantial houses set well back from the road in large gardens and representing the greater affluence of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first is a relatively plain hipped roof, stone-built villa with a nicely detailed porch. The middle villa, Murrayfield, is listed in category C and described as *“1886 villa designed by A Maitland & Sons of Tain, one of the more ambitious and intact of its scale, date and type within this part of Tain .....Murrayfield is an intact example of a villa built by the prolific local practice Andrew Maitland & Sons. The detailing, including ball finial and stone dentilled eaves cornice, metal work, porch and interior fittings add to the character of this building”*.



The next villa is also relatively plain although enlivened by the bay windows at ground floor, linked together with a roof that also forms a canopy over the central door.

Beyond this point the character of the north side of the street then changes significantly with an earlier, more modestly scaled original pair of houses (now one house) on the corner of Hill Street.



Across the street, the B-listed St Andrew’s Episcopal Church forms a fine termination to the view west along Manse Street. The first building was an iron church built in 1880-81, replaced in 1887 by St Andrew’s Episcopal Church designed by Ross & Macbeth.

The building forms a simple 4 bay rectangular church orientated east/west with lancet windows and good quality detailing, including a small timber louvred ridge bellcote with small faceted and bellcast spire and apex cross finials.

The church closes in the end of Manse Street and restores the more traditional, suburban grain of this part of Tain – substantial buildings in

generous plots with a reasonable amount of trees and vegetation.



The Parsonage, off Glebe Crescent, was added in 1898. Designed by Alexander Ross it is a simpler design than the church but still a substantial villa in large grounds.

The Manse and Church together with the three substantial villas on the north side of the street almost form their own group.

### **Conclusion**

The south west character area is difficult to define as such other than it represents the expansion of Tain over a long period from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some earlier buildings survive but as prosperity increased during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first housing expanded with some substantial houses and smaller scale dwellings built alongside each other, then later, the commercial and civic activities of the centre began to expand southwards, particularly along Queen Street, Cadboll Place and the first section of Stafford Street. Newer, generally larger (and in the case of the Queen Street Church extremely large) buildings replaced older buildings or were inserted into gaps or built on new sites (such as St Andrew's Episcopal Church and manse). Substantial villas in spacious grounds were also built.

Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the area was very much on the edge of the town, with open land to the south of much of Manse Street. Following the 1903 Carnegie Library there is little evidence of further redevelopment within the area, other than a couple of unfortunate modern buildings at the west end of Stafford Street and some later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing beside the church and at the top of Quarry Lane.

### 3.09 BUILDING ELEMENTS AND DETAILS

Although having ancient origins and a street pattern in the centre that reflects the medieval layout, there are relatively few early buildings. St Duthac's church, in the centre, dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was completed after the original church down by the links was destroyed by fire in 1427, while the roofless enclosure is all that remains of the earlier parish church of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The parish church relocated to a new building in 1811-14 and the existing church fell into disrepair, being rescued and restored in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century by Andrew Maitland and others. The Tolbooth dates from 1706-1733 – built to replace an earlier Tolbooth of 1631 that had collapsed in 1703. The Tolbooth and Town House were repaired between 1778-80. A new jail and courthouse, built next to the Tolbooth tower in 1825-26, was destroyed by fire in 1833 and eventually the Court House was replaced in 1848-49 and extended in 1873.

In many ways this pattern demonstrates how the centre of Tain probably developed over a long period, with medieval buildings falling into disrepair and being replaced when times were suitable. The history of Tain shows that there were many troubled periods followed by years of improving prosperity, with economic conditions becoming increasingly favourable from around the 1750s.

The result is that much of Tain dates from the later 18th century onwards although the irregular layout has more ancient roots.

#### Materials

##### Sandstone

Tain was fortunate to have a local source of good quality stone, the sandstone from the local quarry proving durable and an attractive golden buff colour that has mellowed over time. Many buildings are well finished and finely dressed, with good carved detail, as these examples over 100 years apart illustrate.



Unfortunately the stone is not immune to erosion and some buildings show a degree of decay, those in range of the road salting vehicles suffering quite severely at ground level while leaking downpipes is another common cause of decay.

Sandstone was the material of choice for the prestige buildings over a long period – the Royal Academy, St Duthuc's Parish Church, most of the

more commercial High Street properties and latterly the imposing villas and later Victorian buildings such as Queen Street Church and Knockbreck Primary school.



Dressed stone was expensive and the more modest earlier buildings often used rubble for general walling, saving dressed stone for architectural details such as window rybats. There is also a reference to the houses in the early expansion to the south east being built of stone and clay. These were probably originally 'slaister pointed,' ie. with lime mortar spread widely across joints. Recent techniques include unsatisfactory hard cement-based pointing, although there are several examples of well executed lime mortar pointing (far left).

### Harling and Render



Although in the minority overall, there are many examples of harled (rough textured) or rendered (smoother finish) buildings in Tain. Lime render, by its nature tends to decay over time and coatings, in most cases are likely to have been replaced. Some buildings may have started life with rubble walls and then been harled or rendered. Harling was occasionally used as a solution to a poorly constructed wall that was deteriorating or might have been allowing damp to penetrate. 23-24 High Street is an example with a dressed ashlar frontage but modern harling to the gable and rear (and also alien hard cement ribbon pointing). Painted cement-based wet dash harling became the norm in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some quite old buildings have modern harling or render. Lime based traditional harls or renders have made a comeback over the last twenty years or so but require a knowledge of traditional building methods that relatively few contractors possess. To determine the authenticity requires a detailed examination of each building.



5 St Duthus Street (above, right) is an interesting example of a substantial villa (B-listed) from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that is harled (with painted window margins) but the later 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations include imposing ashlar canted bay windows.

### Chimneys, gables and gablets

Chimneys are an important element of the skyline and townscape generally and fortunately the good quality stone seems to have meant that the majority have survived. Chimneys tend to follow the walling below ie. ashlar on ashlar buildings, harled on harled buildings, although with some variations, and are well illustrated in the preceding photographs. Most in Tain are end gable stacks but the larger buildings often have additional ridge stacks, as seen in the general view below.



**Gables** (usually the end of a building or wing of a building) and **gablets** (usually over a single window or pair of windows) are an important feature in Tain. Many of the more modest houses are two-storey but with a coombed first floor and dormer windows rising through the eaves, sometimes with a piended slate roof (far left) but often with a bolder gablet, such as in Hartfield Street, left (sadly with a modern window). As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed details became more elaborate, for example to include finials, skewputs and chamfered window margins (below left), with some of the more commercial buildings having elaborate rooflines, perhaps taken to extremes with the examples below from Andrew Maitland's office.





**Dormer windows** also tended to start at a modest scale in the earlier buildings, but by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century larger, canted bay windows became popular (giving more space and light to the attic room), while gabled versions perhaps gave more expression to the building. Andrew Maitland's Royal Hotel has small roof dormers set behind the prominent gablets (such small dormers set into a roof pitch, often on spires or towers are referred to as lucarnes). Sadly, demand for space and lack of historical sensitivity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulted in box dormers becoming a way to create space. These are quite unsympathetic in the context of historic buildings and in many cases spoil an otherwise good original building. The example from Academy Street (below, right) shows the leap from one end of the spectrum to the other on one roof.



#### Other high level details

**Bartisans** (corner 'pepperpot' turrets) and spires. The Tolbooth has an earlier, solid looking bartisan while the courthouse next door has French style corbelled versions. Coupled with the battlemented parapet and almost Tudor window hood mouldings below, the courthouse is more a flight of architectural fancy, although no doubt based on historical precedent, as was fashionable at the time.

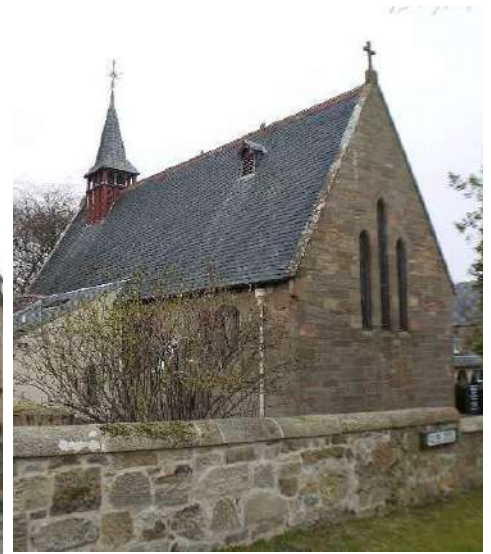
In terms of earlier details, there are few examples of crowstepped gables – this one in Tower Street (below, left) and the St Duthus Hotel opposite surviving from the earlier to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, architectural features were relatively restrained. The former parish church sports late Georgian 'Gothick' battlements to go with the Gothic windows below. 1-5 Lamington Street has raised square parapets, no doubt intended to give a more imposing presence.





The 1860, B-listed, 16-18 Tower Street takes this a step further and perhaps marks the transition to a more decorative style with the parapet and finials topping a neatly designed façade. By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century increased prosperity and greater architectural ambition appears to have led Andrew Maitland & Sons to experiment with different historical styles. The tower and spire of the Royal Hotel (1872) is relatively plain while next door the 1874-76 former Town Hall takes off with an elaborate, very free, renaissance elevation with a wonderful mix of features. By 1891/92 Andrew Maitland & Sons designed the building that most altered the skyline and existing scale of Tain, the Italianate Queen Street Church. This has an imposing frontage and very tall tower, the tallest structure in Tain to this day and now a more significant landmark than the Tolbooth. The fleche/bellecote on the Ross & Macbeth Episcopal church seems excessively modest by comparison.



### Elevational Details

Late Georgian buildings showed restraint, owing more to regular composition and proportion than detail; however, elements such as door surrounds gave the opportunity for neat classical aedicules, as below.



The example near left, in Ross Street has a neatly designed forestair, one of a few in Tain. 16-18 Tower Street, illustrated above, shows the transition to a more elaborate type of detailing with projecting cills supported by corbels, prominent cornice and string course and moulded architraves to the windows. The shopfront openings and stallrisers are also carefully detailed. This kind of detail is seen in many of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfronts (see below).





By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, as noted above, flamboyance increased, perhaps typified by Andrew Maitland & Sons 1897 French Renaissance, B-listed, 18 High Street, designed in a 'free Renaissance' style, with architectural features expressed at every opportunity. The massive doorpiece is repeated (with modest changes) at the otherwise more restrained version of the building at the top of King Street (photograph below, left). The slightly earlier 1878 former North of Scotland Bank, also B-listed and by Andrew Maitland & Sons also has a great richness of architectural features including balustrade and cornice, pilasters and moulded arched and keystone window architraves, arched over-door with crest in roundel as well as good quality ironwork to the ridge crest and railings. The modest commercial building at 20 Tower Street is notable in being the only red sandstone building in the town centre and is neatly detailed with rusticated arches to the windows.



No description of the architectural stonework of Tain would be complete without reference to the, B-listed, memorial monument to Kenneth Murray of Geanies (1825-1876). The list description states it was designed by "*Laurence Beveridge, Edinburgh 1879. Decorated Gothic monument after manner of Scott Monument, built up to street height on tall, square rubble plinth. White marble bust on dark marble plinth stands under spire borne by four cusped arches, with nook shafts and buttressed and pinnacled angles; columned circular arcade above with smaller angle pinnacles and bearing crocketed spire with stiff leaf finial.*"

*Notes: Sculptor of bust: T.S. Burnett, Edinburgh, 44' high"*



### Mock Tudor buildings

There are four examples of mock Tudor buildings in Tain including the former office of Andrew Maitland and Sons (below, left) built in 1893-94 and described in the list description as “cottage-sized building in Maitland's distinctive picturesque style, with decorative barge-boards and timber-framed, painted walls, slated roofs with deep eaves and red ridge-tiles”. It is assumed that the other buildings are from the same hand.

The Co-operative building contrasts significantly with all the other High Street buildings, despite their great variation in period and style. The Castle Brae building is a less assertive oddity while the extension to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Shandwick House, right, is a marked collision of styles. Perhaps this imported style can best be viewed as evidence that Tain looked well beyond the local when adding to its built environment.



### Roofing materials and rainwater goods



Tain Museum Image Library



Almost without exception the roofing material of choice in Tain is slate, usually a dark blue/black fairly regular slate. This was not always the case as the photograph from of Manse Street circa 1900 clearly shows one of the houses with a thatched roof. Thatch would have been a common early roofing material, but with obvious drawbacks in terms of fire and durability. Slate became more readily available and affordable with the advent of the railway.

Although there is one corrugated steel roofed shed in Ross Street and another in Cadboll Place, the other modern sheds in Ross Street are slate covered. Some other modern houses and buildings (such as the single storey commercial building on the south side of Stafford Street) are covered in concrete tiles. Even the mock Tudor buildings are slated (Rosemary tiles being common on this style elsewhere).

Ridges are often capped with stone (sometimes later replaced with plain fireclay ridge cappings) or lead (often replaced with zinc). A few buildings, usually later, have decorative clay ridge cappings and finials (eg the Carnegie Library and Royal Hotel) and the bank building in Market Street has decorative ironwork on its ridge. There are occasional wrought iron finials (as on the dormers to the Royal Hotel).

Valleys flashings and hip flashings are traditionally lead, although some



replacement with less durable zinc has taken place.

Rainwater goods are traditionally cast iron, usually simple half round beaded gutters and circular downpipes, but sometimes on later buildings more elaborate, with OG profile gutters and, as at the Royal Hotel, square downpipes worked into the architectural detailing. Unfortunately there are several examples of later PVC replacements.



**Windows and doors** are clearly major elements in defining the character of individual buildings. Late Georgian buildings usually had astragalled windows, due mainly to limitations in glass size, as seen in the example, left, at 5 Geanies Street, as well as the Academy, former parish church and manse in Manse Street. Relatively few examples survive. By about 1840 plate glass became far more common as improved methods of manufacture made it less expensive and by the mid-century most sashes either had only a single, central glazing bar, or none at all. Some of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, where small pane windows might be expected, have what appear to be later 4-pane windows. As building continued in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century many houses will have original 4-pane, sash and case windows. Many houses had openings enlarged (presumably to admit more light) often destroying the original 3-bay proportions of the elevation, and the example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century addition of oriel windows and larger ground floor windows in the house in Esther Place contrast with the original composition seen next door. Sadly, the trend to replace windows in non-historical manner became prevalent from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards and there are many crass examples of oddly proportioned windows, sometimes not even fitting original opening sizes (below, extreme right).





### Porches

A relatively small number of buildings have porches, almost all of which appear to be later additions and built in the style of the period they were added, for example the late Georgian manse in Manse Street has a nicely detailed Victorian porch while 'Murrayfield' (also in Manse Street) appears to have an Edwardian porch that is well detailed but collides with the original architectural features (below left). Some are somewhat over-sized, such as the example below from Gower Place, which detracts from the simple Georgian proportions of the house. Other examples, such as in Shandwick Street and Stafford Street, bottom, quite change the appearance of the buildings.



Perhaps one of the worst examples is the large porch/entrance built on the Shandwick Street side of the former parish church. It is of an alien Fyfestone construction and masks the original elevation.



### Shopfronts

Tain has a better-preserved complement of traditional shopfronts than most other Scottish towns and is fortunate that so many survive in ways that are recognisably close to the original. Earlier shopfronts, such as those between 1 and 9 High Street appear to have been built as commercial enterprises with dwellings above and have fairly massive stone piers between modestly sized windows. 1-3 has arched door openings and pilasters between openings, doubled at each end while 5-9, though similar, has rusticated piers at each end and rectangular doorways. No doubt the original windows had some form of astragals and doors have also been changed. Signage is modest and overall the character of the original is evident. The late 1840s shop at 11-15 is also a good example of its period, retaining opening sizes and the neat signage fitting in well with the architectural composition.



1-5 Lamington Street is in a similar vein while 16-18 Tower Street is also a good example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront.



Later designs took advantage of larger sizes of plate glass as at 18 High Street. Detailing was very much part of the architectural composition of the whole building with space allowed for signage. The frontage of each shop has thin iron glazing mullions, stone stall risers and recessed doorways and are good examples of their period.

Some buildings have undergone recent upgrading to become contemporary commercial premises. Two good examples (in Market Street and Castle Brae) show that simple detailing that retains the architectural integrity of the historic structure can work well, allowing the original building to be 'read' as such. Where the original architecture is ignored and large openings created or large-scale signage sweeps across whole elevations, masking detail beneath, results are far from satisfactory, as the three examples below demonstrate.





### Boundary Walls

High sandstone boundary walls are characteristic of the secondary streets on the north escarpment. These are traditionally detailed – coursed rubble with inband and outband dressed blocks at the corner (example, left) and half-round dressed copes, many with an overhang, all flush pointed in lime mortar. These walls give a defined sense of enclosure and lend particular character to these streets.



### 3.10 OPEN SPACES, TREES & LANDSCAPE

#### INTRODUCTION

The first impression on visiting the centre of Tain is of a compact urban centre based around the Tolbooth and High Street. However, as described in Section 3.01 the setting of Tain is defined by its topography and in particular its relationship with the escarpment and lower coastal area. The escarpment is largely tree covered. There are no public landscaped spaces within the urban fabric other than the rose garden created on the site of the Polcalk Burn and a small triangular green produced almost by accident at Cadboll Place. The substantial grounds of both the original Royal Academy and the former Parish Church have a good stock of mature trees, both deciduous and coniferous, and these contribute significantly to the natural environment of the town centre. Most sites with trees also have undergrowth.



The large gardens around the imposing houses that developed close to the town centre have allowed significant tree cover to develop, particularly to the north west of the centre and also at the site at Shore Road. The impression of landscape in the Queen Street car park is almost entirely due to trees and plant growth within the adjoining garden. Other smaller private gardens also contribute.

#### The escarpment

Those buildings near the escarpment relate to the steep slopes with what is now mature tree cover. Initially the principal site in Tain was that of the Parish and Collegiate Churches, while the early 19<sup>th</sup> century original Royal Academy occupies a similar position. This tree cover now runs for most of the length of the escarpment, from the bottom of Murray Street in the north west to the lane just to the south east of Knockbreck Street (the current boundary of the conservation area). Some of the trees are in private gardens. Those around The Grove (Lamington Street) are quite dense.



The wooded escarpment is an important element in relation to the setting and environment of Tain. However, many of the deciduous trees are covered by dense ivy and are possibly nearing the ends of their lifespans. Many seem to be of a similar age, so tree loss would be quite noticeable.

Tree cover on the north slope is part of Tain's visual connection with the sea, either framing views out, according to the season and the degree of leaf cover or forming the foreground of the view across the Dornoch Firth, for example at the bottom of Geanies Street.



Trees are also an important element of views into Tain conservation area, especially from the St Duthac's Chapel (below). This was not always the case. Clark's engraving of 1828 shows some groups of trees but some stretches of the town have none, in particular, in front of the then new Parish Church and along as far as Lamington Street, a strip now quite densely covered. Many of the trees seen today are likely to be late 19<sup>th</sup> century planting with elements of natural regeneration.



#### **Former Tain Academy and former St Duthus' Parish Church**

Designed by the same architect, both were intended as major civic buildings in imposing, spacious grounds. The trees, especially those of the former Academy, now mature, have a significant impact on the character of these inner suburbs.



#### **Knockbreck Primary School**

The impact of vegetation, especially non-native evergreen trees and shrubs, on the appearance of Knockbreck Primary School should be carefully considered. The vegetation should be managed and inappropriate or overgrown species gradually replaced with native species at a suitable distance from the building.



**St Duthus' Church, Collegiate Church & Burial Ground and the north slope**



The trees within the burial ground include several mature yews. Although yews are traditional in a graveyard setting, these are large specimens, some of them planted very near masonry structures. Their significance and future management ought to be assessed and recommendations implemented.

There is heavy tree cover and vegetation on the north slope behind the church and this affects the setting of the scheduled monument (see photo below). The balance between framing the building in a positive way and blocking it from view needs to be managed carefully. At the moment the area appears unmanaged.



**Public open spaces**



The rose garden was formerly a private garden owned by the Commercial Bank and was transferred to Tain Town Council. It was opened in 1966 by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother to commemorate the founding charter of the town in 1066. Restored in 2009 by the community it provides a secluded open space on the site of the Polcalk burn. As it is some way below the level of the High Street/Lamington Street it does not have great visual impact other than by creating an open side to the otherwise tight urban street, offering views out across the firth. The memorial to Kenneth Murray of Geanies,

1825-1876, dominates the space and provides a landmark within the streetscape.



Also on the course of the Polcalk Burn is the triangular green at Cadboll Place, formed when the route from Stafford Street was connected directly to Queen Street/King Street. It is a small scale space, simple in design, with a low hedge around an area of grass, but with its two mature trees it creates a very good quality space within the town centre. The trees should be checked for health and longevity by an arboriculturist and possible thought given to adding trees that could mature over time.



### Trees in private gardens

Trees in private gardens, along with ornamental planting generally, contribute significantly to the character and atmosphere of the conservation area. Many of the trees that overhang and enhance Tain's streets and lanes are in private gardens. Those that help soften the Queen Street car park, left (behind the wall in the distance) are important.

Elsewhere, more isolated trees, such as the beginning of Queen Street help soften a corner, while the blocks to the north west of the centre are quite leafy in character with numerous significant trees and/or tree groups. There is a good deal of evergreen growth so although many of the photographs were taken in early spring, the impression is still of quite a leafy town.



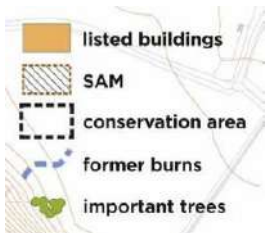
There are significant trees relating to other public buildings and spaces. The Episcopal Church in Manse Street helps close the view along the street and the trees that surround the church play an important part in this. There are mature trees behind the Queen Street Church. They have little impact on the

town but are important in giving character to the pleasant courtyard behind the church. There are some trees along the bank in the King Street park which, together with those in adjoining gardens help soften the impact of this area.



#### **SUMMARY**

The map below shows significant trees in public spaces. Individual trees or tree groups in gardens are not shown.



## 4.00 NEGATIVE FACTORS NITHEAN MÌ-SHOIRBHEACH

### 4.01 INTRODUCTION



Ross and Cromarty Sheet XLI, Surveyed: 1904, Published: 1907

The last major addition to the stock of buildings in the conservation area appears to be the Carnegie Library, opened in 1903. As noted in Chapter 2, the First World War and subsequent economic difficulties resulted in the centre of Tain 'standing still' and provide us now with a very good picture of a prosperous, late Victorian regional capital (although Dingwall is the official County Town) serving a large, prosperous hinterland. The map left, shows Tain in 1904.

From this viewpoint, changes that have resulted in a loss of historic fabric and urban grain or inserted new development of inferior quality into the fabric are to be seen, by and large, as negative factors.

Change is inevitable, and there are some good examples, such as the marketplace buildings, where contemporary solutions can enhance the existing fabric; however, these are outnumbered by examples of 'negative factors'.

### 4.02 LOSS OF URBAN GRAIN – CAR PARKS

Tain's most notable characteristic is its irregular layout, with its tight urban centre and associated variety of small streets, lanes and closes giving a rich urban texture. Loss of this tight urban grain is considered detrimental. Car parks close to the centre are probably necessary to support the many shops and other services there; however, care is needed in assimilating these into the fabric of the town.



#### King Street

The 1904 plan shows King Street as a narrow street lined with buildings on both sides. Most of the east side has been lost, leaving the commercial building at the south end in incongruous isolation and exposing the rear elevations of Ross Street, Lamington Street and part of the High Street, various gardens and the rear of the modern shed-like building in Cadboll Place. The Polcalk Burn ran through this area, creating

the various changes in level.



The changes in level and bank of trees help break up the area; however, the King Street frontage is poor and most of the buildings were not designed to be seen from the rear. Efforts are needed to landscape the car park to a higher standard and deal with the untidy area left by the removal of the King Street buildings.



#### **St Duthus Street**

The car park beside the Royal Hotel has, over time, expanded westwards to occupy a large area in the centre of the block between St Duthus Street and Quarry Lane, previously garden ground. The loss of garden and trees is regrettable but the poor quality of the surfacing and landscape reduces enormously the quality of this space. As above, greater efforts are needed to landscape the area, introduce trees and perhaps restore walling or other divisions to reduce the impact of the car park.

#### **Queen Street**

The 1878 Town Plan shows a large garden. Now a car park, at least some of the wall to Queen Street has been retained but the four trees at the south side (two at each corner) are all by way of landscaping. The situation is saved, to some extent, by the adjoining garden to the north, the trees of which give some definition to this side, and the arch and steps leading from St Duthus Street. Improved soft landscaping might help to restore some sense of the former garden.



#### 4.02 LOSS OF URBAN GRAIN – GAP SITES/POOR QUALITY INFILL



Cadboll Place – historically affected by the Polcalk burn running down through the gap now occupied by the modern shed-like building and by the realignment of Cadboll Place to bring the route from Stafford Street directly across to the junction with King Street/Queen Street, this area is shown with slightly randomly placed buildings on both the 1832 and 1878 maps. The situation could perhaps have been redeemed if the infill building had some architectural merit but the present building and, particularly, its front parking area detract from the urban grain of the street in this important area (which should, ideally, form a decent third side to the triangular open space).



The first section of Stafford Street is shown lined with buildings on both sides in both the 1832 and 1878 plans. To the north a poor quality commercial building has been set back from the building line. A token slate roof to the front pitch barely conceals the corrugated metal rear roof. On the south side a modern building with a long low horizontal, concrete tiled roof and poor quality gable is set back from the building line and has frontage parking – all elements that are alien to the urban quality in the centre of the conservation area.







Other infill has taken place in various locations within the conservation area, sometimes of a reasonable scale and character that manages to slot into the grain of its surroundings such as in Quarry Lane (left) or off Chapel Street (bottom left) where the form of the older buildings has been respected. Unfortunately however, the infill has often changed the existing pattern in a detrimental way, as shown in the two examples below, right.



#### 4.03 VEHICLES – PARKING/TRAFFIC



At times the centre can seem quite congested, particularly when careless parking reduces the High Street to a single width and buses and delivery vehicles cause hold-ups. Given that the A9 by-pass removes through traffic it must be assumed that most of the traffic has reason to be in the centre of Tain. Buses and delivery vehicles bring people and serve businesses and many locals are used to parking close to the shop they want to use. To maintain a healthy commercial centre requires people and consequently vehicles seem to be a necessary evil. However, the environment in the centre of Tain is car and carriageway dominated – ie the streets are laid out to suggest that the most important thing is to allow unimpeded movement for vehicles.

Much could be done to restore the streets to a more pedestrian friendly environment where people are the priority. Vehicles can still be permitted but with careful design their impact can be minimised. There are also ways to encourage more sensible parking and at the same time give better opportunities for short-stay parking to load/unload.



The building line in Tain is characteristically very near the carriageway, leaving very narrow or non-existent pavements. In some instances forestairs or porches completely occupy the pavement space, forcing pedestrians onto the carriageway. Examples are found on parts of



Academy Street and Morangie Road, Laundry Lane, Cadboll Place, Castle Brae, Castle Street, Chapel Street, Cramond Brae, Dunrobin Street, Hill Street, Rose Street, Quarry Lane, Ross Street, Manse Street and Shandwick Street.

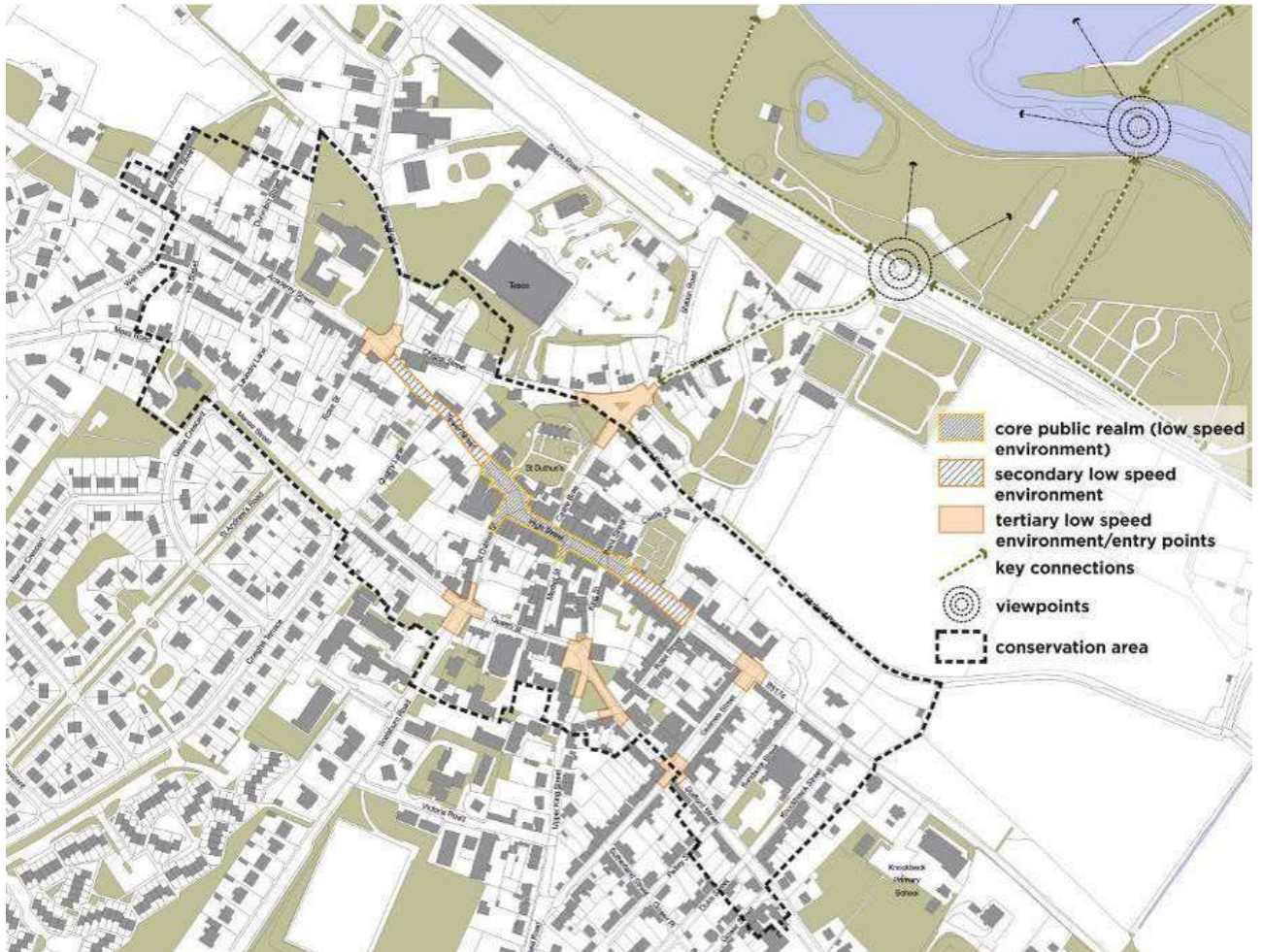


Given this, more effort should be made to facilitate safe pedestrian circulation. Many streets are simply too narrow to have parking *and* a carriageway *and* separate pavements, so the width has to be shared. The current situation is informal, but leaves pedestrians (and users of mobility scooters, wheelchairs, buggies) feeling vulnerable. A single yellow line tells vehicles not to park but does not indicate any street space where pedestrians have priority.



Access to the municipal gardens via Cunarder Lane would provide an opportunity for future public realm improvements.

The plan below is an analysis of the key points of interest in terms of traffic and movement.



#### 4.04 BUILDINGS AT RISK

Just about any unused building could be considered to be ‘at risk’ if this is taken to mean that it might suffer from a lack of investment to the point where fabric decays and may be lost; however, taking a narrower view of ‘at risk’ buildings that could deteriorate beyond the point of economic repair, the following are identified:

##### **The Grove, High Street (Unlisted)**



Tain Museum Website states *“The Grove is situated off Cunarder Lane (which links the High Street and Kirksheaf Road). This picture was taken before part of the grounds were used for the existing Post Office car park ... a former owner, .... Alex Macleod (“Dow”) was a photographer and used parts of the building as a shop and a studio”*. It appears in the 1832 town plan and the 1878 Town Plan shows the grounds set out as a garden, seen in the photograph below. It has the appearance of a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century substantial house, on a scale similar to the Manse in Manse Street. It is badly fire damaged and derelict.

The Buildings at Risk Register states: *“28 March 2019: Full Planning Permission and Conservation Area Consent for partial demolition and conversion of the building into flats with new build dwellings within the surrounding grounds (18/03191/FUL & 18/03192/CON) are being sought. Supporting documents with the applications note the property was last in*

use as a shop with flatted accommodation above, and that the property was fire damaged in 2014". Both planning applications were approved on 10 December 2020.



1878 Town Plan



Tain Museum Image Library

The next buildings are on the Buildings at Risk Register which has been in operation in Scotland since 1990 in response to a concern at the growing number of listed buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas that were vacant and had fallen into a state of disrepair.

The Register provides information on properties of architectural or historic merit throughout the country that are considered to be at risk.



**Building to rear of 5 Market Street (Unlisted)**

The report notes: *"October 2013: External inspection finds the small building in generally fair condition but with heavy plant growths at roof level and very damp walls in places. Some damaged slates are evident with shrub growth at wallhead. Stone damage to North chimney, South stack obscured by ivy growth. Timber elements are in need of maintenance. The building may be in use as storage space"*.

*29 November 2018: External inspection finds deterioration since the previous visit - harling is cracking and has been lost to one section of masonry and ivy is now engulfing a gable. Condition moved to Poor.*



**Kingsway House, 10-14, High Street (Unlisted)**

The report notes: *"4 October 2013: External inspection finds the significant High Street building in generally fair condition but in need of maintenance, particularly to timber work and windows. There appear to be support struts to the 2nd floor windows suggesting there may be structural issues. The ground floor is in use as a mini-market, the first floor office space is currently being marketed for lease. It is unclear whether the two upper floors are in use"*.

*29 November 2018: External inspection finds the building remains in much the same condition as previous. A marketing board is affixed advertising the upper floors for sale through MJHJ Property.*



#### **Tower Gardens, 9, Tower Street (C listed)**

The report notes: *“4 October 2013: External inspection finds the building in overall fair condition but disused. The roof has been recently replaced. Pointing is poor in large areas and rising damp is evident. Railings have been broken in several places and building materials are lying within the garden area. Listed Building Consent for roof repairs with replacement slates and temporary removal of a section of boundary railings for the placement of skip (in retrospect) was conditionally granted Apr 2011 ref:11/00420/LBC. Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for change of use from offices to residential use with alterations were conditionally granted May/ Apr 2011 ref: 11/00777/FUL & 11/00782/LBC. Papers within the 2011 applications note the property had been marketed for sale for some time since its use as a solicitor’s office had ceased”.*

*29 November 2018: External inspection finds the property remains in much the same condition as seen previously and remains disused.*



#### **Former Town Hall (B listed)**

The report notes: *“30 November 2018: External inspection finds the building disused and boarded up. Although previously understood to have been restored, it would appear the restoration scheme stalled sometime previously.*

*Overall the property is now in poor condition - damaged clay ridge tiles, slipped slates and vegetation growths to the roof, rainwater goods in need of maintenance, and areas of damp and erosion to the masonry walls. Moved back from Saved to At Risk.*

*April 2021: The owners, Tain Heritage Trust, in conjunction with the Tain & Easter Ross Civic Trust and the Tain & District Development Trust, are currently renovating the building with a view to re-opening it as a cultural centre.”*



#### **4-6 King Street (Unlisted)**

The report notes: *29 November 2018: External inspection finds the property, latterly a retail unit, disused. General deterioration to the building fabric is evident - some slipped roof slates, cracked/ bossed render in places suggesting dampness to walls, rainwater goods are defective and missing in sections. One opening has been boarded up and the roof has recently sustained damage.*

#### 4.05 UNDER-USE OF BUILDINGS/VACANCY



Conservation of historic fabric requires investment and the best way to achieve that is to ensure that buildings have viable, sustainable long term uses. Sadly, this can be difficult to achieve. Traditional shops in town centres throughout Scotland are suffering from competition from out of town stores and increased internet shopping. More successful towns create niche markets and/or serve a wider catchment area than purely local. Tain is fortunate in that it appears to have several businesses that are keeping up a high quality of service/merchandise; however, more peripheral sites tend to suffer first and there are several vacant shops (examples, left).



Equally of concern are those buildings of architectural and/or historic significance that fall out of use. Chief of these is the former Royal Academy/Duthac House, owned by the Council and is largely unoccupied. The former Andrew Maitland & Sons office in Tower Street is not in use, although recently restored and the former Clydesdale Bank, Market Street. Knockbreck Primary School is currently in use, but it is due to be vacated in due course. The future of all these listed buildings should be addressed appropriately.



#### 4.06 LOSS OF ORIGINAL FABRIC/UNSYMPATHETIC CHANGES



##### Windows, Doors

In common with most historic towns in Scotland widespread window and door replacements have been undertaken. Occasionally replacement windows follow something like the pattern of the original glazing, left, but the detailing is significantly different from traditional sash & case windows, which when well maintained fulfil their role adequately. There are many instances of surviving sash & case windows in good condition, as illustrated below.



However, these examples, sadly, appear to be in a minority and many buildings have suffered from ill-proportioned replacements quite out of character with the age and style of the architecture. Some examples are shown left and below.



The impact on the building can result in a significant change of character when also coupled with enlargement of original openings.



### Box dormers, porches and other accretions

Box dormers are relatively rare but have a significant adverse effect where present – particularly when almost engulfing a small early cottage, left, or seen in contrast to the original, bottom left. Some Victorian and Edwardian porches add character to some of the buildings but over-sized modern porches can detract. Below right, where the original appearance was probably similar to the building on the left, enlarged dormers and added bay windows with a linking open porch roof, built onto the pavement have made dramatic changes to the character.



One building shows how changing tastes have brought dramatic changes of appearance over time. The St Duthus Hotel, one of the few crow-stepped buildings in Tain, is possibly one of the earliest remaining. The current 'picked and pointed' appearance shows an earlier pattern of smaller irregular window openings, now blocked up. The building might originally have been harled. The 1930s photographs shows a more regular 3-bay building, similar to many built in Tain in the earlier to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but with two canted Victorian dormers sporting iron finials. These suggest a later date while the off centre dormer may be later still. The smooth render appears to be lined out and may well be a cement based 20<sup>th</sup> century coating. The modern extensions obscure what has been a fine building and would perhaps have been better added to the side where there is a large car park.



Tain Museum Image Library – photograph circa 1930s

#### 4.07 MAINTENACE/STONWORK/POINTING





Tain is fortunate in that it had a source of good quality stone at the Hill of Tain quarry which furnished the ashlar blocks for the Tolbooth begun in 1706. It appears to have operated up until 1915. Correctly bedded and built in lime mortar that matches the stone in porosity many of the buildings have lasted well. Unfortunately damage can occur from a number of causes, for example, persistent dampness (such as from leaking rainwater goods or rising damp), incorrect repointing with hard cement based mortar and from exposure to road salt, the latter being a particular problem as so many houses are built right onto the street. The example, left, is typical of the type of erosion that occurs from road salt.

Hard cement mortar is less porous than the sandstone and when the wall is soaked by rain the moisture evaporates out through the stone, bringing salts and causing decay. Lime mortar pointing performs much as the stone and drying out is more even. In many instances the stone erodes back, leaving the cement mortar standing proud (and also able to trap more water), as in the example, below left.



'Ribbon pointing' where a cement-based mortar joint is formed to stand proud of the stone is usually a modern introduction and is potentially harmful for the stone. There are good recent examples in Tain of buildings repointed using lime-based mortars for rubble walling in a traditional manner. Ashlar requires fine joints (approx. 3mm). If repointing is needed this should be done in finer lime-based mortar (the original courthouse pointing is a good original example).



### **External Insulation**

External insulation is poorly detailed and results in a poor, sub-standard and non-traditional finish. It should not be considered for use in conservation areas. External insulation can obscure architectural detailing, original finishes and fabric, alter the profile of window and door openings and affect how rainwater goods and other fittings and fixtures are fixed to the building. External insulation does not only adversely affect the character and appearance of individual buildings, but it can have a detrimental impact on neighbouring buildings and on the wider streetscape. Planning permission is required to install external insulation on any building within a conservation area and as it is unlikely to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, such permission is unlikely to be granted. Internal insulation however is encouraged and should always be considered in the first instance.



### **Rainwater Goods**

Traditional cast iron rainwater goods are part of the historic character. A good proportion remain in Tain and the civic/public buildings show a range from simple half-round gutters and circular downpipes to more elaborate details such as the rectangular sections on the Royal Hotel and the hoppers on the Tolbooth. The prevalence of buildings with dormers rising through the eaves line creates a multiplicity of gutters on buildings, traditionally dealt with in a simple way with vertical round cast iron downpipes to each section. PVC rainwater goods are less durable and have an unfortunate appearance when branched across elevations.



### **Satellite Dishes**

A proliferation of satellite dishes is a common problem in many Scottish Towns; however, Tain seems to suffer less than most. Where they do occur, the effect is detrimental.

## 5.00 ARCHAEOLOGY

### ÀRC-EÒLAS

The Burgh Survey, published in 2009, is part of a series to provide a “guide to the archaeological resource in towns” and is “intended to furnish local authorities, developers and residents with reliable information to help manage the archaeology and historic environment of Scotland’s urban centres”.

At the time when the research was carried out the authors concluded that “the archaeological potential of the burgh constitutes a great unknown, given the absence of any watching brief or excavation work yet undertaken in Tain”.



#### Remembering Hidden Tain



A Report prepared for Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust, by Cait McCullagh, with members of the local community

Following the publication of the Burgh Survey, Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) carried out a project entitled “Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) and the Remembering Hidden Tain Project”. The introduction states:

*“A comprehensive survey of Historic Tain; its archaeology and its development, has recently been undertaken, as part of Historic Scotland’s Scottish Burgh Survey Series 1. First published in 2009, this scholarly synthesis has provided members of the local community to consider further research and investigation; paying particular attention to the repository of knowledge and information that rests within local resources and in the research, recollections and memories of people living in and around the burgh, today.*

*As part of this momentum towards a local community venture to investigate Hidden Tain, and at the behest of Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust, supported by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd., ARCH developed and delivered a pilot oral collection and recording project, which took place in Tain Parish Church Hall at various sessions from October through to December 2011.*

*The pilot was undertaken in order to achieve two main aims. It was established to determine the local community members’ levels of interest and engagement with the proposed project to investigate ‘Hidden Tain’, the feasibility of which is being scoped by Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust, under the coordination of John Wood, Director of Highland Archaeology Services Limited. The pilot was also designed to research and record locally held knowledge, information and recollections associated with three specific areas of potential future investigation:*

- *Traces of Tain’s past as a main centre of pilgrimage*
- *Traces of any early settlements on the Tain Links, and environs*
- *A study of changes to the High Street”.*

The study was very well supported locally and productive, the conclusion states:

## 7.0 Conclusion

*As aforementioned, the Remembering Hidden Tain Sessions were designed to produce a record of the archaeological, cultural and built heritage remains of at least three specific subject areas regarding Tain's past – Tain as a centre of pilgrimage; the possible indices for early settlement in the Links area and environs and changes to the High Street - making these recollections and memories accessible to the community.*

*During five collection and recording sessions that took place from October through to December 2011, 50 records of sites, buildings, features and findspots cited in the Highland Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) were updated with new information. 40 new records were generated for future entry into the HER.*

*The information collected can be categorised as falling into seven broad-ranging themes that both embrace the projected aims and augment these with additional context. These are: Tain's Cellars; Tain's Tunnels and Drains; Ecclesiastical Tain; Built Tain; Garden Tain; Maritime Tain and Buried Tain.*

*The pilot project has been of benefit in building up the ancient and historic environment record and local awareness of the archaeological, cultural and built heritage of the area. It has also demonstrated the tremendous potential for further community involvement in the exploration of Hidden Tain..."*

There is a comprehensive list of sites and features which should be referred to. Clearly there is a need for further archaeological investigation where it is possible to excavate or open up and also a need to establish archaeological watching briefs for the buildings noted. Otherwise, all known archaeological sites, historic buildings and other sites of historic interest are included in the Highland Council's Historic Environment Record. The full database records and available supporting documents are freely available online at: <https://her.highland.gov.uk>.

## 6.00 SPECIFIC ISSUES

### CEISTEAN SÒNRAICHTE - CRÌOCHAN

#### 1. The south-west extension



The area from Hartfield Street to Gower Street is shown significantly developed in the 1832 plan and more or less developed to its current form on the 1878 Town Plan. These streets follow the same grid as the area that is within the conservation area and the houses are of the same types, although more towards the smaller scale.

Hartfield Street is, in many ways a continuation of Geanies Street although narrower and comprising mainly the smaller scale dwellings. The west side is shown fully developed on the 1832 plan. There are some good examples of their period, some a full two storeys and several having the upper storey with gablets rising through the eaves. There are a couple of single storey cottages. The east side of the street is less consistent with the two gables of Sutherland Street and back gardens to these (one a car park) breaking up the building line.



Petley Street, Duke Street, Sutherland Street and Gower Place are shown in some detail in the 1878 plan and, to a more limited extent in 1832 (although Gower Place and the eastern section of Sutherland Street are missing). The plans indicate at least the intention of continuing the new south eastern suburb.

The buildings in these streets confirm to the types common in the area, although at the smaller end of the scale. The west side of the street is developed while the east side has only a couple of houses. Nos. 1 and 3 are single storey and attic cottages, both altered with changed openings, modern windows and later dormers (no. 1). No. 3 is harled and has a large rear extension.



Further south the houses are two-storey with gabled dormers. The first a pair of semi-detached houses, now harled. No. 7 is more original, although with modern windows and door and the stonework 'picked and pointed' with cement based, recessed mortar. The last pair, in the south section of Petley Street are similar, although the first is harled and both have modern windows and doors and both have unattractive side extensions. The two houses on the east side are a two-storey house with gabled dormers and a single storey cottage. These two are on the corners with Sutherland Street.



Duke Street has a couple of 19<sup>th</sup> century houses with a single storey cottage opposite, again of familiar types. All three are shown on the 1878 plan.

Sutherland Street has two mid-19<sup>th</sup> century houses near the west end, opposite which there is a new or reconstructed block of flats on the site of two buildings shown on the 1878 plan. There is a modern cottage beside the two older houses and at the east end there is a single storey cottage in what is actually Gower Place, but for most of its length it is flanked by gables, a garage and gardens making it lack the integrity of the other streets in the south eastern suburb.



Gower Place, in addition to the interesting group at the corner with Knockbreck Road (within the conservation area) has a pair of good quality substantial houses, opposite each other nearer the south end of the street and a third similar house in the middle of the east side. No.3, left, is B-listed while the other two are C listed. There is also a single storey cottage.

A single storey 19<sup>th</sup> century building sits on the corner of Sutherland Street but has been much altered and extended. It appears to be listed C but the description does not match the current configuration.



Upper King Street provided a significant route into the centre and is shown on the earlier maps, although it is not shown developed on either the 1832 or 1878 maps. A row of good quality, mainly villas was built on the west side probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and these are consistent in scale, siting and character. The east side is less consistent, partly as it bounded for a good part of the south end by the back gardens of Hartfield Street and partly because of a couple of awkwardly sited modern houses. Despite this, the character of the street is consistent with that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century south-east of the town and merits inclusion in the conservation area.



The other streets that cross are quite mixed, generally more developed on their east sides and with a number of gaps or gardens; however, there is a good stock of early – mid 19th century houses, some listed. The layout of this area clearly relates to the planned expansion of Tain envisaged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and shown clearly on the 1832 Great Reform Act plan. There are some unfortunate modern intrusions and several houses, perhaps because they were not listed and not within a conservation area, have suffered from unsympathetic replacement of doors and windows and other alterations. Despite this, there is sufficient original fabric and layout to merit inclusion in the conservation area.

## 2. The south-east extension

The two houses just beyond the boundary, Knockbreck Primary School and the Golf View Hotel are described in section 3.07. These buildings represent the quality of the construction during the mid – late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although not of the same character as the planned expansion, they are largely a result of the extension of Ankerville Street.



The building group is similar in character to the west end of Manse Street, and the position on top of the escarpment continues the pattern established by the siting of early Tain. The fine detailing of the Primary School brings elements of townscape (eg. the high bellcote) almost into the countryside. Extending the boundary to include this group and the former playing fields beyond would enhance the conservation area.

## 3. The north-west extension

The houses on the north-west side of Murray Street are in the conservation area. The boundary should be extended to take in the gardens behind these houses, to protect the setting. The land beyond to the north-west is vacant and should not be included.

Murray Street peters out at the end and the existing conservation area boundary cuts across at this point. This is unsatisfactory, because beyond the cottages the street continues as a footpath that curves round on the contour. The footpath is unpaved but widens and eventually joins Shore Road. The Murray Street houses and the footpath are clearly shown on both the 1832 and the 1874 maps.



Where the route follows the contour along the line of the Matach Gully the edge is well defined by a traditional sandstone rubble wall with half round stone copes. The boundary of the conservation area should be adjusted to include this path/road and the wall.

The survival of the historic route is a reminder of the significance of access to the sea in Tain. Shore Road is partly a path on the 1832 map but by 1874 it includes a bridge over the railway and gives clear access as far as the High Water Mark. Activity at or beyond that line included use of St Mary's Well (1832 map), the mussel scalps (shown on Pont's map) and saltings (1904 map) at the mouth of the river Tain. Although there are several references to trade from Tain, the limitations of the shoreline restricted commercial activity and accounts also refer to the merchants and landowners shipping goods and agricultural produce from further afield (Cromarty and Invergordon). Shore Road has developed as Tain's industrial and business quarter and now has many modern sheds and workshops. The industrial area does not have any townscape merit other than the presence of its two listed buildings - the Slaughter House and Ross's Store, both category B by A Maitland & Sons. As these are protected by their listed status there is no justification in considering an extension of the conservation area into the industrial area.



The proposed extension would result in the inclusion of an attractive late 19<sup>th</sup> century stone cottage (left) and the two-storey stone blocks at the north end of Dunrobin Street. These are a well-built response to the context. (Refer to section 3.05.)

#### 4. The north-east extension

Like the north-west extension this would also strengthen the town's historic connection with the routes down to the sea and towards St Duthuc's Chapel. An extension is proposed that would include the east part of Chapel Street, Station Road, the railway station and Chapel Road (west side). It would take in the houses (with their gardens) along the north of Chapel Street (historically called Shandwick Place).

The first two are late 19<sup>th</sup> century two-storey houses of 3 bays, coursed squared rubble with dressed margins, though much altered. The next, a bungalow with dormers, possibly 1920/30s, then a two-storey block of similar date, with characteristic gables and swept roof detail (though the



symmetry has been disrupted by a recent extension on the east side). These houses retain their original 'estate' railings.



The extension would include the small open space at the junction of Chapel Street, Castle Brae and Station Road. It is similar in size to Cadboll Place, though it lacks the quality of the latter's buildings. The road then funnels through a narrow point between Catherine House and Outram House which has a rare example of an art deco shop tacked on.



The area between Castle Brae and Chapel Street leading to the Station and out via Chapel Road towards the original St Duthuc's Chapel is more problematic. There is clearly a strong historic connection between the upper town and the original chapel and perhaps in the days of smaller ships the mouth of the River Tain provided seaborne access for the town; however, the 1832 plan shows only a few buildings. The railway brought holidaymakers and the links and golf course provided key attractions. The B-listed station, 1864, was designed by Joseph Mitchell. The 1904 map shows several 'Saltings' on the east side of the river.

Unfortunately the east side of the proposed extension is a less coherent piece of townscape. While there is a traditional stone-built house at the bottom of Castle Brae the modern house on the corner opposite seems to occupy an area of poorly defined ground. Chapel Street, despite leading to a couple of good quality older cottages at the junction with Crammond Brae and Kirksheaf Road, has the modern glassworks on one side and two modern bungalows set back on the other (in the grounds of what is regarded as the site of the Tain Castle). The area incorporates a small area of semi-natural woodland bounded on its east side by a substantial stone wall (which once formed the boundary of the former Kirksheaf Estate) within which are set two bee boles in its outer side.





Heading in the other direction, down Chapel Road there is quite a lot of interest on the left (west) side of the road with a series of 19<sup>th</sup> century houses and terraced cottages, both directly on Chapel Road and on an unpaved lane that links it to the station. What was probably once a row of railway workers' cottages has been much altered with an oversized extension on the south side. The triangle of land between Station Road, Chapel Road and the unpaved lane is heavily wooded and this small enclave has an interesting character of its own. It includes St Duthus Villa. Its distinctive beech hedge defines the edge on approach from the town centre. However, the right hand (east) side of Chapel Road is a mixture of modern houses and bungalows together with some sheds and meeting halls, none of which relates well to the road.



On its own merits the area would be difficult to support as part of Tain conservation area. Nonetheless, it does provide an important connection between the town and the shore and in particular the original St Duthuc's Chapel. It is an area that has some reasonable quality buildings in a wooded setting and with care it could become a more attractive link. It is proposed for inclusion on the basis that its potential in the wider context merits funding and regeneration when the opportunity arises.

**Appendix 1** Historic Maps

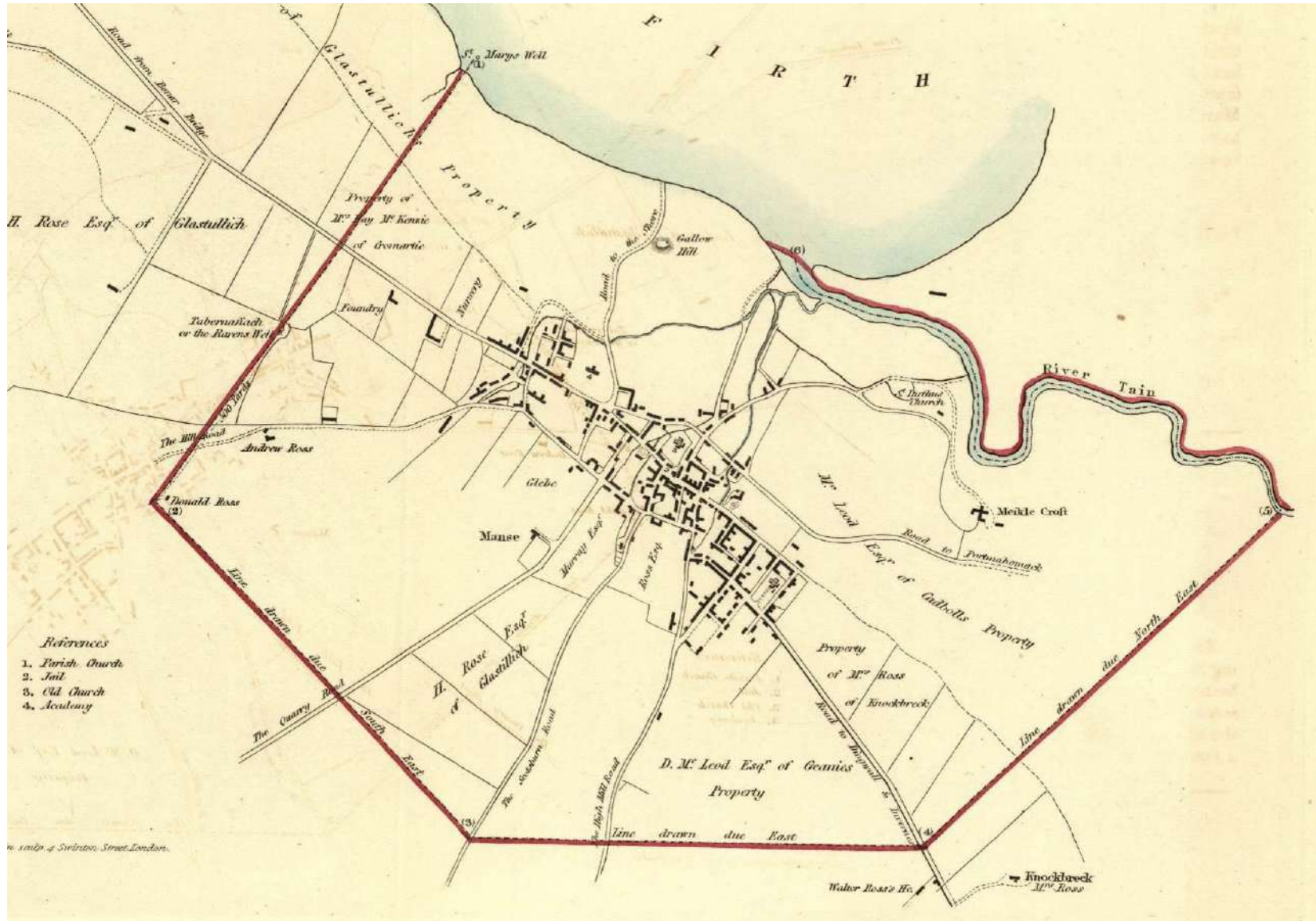
**Eàrr-ràdh 1** Mapaichean Eachdraidheil



Pont's Map (1583-1614)



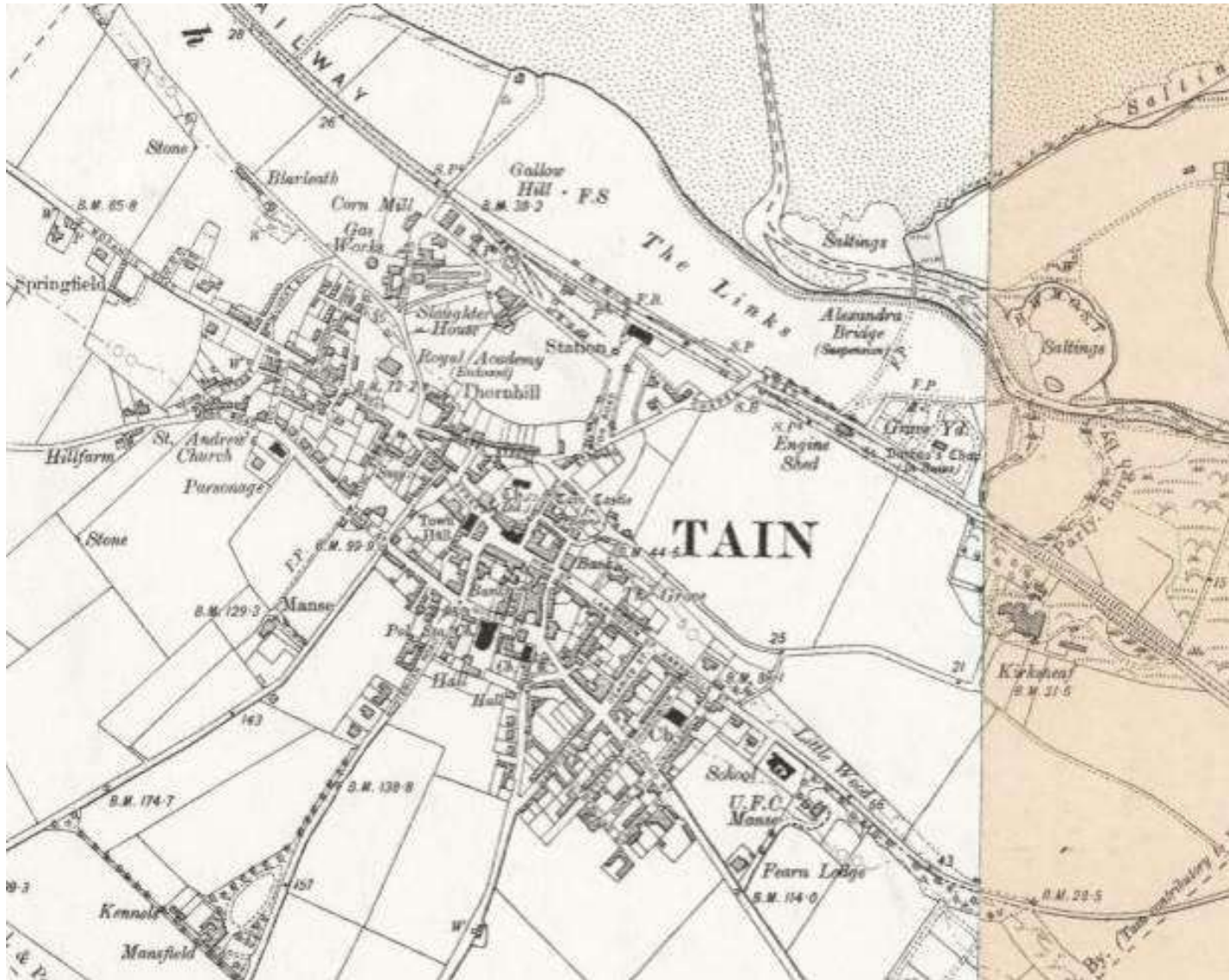
Roy's Map (1747-52)



Map by the Boundary Commission for the Great Reform Act 1832



OS 25" map, surveyed 1871



OS 25" map surveyed 1904





OS 1" map, 1911

**Appendix 2** Analysis Maps

**Eàrr-ràdh 2** Mapaichean Mion-sgrùdaidh



Tain in wider context



General Plan of Tain



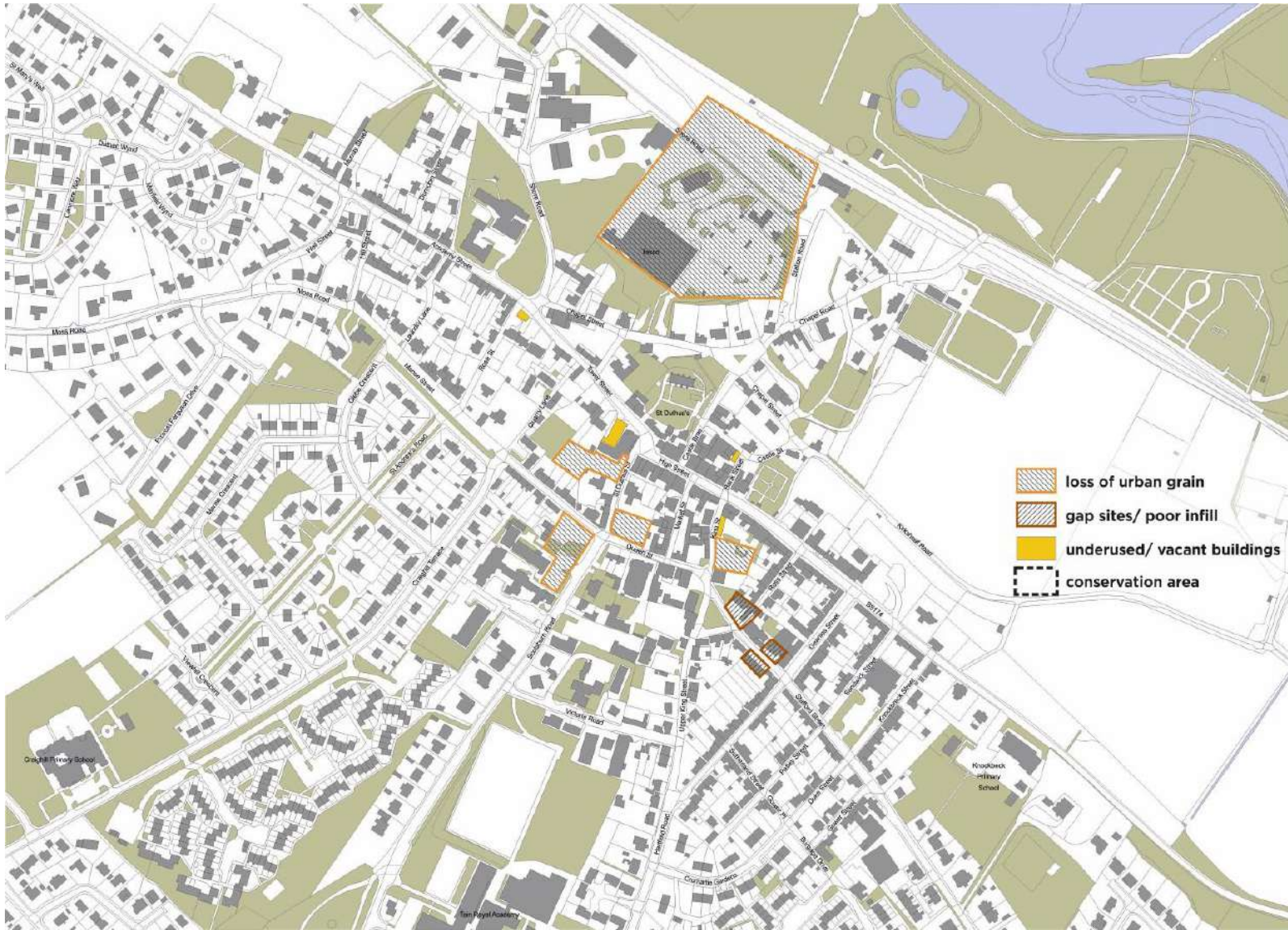
Character Areas in the Conservation Area



General Plan with trees and burns



Development Periods

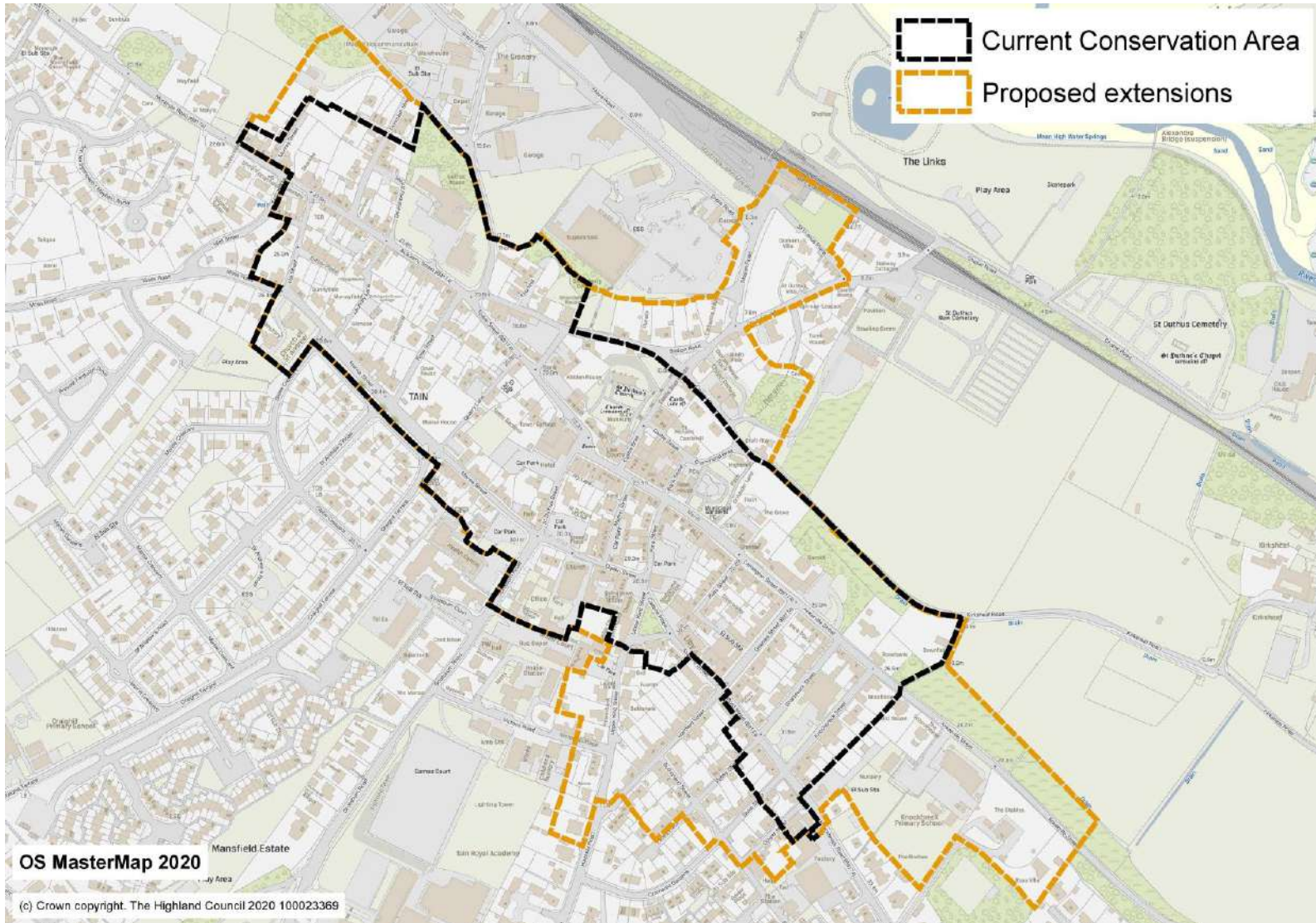


Spatial Analysis





Traffic and movement



Proposed Boundary Changes



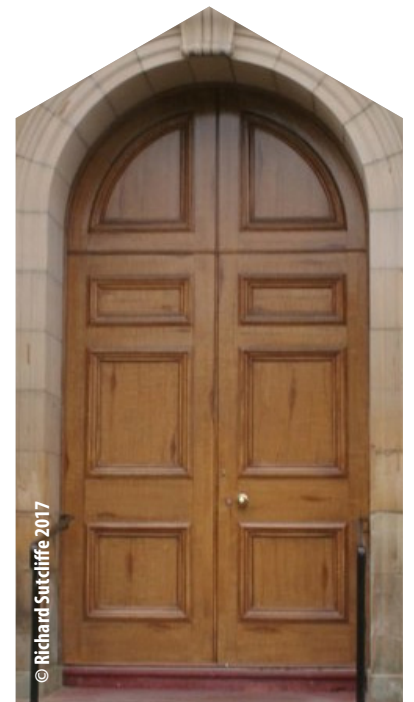
# Tain Conservation Area Management Plan

## Plana Riaghlaidh Sgìre Glèidhteachais Baile Dhubhthaich

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April 2021

For the Highland Council Circulation to Committee



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## 1.00 INTRODUCTION RO-RÀDH

### 1.01 Significance of Tain

Tain is significant because of:

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



## **1.02 Conservation Areas**

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

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

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

## **1.03 Purpose of Tain Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP)**

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

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

## **1.04 Monitoring and Review**

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

## 2.00 POLICY AND CONSENTS POILEASaidh, AONTaidHEAN & STIùIRIDHEAN

### 2.01 National Legislation and Policies

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

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

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



### 2.02 Local Policy and Planning Measures

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



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

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

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

### **2.03 Consents**

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

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

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

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

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

### **2.04 Statutory Powers**

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

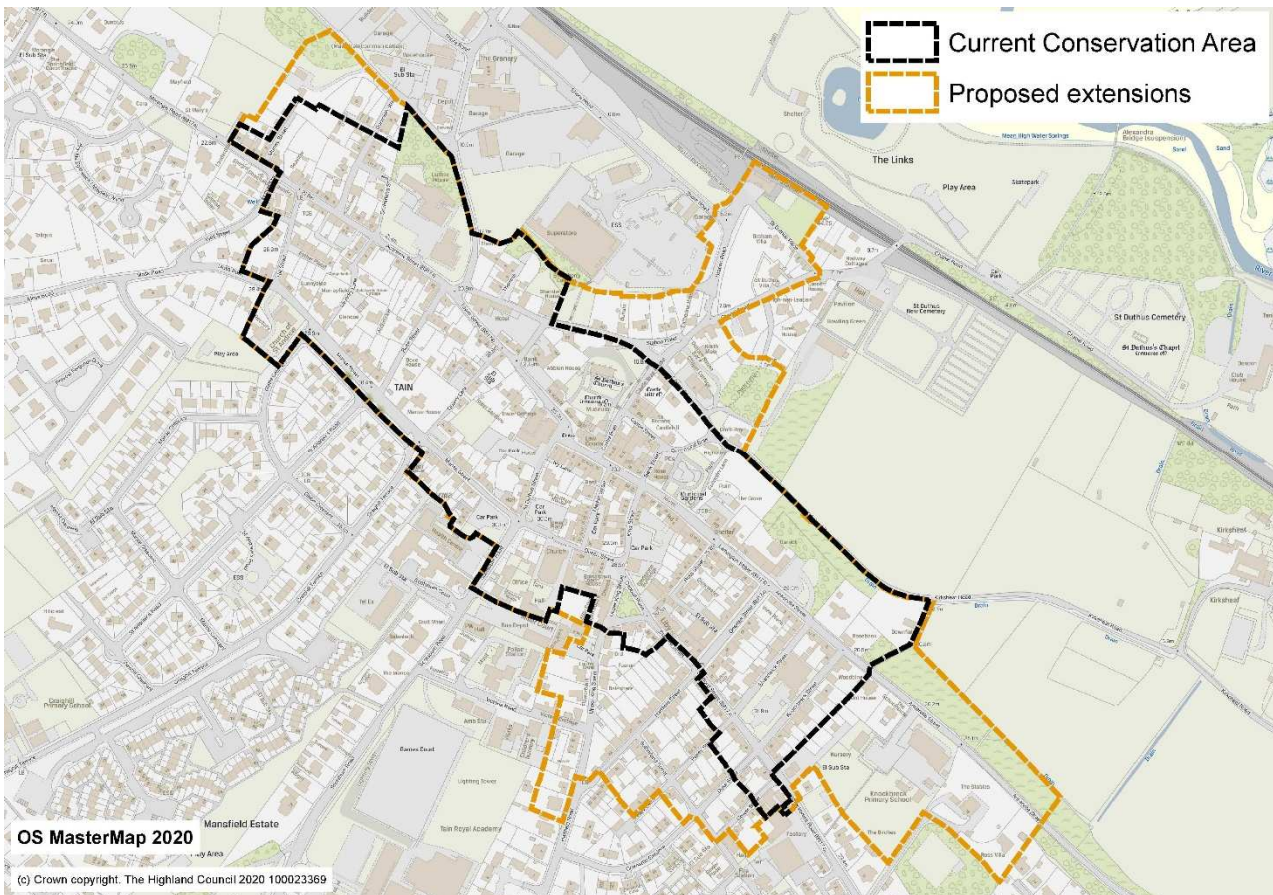
### 3.00 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS MOLAIDHEAN SÒNRAICHTHE

#### 1. Boundaries

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

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

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



#### 2. St Duthus' Church

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

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

**3. Tain Sherriff Court including Tolbooth**

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

**4. Redundant buildings**

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

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



**5. Public Spaces**

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

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

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

## 6. Shops

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

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

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

## 7. Transport

Invest in Tain's transport facilities:

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



**8. Trees**

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

**9. Heritage awareness**

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

**10. Views**

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



**11. Archaeology**

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

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

**12. Repairs**

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

**Appendix 1** Boundary Map

