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# HAY-ON-WYE

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL  
Review September 2016

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK

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**Review September 2016**

# 1. Introduction

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to determine from time to time which parts of their area are „areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance“ and to designate these areas as conservation areas. Hay-on-Wye is one of four designated conservation areas in the National Park.

Planning authorities have a duty to protect these areas from development which would harm their special historic or architectural character and this is reflected in the policies contained in the National Park’s Local Development Plan. There is also a duty to review Conservation Areas to establish whether the boundaries need amendment and to identify potential measures for enhancing and protecting the Conservation Area.

The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define the qualities of the area that make it worthy of conservation area status. A clear, comprehensive appraisal of its character provides a sound basis for development control decisions and for developing initiatives to improve the area. It will also enable the development of a robust policy framework for the future management of the area, on which planning applications and other proposals for change can be considered.

The current adopted appraisal report followed a format originally contained within advice produced by Historic England on appraisals and management of conservation areas. It also takes account of work developed by Cadw on local distinctiveness characterisation.

## The Conservation Area boundary

One of the key elements of a Conservation Area Appraisal is to review the boundary to ensure that the Conservation Area continues to demonstrate clear architectural and historic interest. The review also takes the opportunity to consider whether the Conservation Area boundary should be extended.

The core of the conservation area lies within the footprint of the 13<sup>th</sup> century town walls which, together with the castle, formed the footprint of Hay which is still very much in evidence today. The area around St Mary’s Church and the mound of the first motte and bailey castle, both of which pre-date the later castle and walled town, form the focus for the extent of the conservation area outside the original walled settlement, together with the streets and spaces that link the two areas. The eastern, northern and western boundaries are largely defined by the watercourses of the Wye River and Dulas Brook, which have acted as constraints and strong edges to the expansion or sprawl of development of the town and this has contributed significantly to the retention of the setting and physical fabric of the conservation area and its buildings.

There is less clarity and consistency in the definition of the southern boundary of the conservation area to the south of Oxford Road, where there has been more significant development since the boundary was identified, although parts of this area are already excluded from the conservation area.

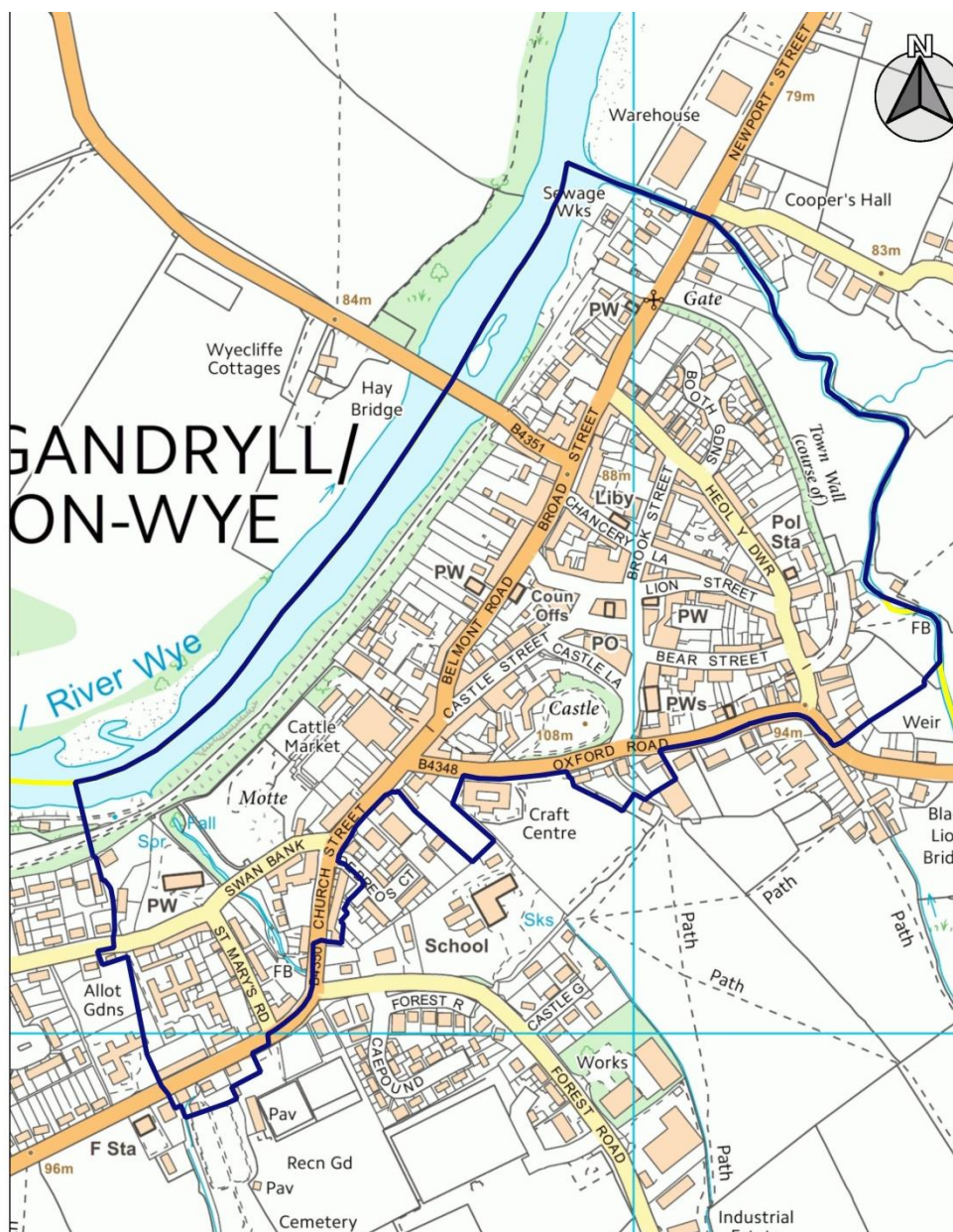
In the last conservation area review it was recognized that significant changes had taken place in Oxford Road since the boundary was designated. There is a somewhat fragmented and piecemeal character to the southern side of the street and the principal area of car parking for the town is now accommodated directly to the south of Hay Castle, alongside a craft centre and tourist facility. The boundary was revised to exclude the craft centre and car park, as well as the bungalow opposite the bank building.



An area adjacent to the south-western boundary of the conservation area was included in the last review. It was included due to the quality of buildings with 4 being listed and 7 included on the local list. Collectively, the area forms an important entry into the town and marks the boundary of the 19<sup>th</sup> century town from the areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion.

Following an assessment of the areas within the conservation area boundary and in the surrounding areas; it is considered that there is no need for further adjustments to the boundary at the current time.

### HAY ON WYE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



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## **Consultation**

This document is part of a consultation on the review of the Hay on Wye Conservation Area and the policies and proposals for enhancing and protecting it. This conservation area review has been the subject of consultation with interest groups, specialist organisations and local residents. The consultation was locally advertised advising of the conservation area review and the opportunity to comment. The revised document was also considered by the National Park Authority to obtain approval for formal adoption.



*Broad Street 1905, looking south towards the Clock Tower*

## 2. The Planning Policy Context

There are several relevant planning documents that relate to Hay-on-Wye and its built environment:

**Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update:** Hay-on-Wye is identified as a Key Settlement within a geographical cluster, including Brecon, Crickhowell and Talgarth; there is an emphasis on collaboration between communities to support their own needs and on flexibility, entrepreneurship and community involvement in the determination of future growth;

**Planning Policy Wales, Chapter 6: Conserving the Historic Environment** which sets out the overarching policy on: listed buildings; conservation areas; historic parks and gardens; historic landscapes; Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and archaeological remains.

**Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan** - Since the last appraisal the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority adopted the Local Development Plan in December 2013. The plan sets out policies and proposals to guide development in the National Park from 2007 to 2022. The policies that related to conservation areas and local list buildings are Policy 19 and Policy 18.

- **Policy 19 Development affecting Conservation Areas**  
New development and alterations to existing buildings within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and where the design, all building materials, proportions and detailing are appropriate to the Conservation Area. The demolition or substantial demolition of any unlisted building or structure within a Conservation Area that is subject to Conservation Area consent will only be permitted where there is the strongest justification. Where such a building is to be replaced, a contract of redevelopment will be required to be finalised and entered into prior to the granting of conservation area consent.
- **Policy 18**  
**Protection of Buildings of Local Importance:** Development affecting buildings which make an important contribution to the character and interest of the local area as set out on the local list will be permitted where the distinctive appearance, architectural integrity or their settings would not be significantly adversely affected.
- The Local Development Plan identifies Brecon as the Primary Key Settlement and Hay on Wye as one of the Key settlement for the Region (together with Crickhowell; Sennybridge and Defynnog; and Talgarth). The Plan sets out a 15 year vision for the town which includes recognition of the town's historic architecture and ensuring that new development complements the high quality of the historic built heritage. The Plan identifies issues and objectives to be addressed in order to implement the overall vision. Of particular relevance to the conservation area is the objective to respect 'Hay on Wye's unique identity'. However one of the issues identified is that the town is becoming constrained within its current boundaries and the challenge is to ensure that future development maintains the strength of the town whilst respecting the imaginative and historically significant townscape, and its setting within the landscape. Policy K LP Key Settlement Appropriate Development sets out how development proposals will be expected to contribute to the Vision for the towns. The policy includes a requirement that 'Proposals for development within Key Settlements will be required to contribute positively to their setting and enhance the quality of the landscape without adverse impact on the wildlife, natural beauty, cultural heritage, environmental assets or biodiversity of the area'.
- The Local Development Plan includes a **Proposals Map** showing detailed proposals for Hay on Wye. The map indicates Areas of Archaeological Evaluation, and Scheduled Ancient Monument sites such as Hay Castle.

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

### 3. Location and Context

Hay-on-Wye lies at the foot of the Black Mountains on the Welsh side of the Wales / England border, at a point where three old counties meet – Herefordshire to the east, Brecknockshire to the west and Radnorshire to the north, the latter two now being part of the county of Powys. Although, as its name suggests, it is adjacent to the River Wye, it is the Dulas Brook, directly to the eastern side of the town that forms the border between Powys, in Wales, and Herefordshire, in England.

It lies at the extreme northern-easterly tip of the Brecon Beacons National Park, beneath the northern escarpment of the Black Mountains that is approximately five km from the town.

The settlement is at the junction of four roads:

- From the south west, the B4350 connects to Brecon, via Bronllys;
- From the north the B4350 links to Clifford and then east, via the A438 to Hereford;
- From the west the B4351 links, via Bridge Street and Hay bridge, to Clyro, linking to the A438; and
- To the east there are connections to Cusop and via the B4348 to Hardwicke, and on to Hereford.

The current population of Hay is approximately 1500, considerably less than the 1997 recorded in the census of 1861, although these numbers were accommodated in only 302 dwellings in comparison to the 2001 figure of 730 households.

The town has become synonymous with second hand books with 30 bookshops and the annual festival of literature and the arts, of which the 2012 event was the 25<sup>th</sup> to be held. The Hay Festival 'brand' now extends to events in some 15 other international locations in five continents to "*cross cultural and genre boundaries and foster the exchange of understanding, mutual respect and ideas.*"

The tourist attractions of books and literature are augmented by the natural beauty of the area and its landscape which offers great opportunities for walking, canoeing, cycling, riding, fishing and camping. The Offa's Dyke Path, a 177 mile national walking trail that, broadly, follows the England / Wales border, passes through the town, although Offa's Dyke itself is located some 8 to 10 miles east of the town.

The market has played an important part in the shaping of Hay since early on in its history and there is still a thriving weekly market, both for agricultural products and livestock, at the cattle market as well as a traditional street market within the heart of the town.



Broad Street Market c.1900 (left) and today (right)



## 4. General Character and Plan Form

The general character and plan form of Hay-on-Wye is intrinsically linked to its history and development. Each phase in its 'story' has left its own mark and can be read in the layout of streets, spaces, places and buildings today.

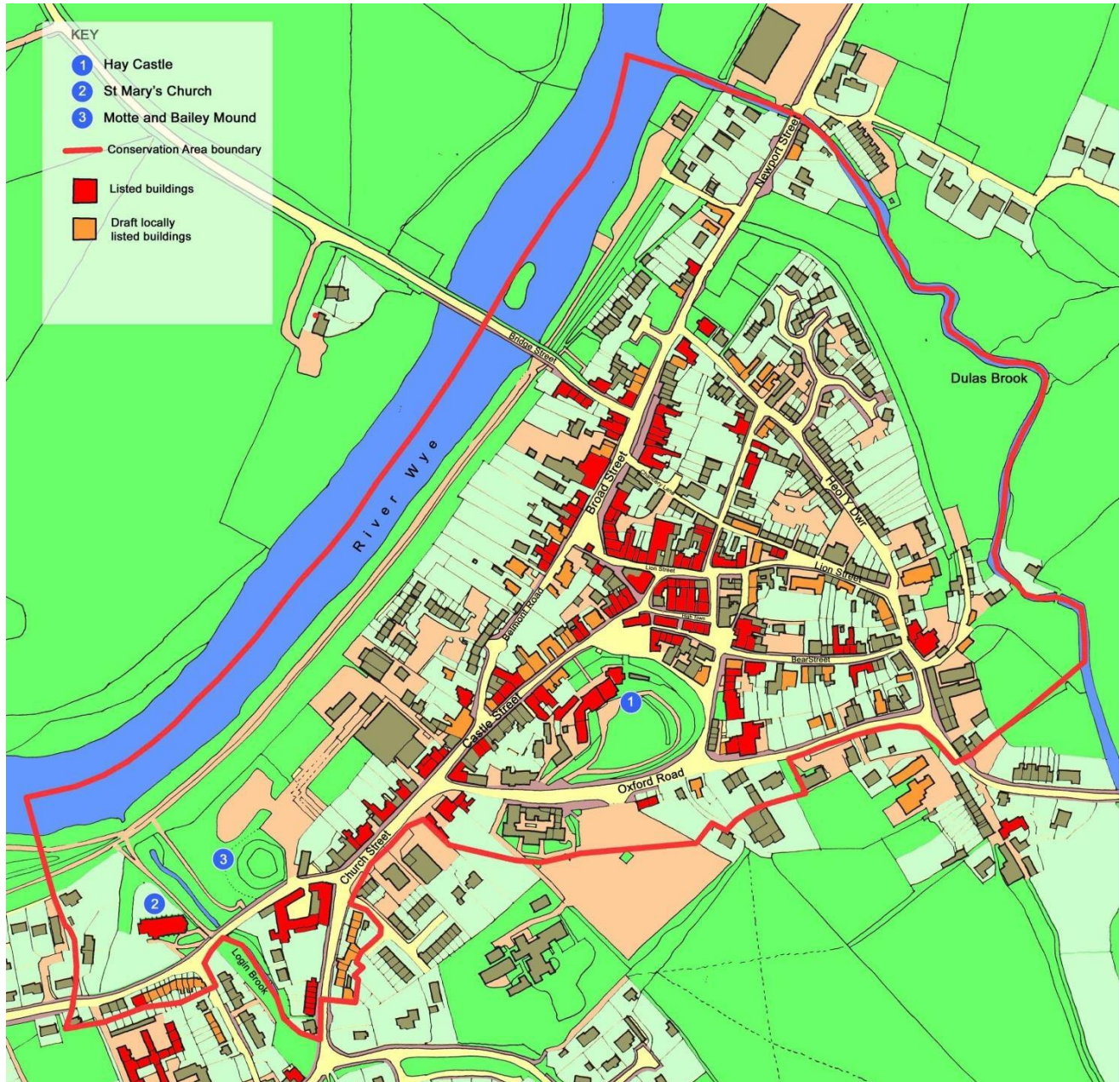
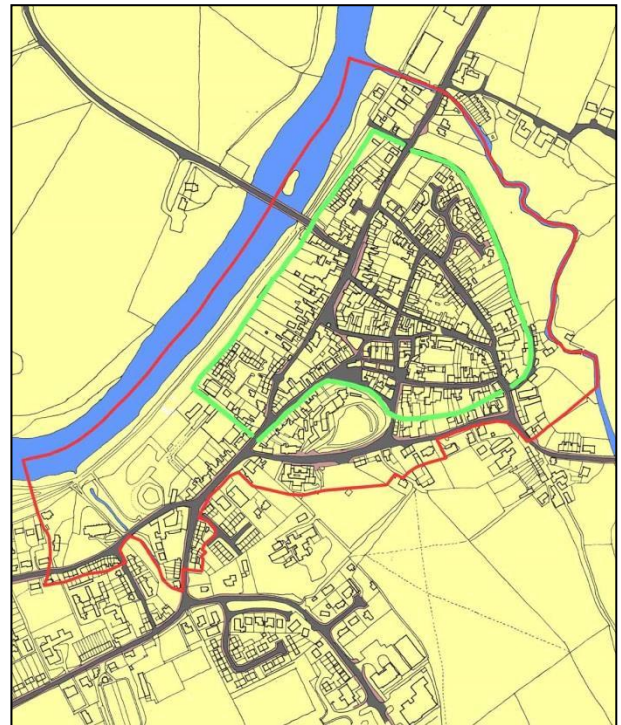
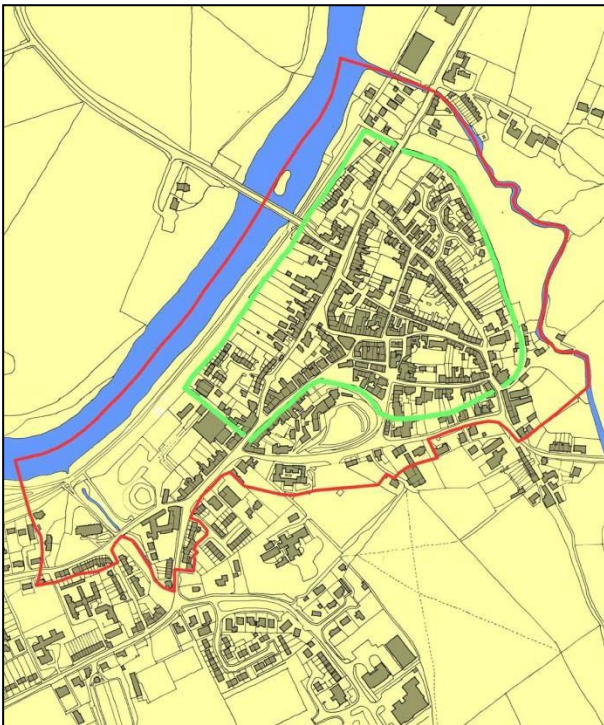


Figure 4.1 Hay-on-Wye today, showing the conservation area boundary, listed and draft locally listed buildings

- The castle still commands a dominant presence both in the overall setting of the town and as a physical and visual node within the townscape;
- The extent and location of the walls and gates that protected the area through the Middle Ages can be seen to be a major factor in the patterns and layouts of streets and public spaces which have retained many characteristics of the Medieval period; and
- The narrow-fronted, burgage plots with which the medieval town was sub-divided into parcels are still very apparent in the layout today.



To help analyse and understand the characteristics of the town, it is useful to illustrate the layout plan in a variety of ways, which highlight certain key elements that reflect its historic development and the manner in which these criteria are apparent in the layout today.



*Figures 4.2 Figure / Ground plan (left) and 4.3 Diagrammatic Movement Network plan (right)*

The Figure / Ground plan, figure 4.2, shows the footprint of built development highlighting the compact core of the town that can clearly be seen within the curtilage of the 13<sup>th</sup> century boundary walls (the alignment of which is shown in the green line) . The streets and spaces within the town are, in general, very clearly defined by the overall form and massing of the buildings that face onto them, which combine the qualities and characteristics of their individual scale, materials and details with a collective form that creates a highly unified and integrated containment to the public areas. The dense and highly concentrated central area is in contrast to the more fragmented and loose arrangement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century development outside the conservation area to the south. The larger footprint employment buildings are also very evident to the northern and southern edges of the plan. The linear growth of the town in a south westerly direction, coupled with the constraining natural features of the River Wye and Dulas Brook, has left a very abrupt transition between the urban heart of the historic town and the rural areas beyond.

To the south west of the town centre, Saint Mary's Church forms the focus of a secondary and smaller concentration of development with a more village character, influenced by the green spaces and landscape setting of the churchyard, castle mound and Logon Brook.

The Diagrammatic Movement Network plan, figure 4.3, illustrates the manner in which the 13<sup>th</sup> century boundary walls (green line), was the principal influence on the street layout, which is still retained today. The plan indicates the principal public areas – streets and spaces – within the town and shows the very fine grain of movement, access and permeability at the centre of the town with the larger spaces of, in particular, Broad Street and the space to the north of the castle which were (and still are) the setting for regular markets, gatherings and events.

## Historic Maps

The 1847 Tithe Map shows a street pattern that, within the current conservation area, is virtually identical to the present one. Significant changes to the layout of the town include the open fields within the original walled area of the town, annotated as 497 and 500 (to either side of Heol Y Dwr) and 502 (to the west side of Belmont Road), that have subsequently been developed for areas of housing. Field 169 now accommodates the cattle market. The overall extent of the settlement would seem to have changed relatively little from the 13<sup>th</sup> century walled town to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century layout.

Other notable differences with today's layout include: the 'L' shaped building at the north eastern end of Castle Street, now demolished and forming the open market space; relatively little development along Oxford Road and much of Heol Y Dwr;

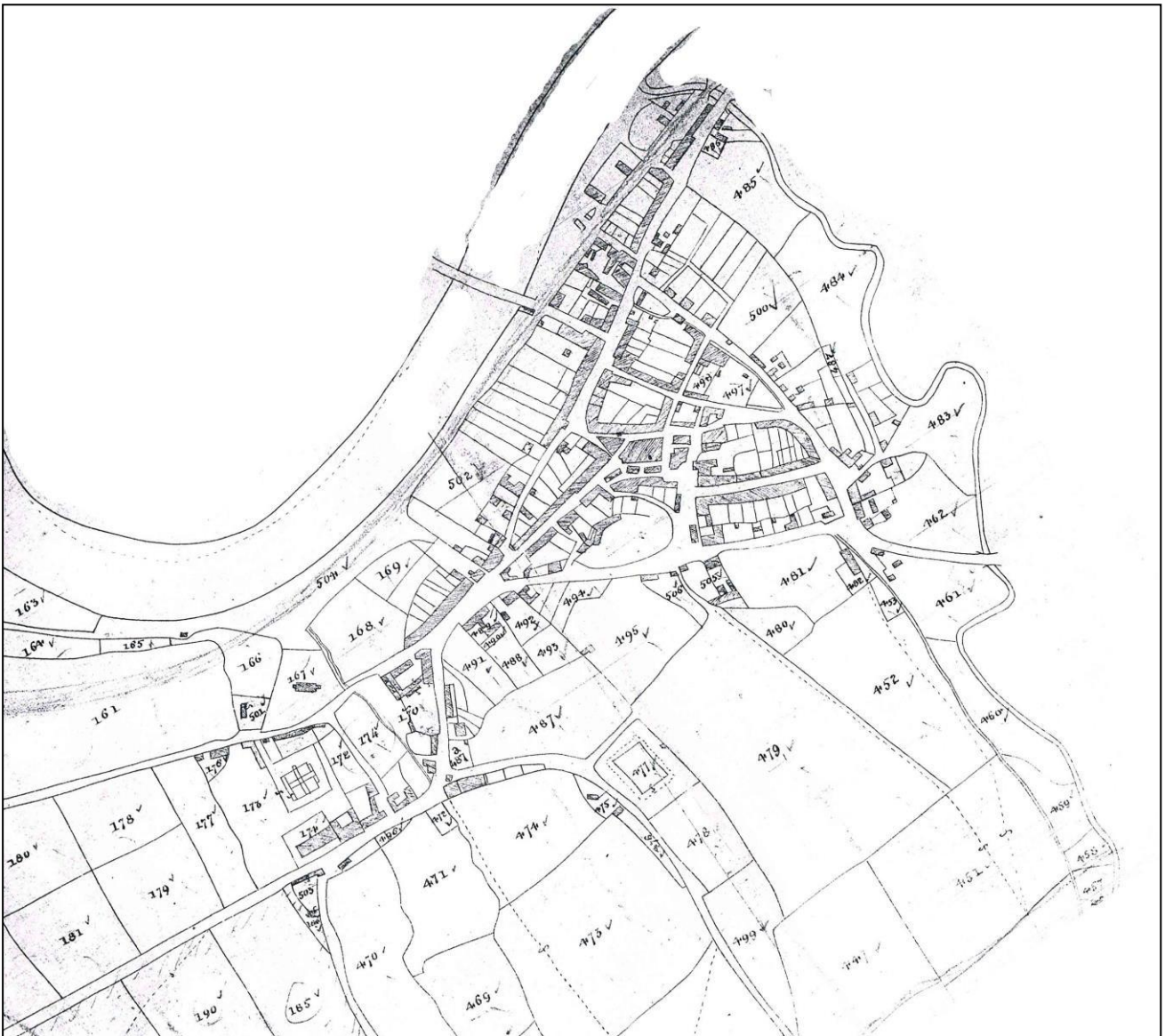


Figure 4.4 Extract from Tithe Map 1847 (re-orientated to be consistent with other maps)



The Ordnance Survey Plan from 1927, (published in 1929) allows a better understanding of those individual buildings that have been demolished within the town in the past century and undeveloped areas which have been developed. The railway line on the eastern bank of the River Wye can also be clearly seen.

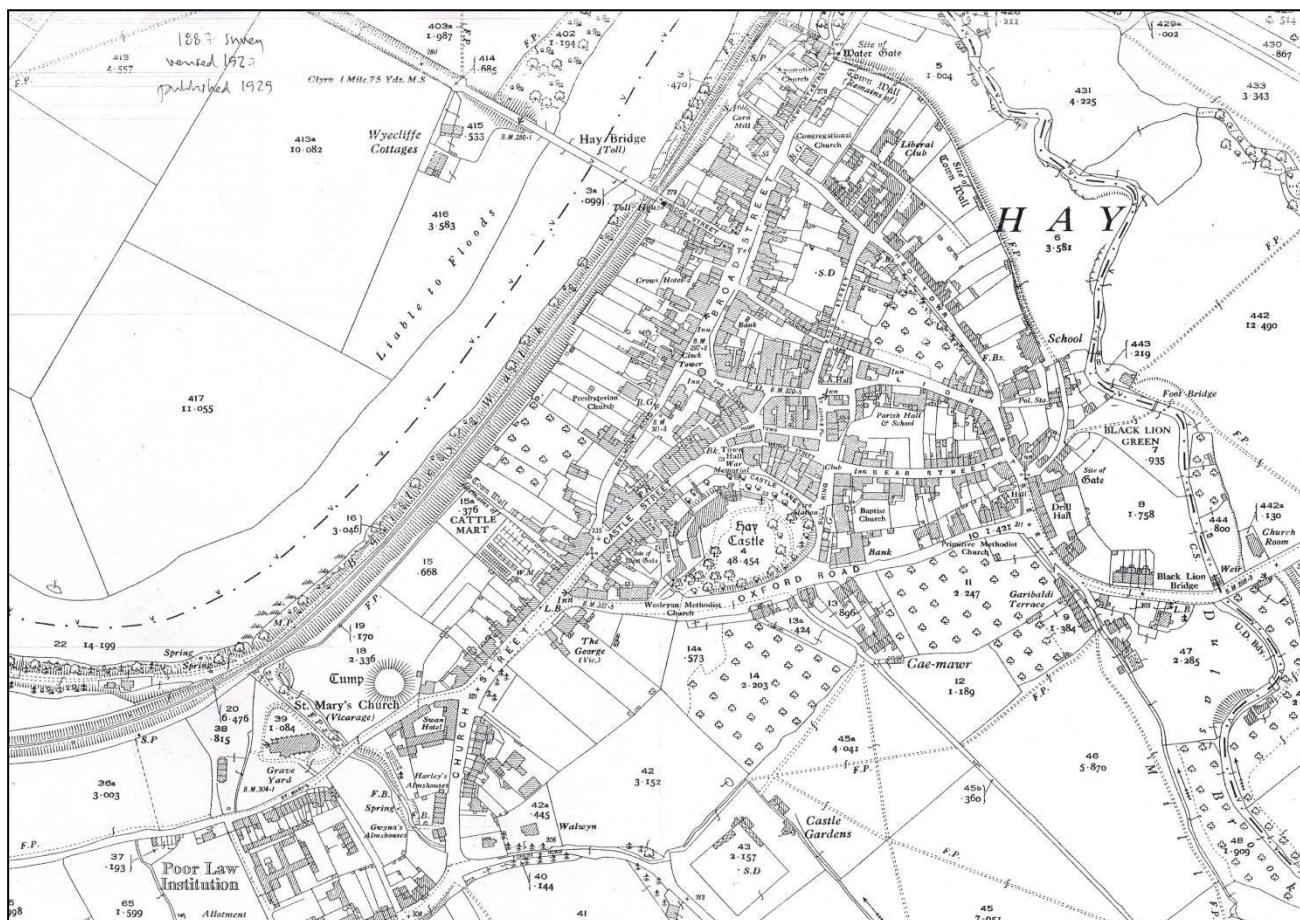
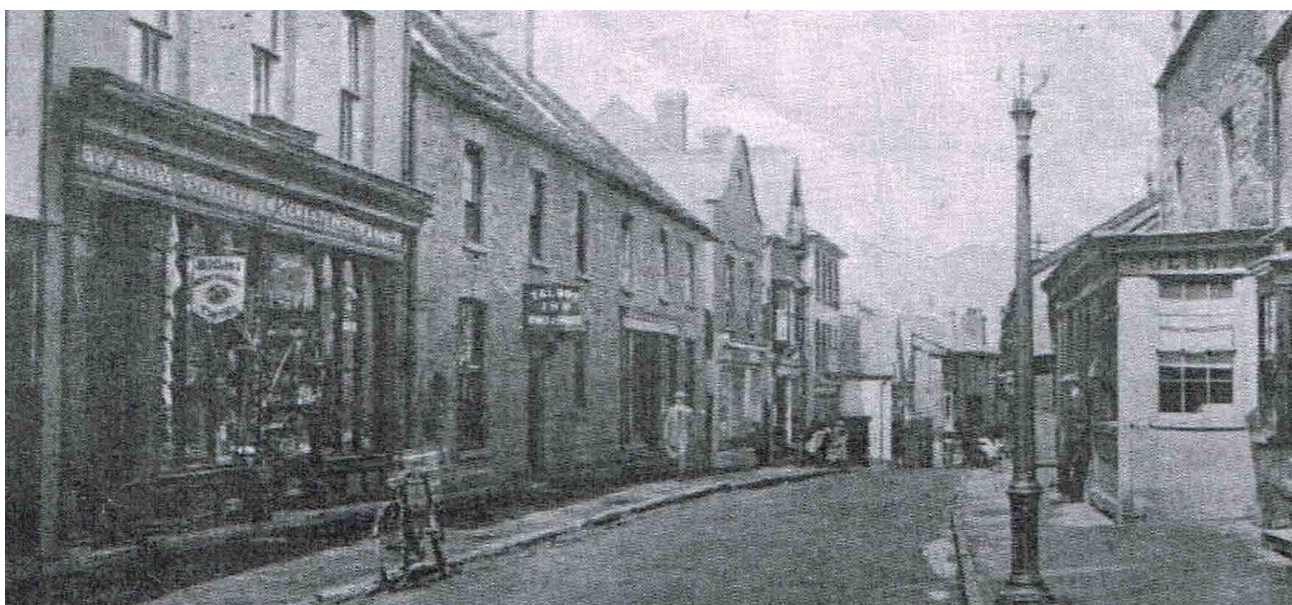


Figure 4.5 Ordnance Survey Map 1929



Castle Street 1930



## 5. Landscape Setting

Hay-on-Wye lies on the eastern bank of the River Wye which meanders through the floodplain at the base of the Wye Valley. The river is categorised as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The river bank slopes steeply from approximately 75m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at water level, up to the core of the town, within which the castle occupies the highest ground at approximately 95m AOD. Either side of the floodplain, the ground rises gently at first, before becoming steeper and with deeply incised valleys that run down from the northern escarpment of the Black Mountains, one of which, Dulas Brook, forms the eastern perimeter of the town. Hay Bluff, at 677m AOD is approximately 5.5km to the south and these upland areas are a looming and attractive presence and setting for the town.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment August 2012, categorises the area as being in Landscape Character Area (LCA) 14, Wye Valley foothills, with a broad landscape type of *Lowlands*

The summary description in the assessment states that:

*A series of ridges run down from the Black Mountains towards the Wye Valley, creating a series of narrow, enclosed valleys which gradually broaden out. These valleys form the basis of a strongly agricultural landscape, visually dominated by the northern scarp of the Black Mountains, with farms nestling at the heads of valleys. It is a well-wooded landscape with ancient woodlands on valley sides and alongside streams, as well as some conifer plantations. The tops of the ridges support heath habitats, and many contain prehistoric monuments. Along the northern edge of the LCA are a series of nucleated settlements (Hay-on-Wye being the largest).*



*View towards Hay from the south. The vegetation within Hay Castle forms an important part of the setting for the castle and the town as a whole. The public car park can be seen on the edge of the settlement.*

Distinctive traces of the former open fields of Hay manor survive on the flatter ground to the west and the sloping ground to the south of the town centre. Particularly characteristic are the strip fields to the south of the town, between Clay Cottage and Bryn Teg, representing enclosure of former

medieval strip fields. Some of the fields here, as well as some bordering directly onto the southern and western boundaries of the town, retain traces of ridge and furrow, representing medieval open field strips.

Parts of the horse-drawn tramway between Hay and Brecon built in 1816 are still visible in the area, most notably a 400m-long terrace cut into the edge of the river bank at The Warren, to the west of Hay. Much of the former course of the tramway was superseded by the Hay, Hereford and Brecon Railway in 1862, the course of which is still visible in places.

Open spaces and landscape are very important elements of the character of the town and conservation area, including:

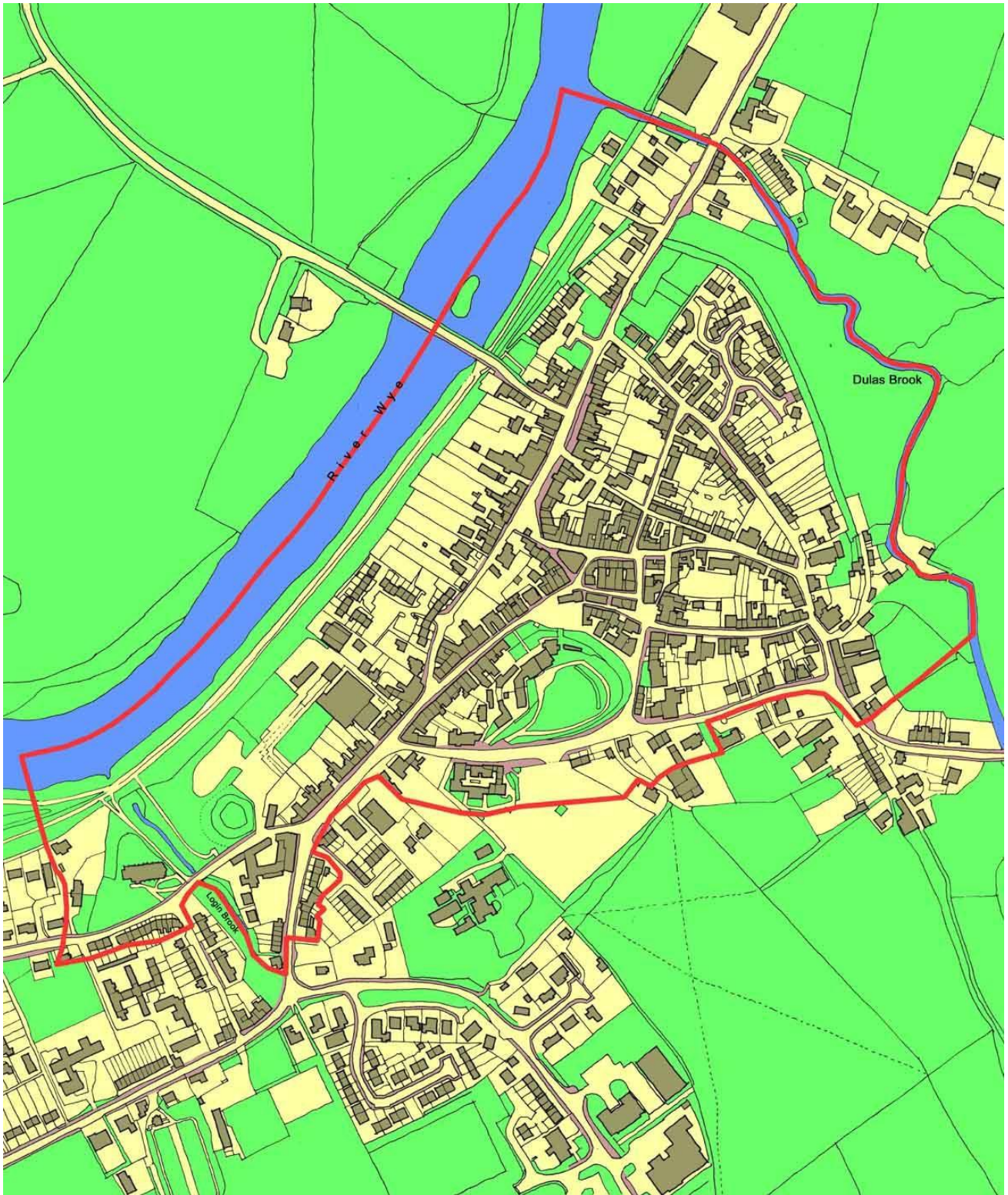
- The castle grounds;
- St Mary's Churchyard;
- The Motte and Bailey mound and setting;
- River Wye / Bailey Walk
- Dulas Brook;
- Login Brook; and
- The town walls and setting on the north eastern edge of the settlement.



*Important open spaces within the conservation area. Top from left: Hay Castle from Oxford Road; River Wye walk; and Motte and Bailey mound. Bottom from left: town wall embankment on north eastern edge of the settlement; view across Logon Brook from the mound towards the landscape setting of St Mary's Church; and St Mary's Church and churchyard.*

Apart from these areas, within the majority of the public areas of the town there is no tree planting, the principal exception being Broad Street, although this is not a deficiency but a product of the narrow streets, the building line generally being tight to the back edge of the pavement and the active use of the streets and spaces within the town for retail, markets, events etc. An important characteristic of the town is the contrast between the landscape areas listed above and the general urban form of the town, accentuated by the manner in which the two elements are juxtaposed.





*Figure 5.1 Areas of landscape and open space within and around Hay-on-Wye*

The topography, landscape setting, street pattern, landmarks and focal points within the town and its environs result in a complex sequence of views and vistas within, towards and looking out of the conservation area. It is worthwhile to explore the different approaches to the town and the differing experiences of arrival that each one offers.



**From the south**, the topography and more recent development within the town, inhibits longer views towards the castle and the medieval core and it is the large footprint, modern development of the Wye Valley Business Park that forms the first 'gateway' into the town. 20<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development along the Brecon Road gradually intensifies in density, but It is not until one rounds the corner at the southern end of Church Street and rises up hill towards the Swan Hotel that there is a true sense of 'arrival' at the town centre.

Approaching **from the west** there is a much more abrupt and clearer transition from the rural to the urban, thanks to the River Wye and the lack of development on the western side of the river. The topography allows very attractive views towards the town with the castle very prominent and enhanced by the backdrop of the Black Mountains. Crossing the bridge, the dense and substantial vegetation along the river bank, softens the impact of the built development and arriving on Bridge Street and, soon afterwards at the junction with Broad Street, is a very sudden change from the open countryside to the heart of a densely developed town centre.



*The view of Hay from the west is against the backdrop of the National Park and the lower slopes of the Black Mountains*

**From the east**, there are more open views across the Wye Valley, with low density development in the foreground set in the soft, landscaped edge to the settlement. The character of low density urban / rural fringe continues until the crossing of Dulas Brook, with Oxford Road rising up the hill to the junction with Heol Y Dwr. Whilst Heol Y Dwr would have formed the eastern gateway into the walled town, the current road hierarchy swings left to skirt around the perimeter of the castle grounds. The piecemeal development on the southern side of Oxford Road allows views out to the wider landscape. It is only on reaching the junction with Church Street / Castle Street that there is the sense of arrival at the town centre.

The approach **from the north** is via the low-lying, flood plain, running parallel to the River Wye. As with the approach from the south, the first development encountered is a business park and a series

of light industrial sheds, commercial premises and the co-op food store and car park that occupy the level ground between the road and the river. The vegetation and topography only allows fragmented views to the higher ground and development of the town centre. The crossing of the Dulas Brook marks the boundary between England and Wales as well as the start of the conservation area. However, the open character continues with views across open, rising ground to the left, culminating in the vegetation that marks the alignment of the former town wall. Even after passing the site of the Ny Port gate, the open fields to the eastern side of Newport Street maintain a landscape setting although in a more urban overall context. It is not until one passes the junction with Heol Y Dwr and enters Broad Street that the buildings close in more tightly to the street and form a pinch point and perceived 'gateway' into the town centre.



*View north from Hay Castle, over Castle Street and to the Wye Valley beyond*

Within **the core of the town** itself, the intricate pattern of short streets with frequent changes on alignment, results, generally, in vistas that are short, terminated by buildings, and constantly changing as one moves through the area. The more obvious focal buildings, such as the castle, clock tower and butter market, stand out by being different from their neighbours, and some corner buildings within the town such as the Swan Hotel, Blue Boar Inn and Half Moon House, Lion Street play an important role in the containment of views. The majority of buildings are appreciated as part of the wider streetscape and in forming the collective backdrop to the streets and public spaces of the town. In the southern part of the conservation area, around St Mary's Church, the lower density of development allows longer, more open views and an appreciation of the attractive landscape context of both the Church and the castle mound. The steeply-sided valley of the Login Brook, and the vegetation within it, forms the setting for the church and the development around it. There are views to, and connections with the banks of the River Wye and the dense vegetation that runs alongside the river and its associated footpath. The tightly enclosed streetscapes at the core of the town centre, do not generally allow views out to the wider landscape, although the more fragmented development around the southern end of Heol Y Dwr and the southern side of Oxford Road create gaps through the outer perimeter of buildings with views to the landscape and higher ground beyond.



## 6. Historic Development and Archaeology

Hay, (as it was known until it became Hay-on-Wye in 1947), seems to have been a wholly new foundation of the Norman period - at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century - although the ford across the river at this point is probably much older. The wider area around the town however, shows signs of settlement from as long ago as the Stone Age, such as the long barrow at Pen-yr-wrlodd and evidence of a large, Roman transit camp at Boatside Farm, just across the river from Hay. When the Romans left, thought to be around 410AD, the area became part of the Kingdom of Brycheiniog.

There is no knowledge of anything on the site of the current town prior to the building of the first motte and bailey castle by the Normans in about the 1090s, which was probably built by William Revel, to whom the lordship of Hay was granted by Bernard de Neufmarché in recognition of his part in the conquest of the pre-conquest kingdom of Brycheiniog. This was not on the site that is now known as Hay Castle, but opposite the rear entrance to the Swan Hotel. An early church on the site of the present church of St Mary was probably also built at this period although the first formal record of it comes in 1115 when the church was dedicated following the Norman's victory in the battle of Brecon in 1093, over the local native ruler, Bleddyn.

The precise date that the construction of the second, masonry castle commenced remains undefined, but it is thought that around 1200 AD, Maud de St Valerie, wife of William de Breos, had the new fortress built. The new town of Hay grew up in the shadow of the stone castle, and in 1236, following a number of attacks, a grant was received to fortify the town and it was provided with a defensive wall and gateways, originally an earth rampart and ditch, and eventually built in stone. There were three main gates, with a secondary 'postern gate as indicated in figure x. This shows how the castle and wall were integrated to form a unified boundary forming a defensive ring to protect the community, for their benefit but also for that of the lord of the manor for whom his tenants were an important source of revenue and therefore needed to be preserved. Substantial parts of the walls survived until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century although today the only significant traces are those overlooking Dulas Brook on the north eastern edge of the town.

Although the castle is slightly on the edge of the core of the town, in Norman times it was the centre of activity and mainly used to garrison soldiers, knights and men at arms. The craftsmen, storekeepers, clerks and servants would be accommodated within the bailey walls so that in a time of siege the community could be defended. A garrison would also have needed a regular and reliable supply of provisions and this factor would have contributed to the establishment of Hay as a market town with the regular weekly markets as well as it becoming an important centre for marketing corn, wool and livestock. Twice yearly fairs also became established for the hiring of agricultural labour.

The name Hay is derived from the Norman *La Haie*, meaning a fenced or hedged enclosure and mediaeval Hay was now an enclosed settlement within roughly triangular boundaries. (The Welsh name for the town, *Y Gelli*, means a grove or wood, a reference which probably pre-dates the establishment of the town, being recorded in a survey of 944 AD when the site on which the town is now built was overgrown and uninhabited.)

Within the walls three principal streets ran, broadly, parallel to the walls: one took in Belmont Road, Broad Street and Newport Street; another followed roughly the line of Castle Street and then probably bent around the castle to run down Bear Street; and the third street ran down Heol-y-dwr. Running perpendicular to the streets, burgage plots subdivided the town into parcels from which rent could be collected. A frontage onto the street allowed for a dwelling to be built with a strip of land to the rear. These land parcels can be clearly identified in the layout of Hay today. A large area bounded by Castle Lane, Bull Ring, St. John's Place and High Town probably represented the extent of the market place. Outside the enclosure were the town's meadows and orchards as well as St Mary's Church and associated buildings.

The Middle Ages were, in general, a time of poverty and disruption in Hay: in 1231 the castle was burnt down by Prince Llewelyn ap Iorwerth and then rebuilt by Henry III around 1233 before being restored to the de Breos family; Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, reduced the castle in 1265 during the Barons uprising against the king; in 1322 the castle was captured by Edward II's forces and confiscated from the de Bohun family, then lords of the manor; and at the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the town and castle were once again destroyed by fire during the rebellion of Owain Glyndwr and the castle was declared to be 'in a ruinous state'.

The military significance of the castle declined following the finalisation of the Union of England and Wales in 1542. However, due to its prominent position controlling one of the few routes into the Middle Wye Valley, the town came to benefit from the gradual growth of trade in the later medieval period, becoming an important market town and service centre for an extensive hinterland in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.



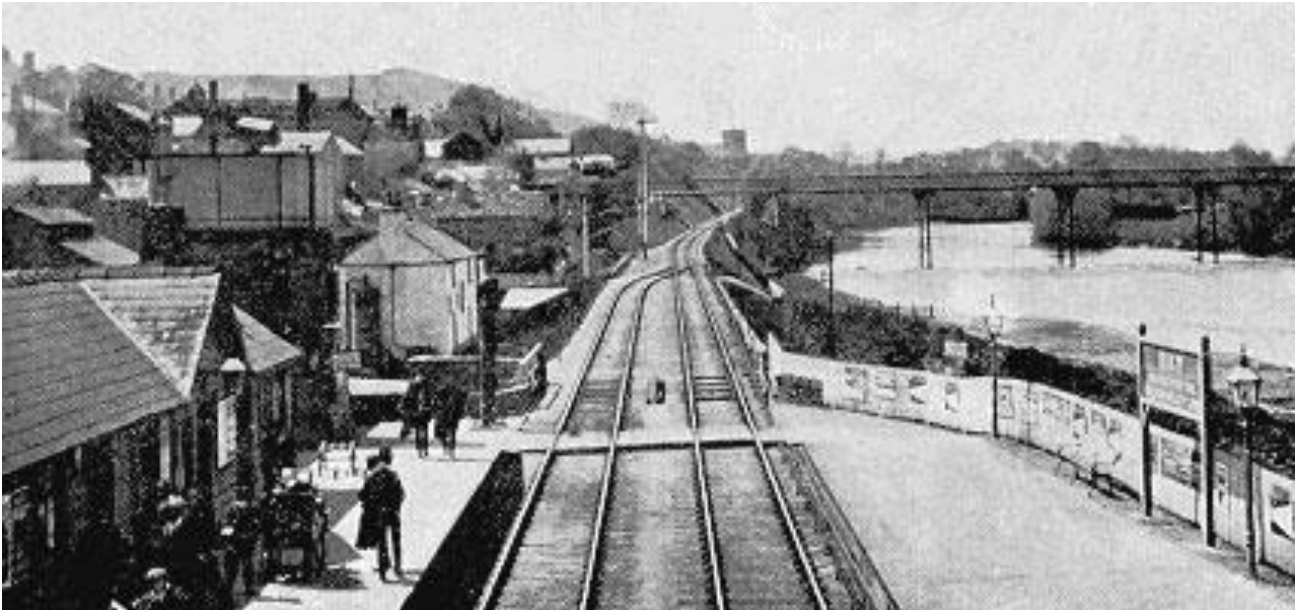
*The castle keep (left hand side of the photo) is the only surviving element from the original defences. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Manor is now partially in ruins but is still an imposing structure overlooking the market area and town centre*

Sometime between 1600 and 1650 the Jacobean mansion, set within the Norman walls, was built under the ownership of the Gwynn family of Trecastle and most of the perimeter wall was demolished to improve the views. Prior to this, the various 'owners' rarely lived in the castle itself but would recruit fighting men, dispense justice and collect their rents there. It was, in essence, an armed administrative building. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a variety of tenants leasing the castle and during Victorian times it became the residence for the vicars of Hay and Francis Kilvert, curate of Clyro and Victorian diarist, was a frequent visitor there.



Although the town failed to develop as a significant industrial centre during the course of the industrial revolution, enhanced access brought a potential stimulus to growth, including:

- Improvements to the turnpike roads in the late 18th and early 19th centuries;
- The opening of the Hay-Brecon tramway in the second decade of the 19th century as a means of transporting coal more cheaply from the Abergavenny and Brecon Canal;
- The construction of the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway in the 1860s, replacing the tramroad; and
- The Golden Valley railway, built between 1876 and 1889.



*The railway ran alongside the River Wye, with the station to the north of Dulas Brook, outside the current conservation area*

However these 'improvements' also allowed for cheaper goods to be brought into Hay, to the detriment of some of the craftsmen and retailers within the town, which had always formed an important part of the economy of the area.

The post war years witnessed a slow decline in the fortunes of many small towns like Hay. The reliance on, and viability of, local shops and trades diminished further and young people had less and less reason to stay in the town. To add insult to injury, the station closed in December 1962, the Hereford-Hay-Brecon line being a victim of the Beeching cuts. However, 1962 was also the year that Richard Booth bought a small shop in the town, for £700, the former fire station, now Boz Books, in Church Street. This marked the beginning of the transformation of a small market town into the largest trading centre for second-hand and out of print books in the world. The book business was expanding and in 1969 he bought the redundant Plaza Cinema and opened a range of specialist book shops in the town. By the mid 1970's he had a staff of 20 and a million second hand books. Other booksellers were drawn to the town and other crafts and retail outlets have developed over the years, building on the base of tourist visitors. The Hay Festival of Literature, first held in 1988, was introduced by Norman Florence and later directed by his son, Peter.

More detailed information on Hay's history can be found in Geoffrey Fairs' *History of the Hay and Annals of a Parish* as well as Kate Clarke's *The Book of Hay*, which are available at the Public Libraries in both Hay and Brecon.

## 7. Spatial Analysis

The street and spaces within Hay-on-Wye possess a subtle balance of unifying and varied elements. There is unity, in places, in the continuity of the building line, and the overall palette of materials, but there is great variety in the scale, form and massing of individual buildings, in details of windows, doorways, chimneys, eaves and roof lines, the widths of streets, boundary treatment, degrees of openness or enclosure, views and vistas, landmarks, nodes as well as the varying impacts of, and inter-relationship with, topography and landscape.

To get a better understanding of the local distinctiveness of the town and the full range of spatial typologies, it is useful to sub-divide it into individual character areas, and to establish the elements that distinguish each of these areas from the others and, where possible, the reasons why.



*Hay Castle*

Figure 7.1 shows the different character areas within the conservation area, as defined in this document, which are:

- Hay Castle, town centre and Castle Street
- Church Street (north and south)
- Belmont Road / Broad Street / Newport Street
- Heol Y Dwr, Lion Street and Bear Street
- Oxford Road
- St Mary's Church and castle mound
- Wye River



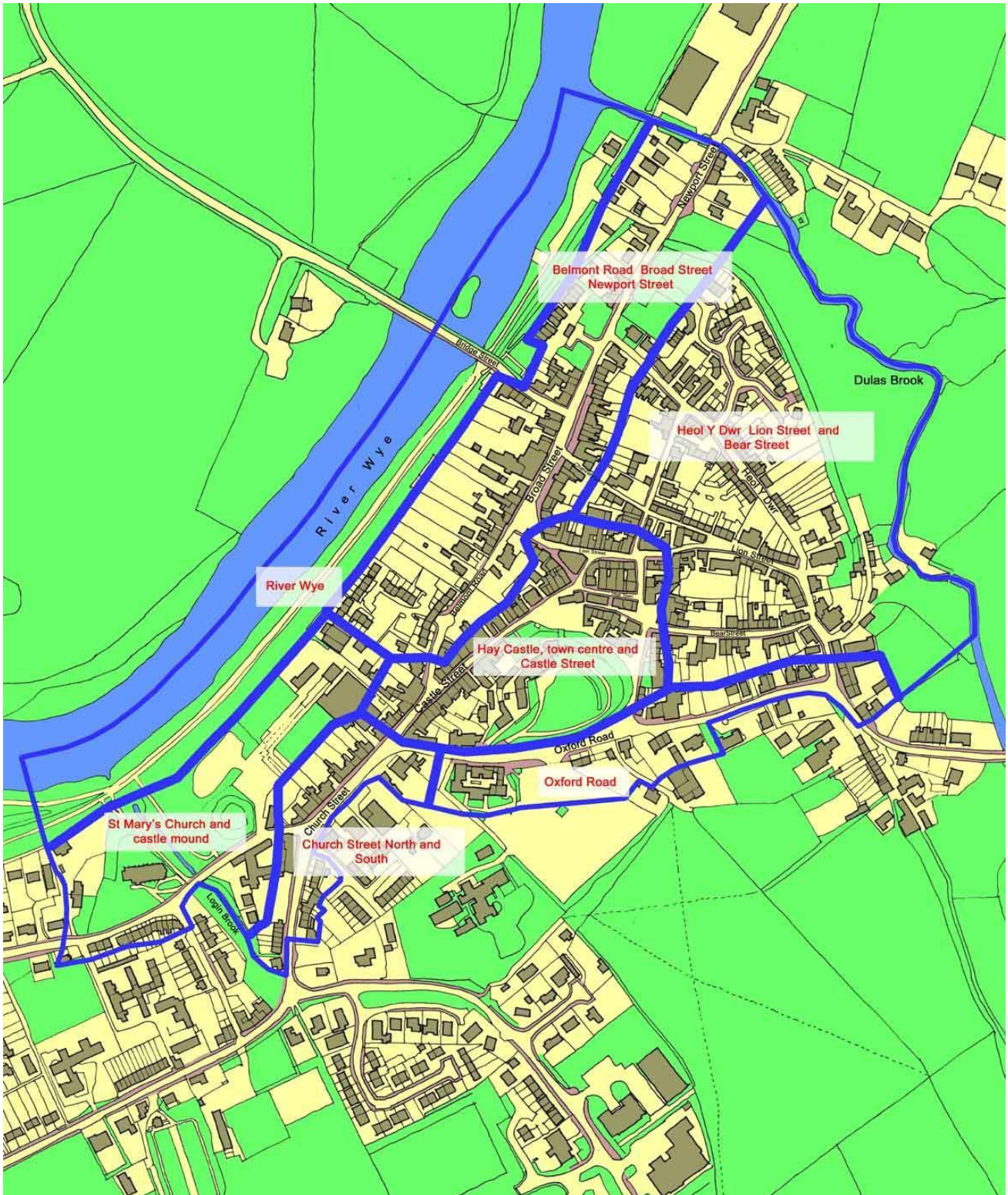


Figure 7.1 Hay-on-Wye Conservation Area character areas

### **Hay Castle, town centre and Castle Street**

There is a huge variety of individual buildings and spatial characteristics within this core area of the town, but there is also a unity and consistency in the overall scale, form and usage of the different streets and spaces and therefore some justification in grouping them together into one character area.





Figure 7.2 Hay Castle, town centre and Castle Street character area

The **castle** was the *raison d'être* for the very existence of Hay and the point where the castle and the town meet, beneath the surviving castle keep, could justifiably be considered as the centre of the town. It is where the ordered and coherent frontages of Castle Street, meet the fine-grained and intricate web of linkages including Market Street, High Town, and The Pavement. To describe them as streets is perhaps to misrepresent their character as the spaces and routes that squeeze between the buildings and urban blocks that contain them and they are completely defined by the built form that encloses them.

Although the castle was, essentially, outside the walled boundary of the town, this area was where the connections to the three main gateways into the town would meet and also reflects the critical relationship and interdependency between the town and the castle.



The market area, beneath the castle keep (left) and the narrow web of streets within the town centre (right)



Section 6 of this document described the importance of regular supplies and provisions to the castle garrison, which contributed towards Hay being a logical location for a market town, and the market would naturally have grown up around the perimeter of its biggest 'customer' and at its gateway.

Whilst the buildings from the medieval layout have been replaced with more robust structures, with 19<sup>th</sup> century constructions being the most prevalent form, the informal and organic footprint of its origins are very apparent on the ground.

It is perhaps unnecessary to try and define the precise boundary of the **town centre**, but there are clear nodal spaces around the perimeter of the central area which form natural transition points from one zone of the town to another and between which there is a distinct character. These are: the castle square, directly north of the castle keep; the space adjacent to the clock tower at the western end of Lion Street; and the space in front of Kilvert's Hotel at the eastern end of Market Street. The core of the town centre is located between these nodes and within this area there is a tight network of short, narrow streets and passageways, which are defined by the generally two and three storey buildings that almost completely fill their plots and wrap around the corners of the streets to form a continuous 'edge' to the public space. This creates a very special, urban character, derived directly from its medieval origins and from the inherent attraction of this important commercial area for built development and the consequent desire to utilise every last parcel of available space.

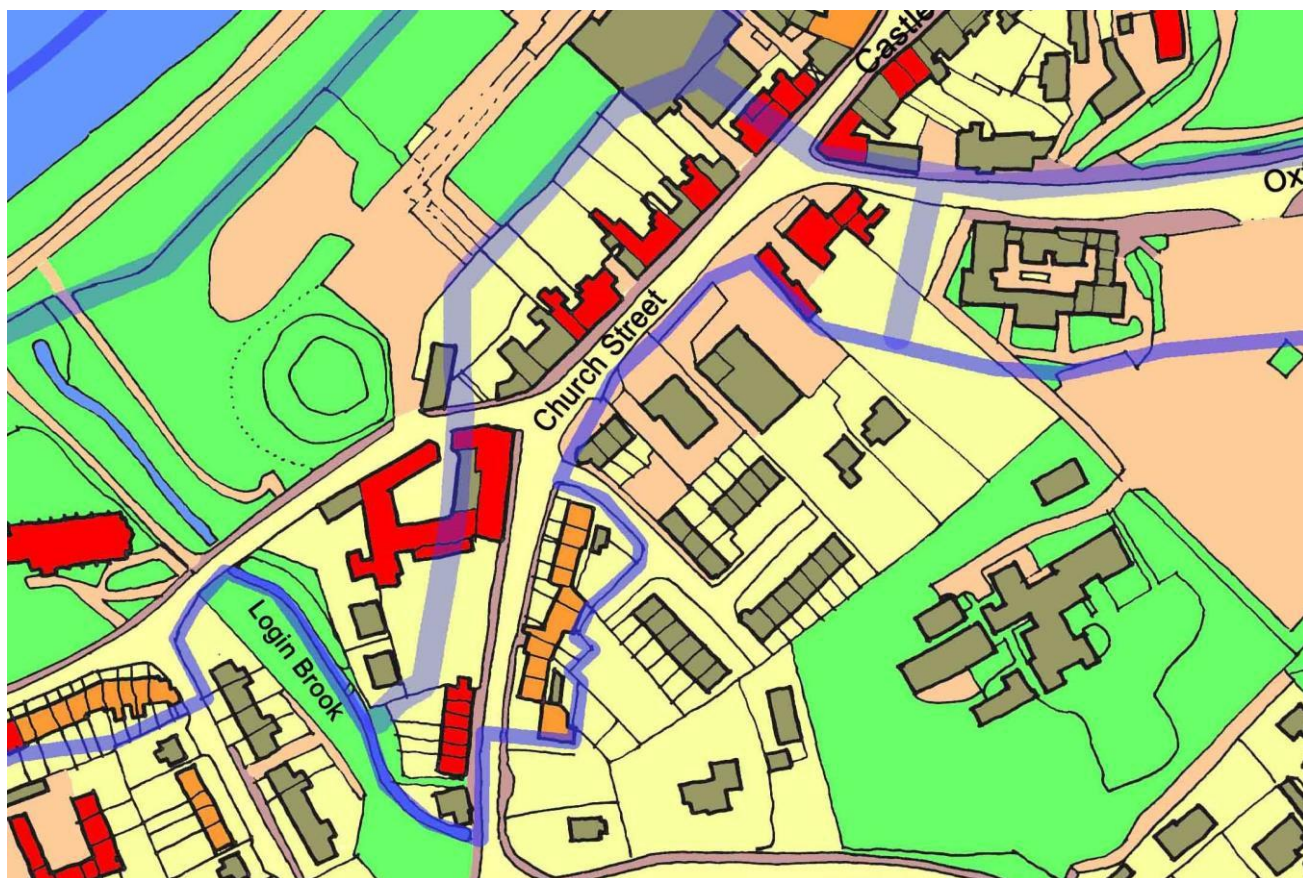
**Castle Street** connects between this central core and the original West Gate into the walled town, which is considered to have been the main gateway into the town. The unity of the retail uses, building line and overall scale and rhythm of buildings is balanced by a great variety of elevational treatment and a lively mix of materials, gables, dormers, architectural details and well preserved shop fronts. The retail character of the street continues beyond the junction with Belmont Road to connect with, or perhaps more accurately 'evolve into' Church Street.



*The variety of elevational treatment within Castle Street*

### **Church Street (north and south)**

Church Street forms the principal southern gateway into the town, as described in section 5 above, and also forms the transition from the dense, urban development of the town centre to a looser and softer character beyond. In the northern half of Church Street the overall character is of a broader, more open streetscape and there is less consistency and continuity of development than in the central core of the town. Imposing three storey terraces on the western side of the street are contrasted with the broader mix of development opposite, which partly lies outside the defined conservation area. Larger footprint, 20<sup>th</sup> century development is set back from the street beyond boundary walls and railings with tree planting screening the buildings to some extent. Beyond the Swan Hotel, in the southern half of Church Street, the boundary treatment of walls and railings becomes a major unifying component in the character of the area and the open and more fragmented character of the built development is even more pronounced.



*Figure 7.3 Church Street (north and south) character area*

### **Belmont Road / Broad Street / Newport Street**

Although Belmont Road, Broad Street and Newport Street are all part of the B4350 that runs from north to south through the town, the changes in name along its length are reflected in significant changes in character between the three differently named sections of the route. Historically, this route connected between the West Gate and the Water Gate at the southern and northern ends of the walled town and the long, narrow, former burgage plots, particularly evident on the western side of the streets, reflect its medieval origins.



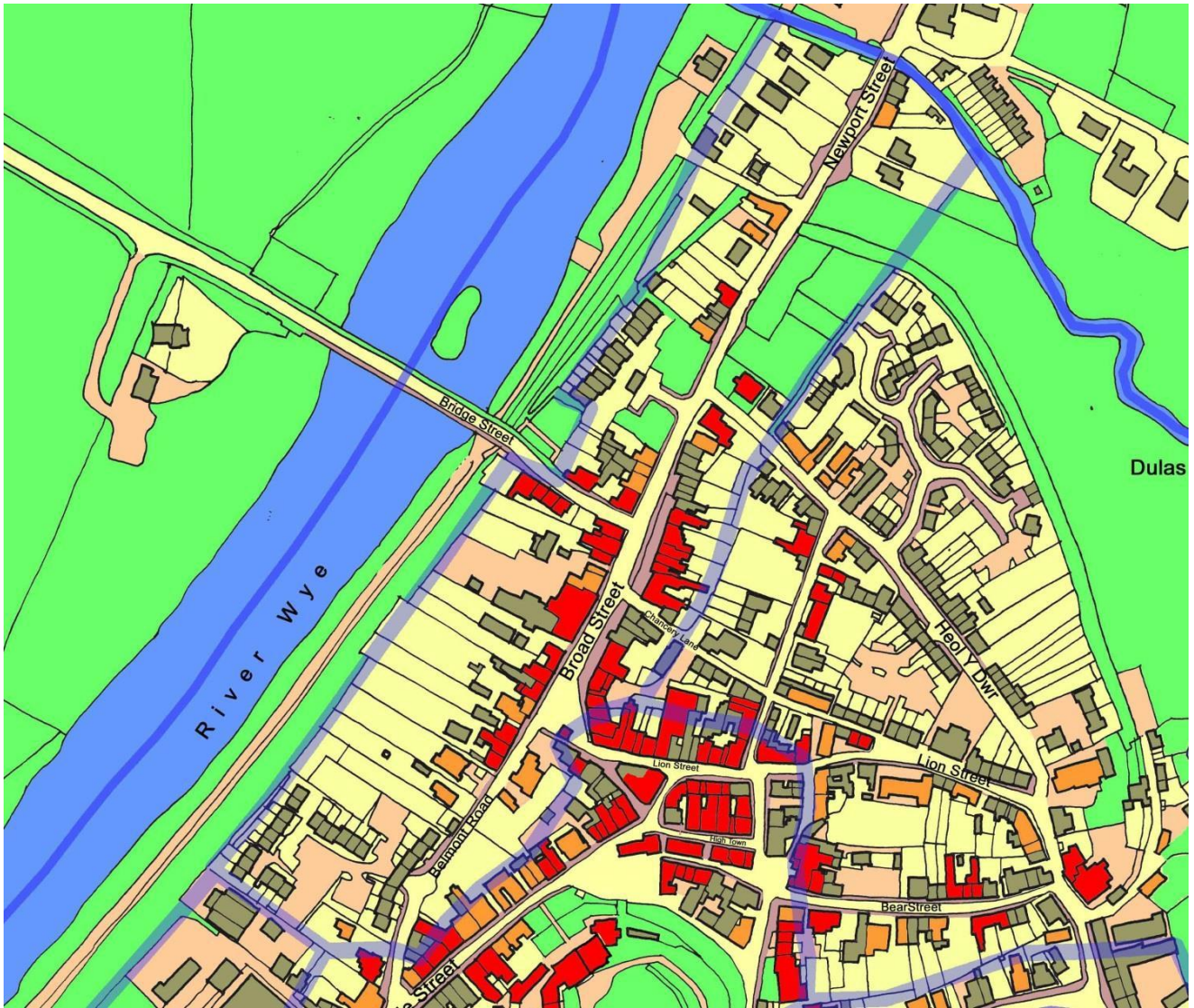


Figure 7.4 Belmont Road / Broad Street / Newport Street character area

Starting from its southern end, **Belmont Road** slopes down and wraps around the rear of the retail properties in Castle Street from which it spurs. In contrast to Castle Street and Broad Street between which it connects, there are no active frontages or retail development on the street and it has the sense of a connecting link or through route rather than a 'place' in itself. At the junction with Castle Street, the symmetrical frontage of Belmont House is set back behind railings at the junction and funnels the flow of the street around the corner and past the four storey, hipped, gable end of the former woolen mill which sits tight to the roadside. Although the continuity of development is broken beyond this point, and the frontage of the new housing development of Carlsgate is set back from the pavement line, there is a strong sense of enclosure by virtue of the high retaining wall that supports the gardens to the east side of the street and the narrowness of the street overall. This sense of containment continues with high walls to both sides, no more than five to six metres apart, reaching a pinch point between the Registry Office and the terrace of 1-3 Belmont Road opposite. The constriction of the route at this point is accentuated by the contrast with the opening out of the space around the clock tower, at the termination of Belmont Road, at its junction with the southern end of the aptly named, Broad Street.

The clock tower forms the focus of a triangular space formed by the cranked alignment of properties on the eastern side of **Broad Street**. Until the construction of the cattle market to the west of Church Street, Broad Street was used as a livestock market area and it has the feel of an elongated public

square with the combination of: the continuity of frontages containing the space; the subtle angles of the street alignment which enclose the lateral views along its length; the width of the street; and the rather theatrical effect of the elevated pavement that runs along much of the eastern side of the area. In general the buildings are built tight to the back edge of the pavement and the consistency and integrity of this building line contributes to unify the contrasting elements of scale, form and materials found in individual buildings such as the Three Tuns pub and the Café Royal (both of which are some of the oldest surviving buildings in the town). The majority of buildings within the street are listed and many of the others locally listed. To the north of the junction with Bridge Street, the space narrows again and the character reverts back from 'space' to route. This transition is more marked to the north of the junction with Heol Y Dwr where Newport Street begins.



*There are significant changes in character along the length of the street with the narrow enclosure of boundary walls of Belmont Road (left), the wide, civic space of Broad Street (centre) and a softer character integrated with the landscape in Newport Street (right)*

The name **Newport Street** is derived from *Ny port* meaning *Water Gate* and the alignment and footprint of the original medieval town wall is still very much in evidence in the embankment to the eastern side of the street. The openness that results from the areas of landscape and vegetation adjacent to the street together with the change from the more active and continuous frontages of Broad Street to a more fragmented and piecemeal streetscape gives the street a character of urban fringe. Newer housing to the western side is set a long way back from the street losing the sense of enclosure that is such a strong feature in much of the town, although the historic maps in section 4 indicate that the original buildings on these sites were much closer to the pavement line.

### **Heol Y Dwr, Lion Street and Bear Street**

Although these streets are within the perimeter of the original walled town, they are somewhat removed and remote from the intensity of the retail core of the town and have a quieter and lower-key character with residential development predominant.



*In Heol Y Dwr, new housing (right) in a sympathetic form and scale to historic types, combines with older properties (left) to create a unified whole*



*Lion Street has a similar scale and form to Heol Y Dwr with an additional intimacy as a result of the narrowness of the street*



Historic maps show that **Heol Y Dwr** was much less intensively developed in the medieval period than the core of the town and some of the plots along its length probably provided land for fruit, crops and grazing within the walled settlement. It provided a link between two of the three gateways into the walled town and must therefore have been an important route from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although much of the current development is more recent than most of the town and of less inherent heritage value. However, it provides residential provision close to the town centre and the section of road known as The Gardens, at the western end of the street, has a tight cluster of cottages and houses on its northern side forming an informal but attractive building group. The street is book-ended by, to the west, the Globe Gallery, the former Ebenezer United Reformed Church, which sits above the junction between Heol YDwr and Newport Street, behind a retaining wall and railings, and to the east by The Old Black Lion pub, close to the location of one of the main gateways into the walled town. In between, there is a varied and informal mix of generally two-storey terraces of dwellings including some recent residential development that fits well into the streetscape. The Police Station at the southern end of the street is a disappointment with a poor quality single storey building and a boundary treatment and plot layout that is poorly related to the character of the street and the town as a whole.

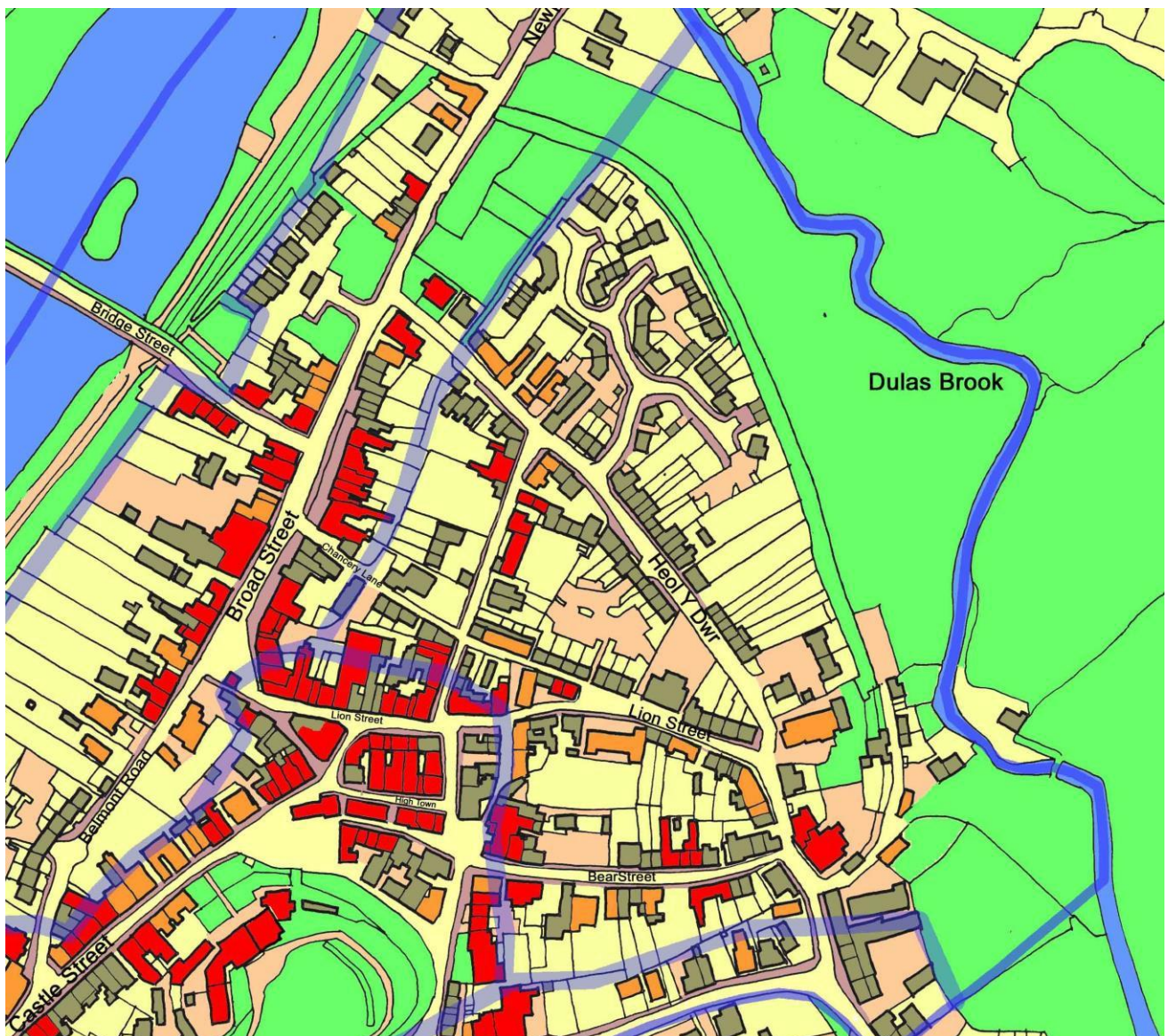


Figure 7.5 Heol Y Dwr, Lion Street and Bear Street character area



The area of **Lion Street** outside the town centre is similar in scale, form and its residential character to the parts of Heol Y Dwr, although the narrowness of the street, combined with the greater continuity of development gives an intimate and enclosed character, also found in **Bear Street**.



*Bear Street, looking west*



*The eastern end of Chancery Lane, connecting through to Lion Street*

**Chancery Lane** has an even tighter character becoming increasingly narrow towards the east, providing a pedestrian-only link into Lion Street. The historic maps show it would have been even more enclosed than it is today, prior to the demolition of the buildings on the site of the current public library.



## Oxford Road

Oxford Road runs outside the perimeter of the original town walls, skirting around the southern boundary of the castle precinct and still retains a sense of being on the edge of, or slightly removed from, the heart of the town. Significant parts of the plots on the southern side of the road lie outside the conservation area although, inevitably, they still have an impact on the overall character and ambience of the street. A large and visually prominent car park, alongside a craft centre and tourist visitor facility, are located close to Hay Castle.

Whilst development on the north side of the street forms a reasonably coherent and integrated streetscape, the southern side is very dis-jointed and fragmented with individual buildings of different eras somewhat 'sprinkled' along the side of the road. A pair of listed, semi-detached, Georgian villas are set back from the street behind railings but there is no continuity of development either side of them, with the public car park close to the rear.



*The public car park (right) is on the southern side of the rather disjointed and fragmented streetscape of Oxford Road (left)*

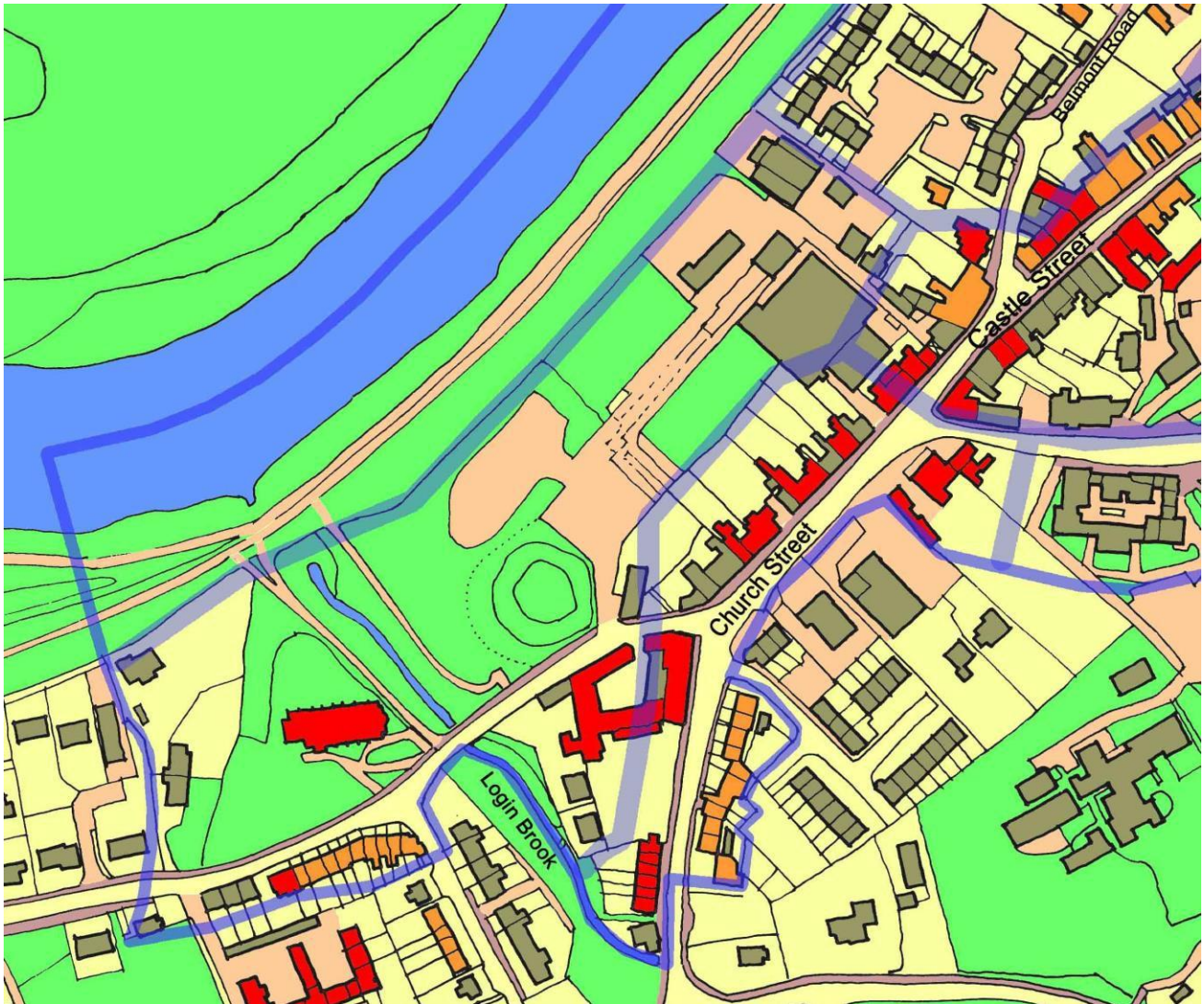


*Figure 7.6 Oxford Road character area*

## St Mary's Church and castle mound

This area is approached from Church Street, via Swan Bank and despite its importance in the history of the development of Hay it could easily be missed, as the access, adjacent to the Swan Hotel, is narrow and set an angle to the main road. This contributes to the area feeling somewhat isolated and separate from the core of the town and the open character, dominated by the landscape setting, is in stark contrast to the dense development of the majority of the conservation area.





*Figure 7.7 St Mary's Church and castle mound character area*

This area is the site of the earliest structures in Hay - the Motte and Bailey castle and St Mary's Church - both established at a similar time, around the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There is little that remains of those early buildings, although the man-made shape and form of the castle mound is still very much evident in the landscape. The Church had a tower added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century although it was in ruins and disused at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt in 1833/34, with the chancel enlarged in 1866.

### **Wye River**

With the exception of the area towards the northern end of the conservation area, the land falls steeply towards the river, inhibiting development close to the river bank itself, and the town walls were set back from the river bank. From earliest times, Hay residents had the right to walk between the town walls and the riverbank and in 1884 Sir Joseph Bailey laid out the river walk, now known as the Bailey Walk, at his own expense, and gave it to the town. It ran between the railway line and the river



## 8. Character Analysis

As was common in many Welsh and border towns, Hay underwent very considerable re-building from about 1830 onwards: the more primitive structures were demolished and replaced by Georgian stone houses and later by Victorian red brick dwellings and shops; many of the timber-framed houses were faced; and some of the principal public buildings were re-provided.

### Public buildings

Apart from the remnants of the two castles, no original public buildings survive from before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some important buildings that replaced earlier structures include:

- The Butter Market, dated 1833, which was built by William Enoch on the site of a previous butter market. Its open sides were enclosed with concrete blocks in World War II, to allow it to be used as a store, but it was restored to its former state in 1984;
- The Cheese Market was built in 1835 for the lord of the manor, Sir Joseph Bailey, probably on the site of the demolished 17<sup>th</sup> century markethouse;
- St Mary's Parish Church which was largely rebuilt in 1833/34 having fallen into complete disrepair;
- St John's Chapel, located on the site of a medieval guild chapel, said to have been founded in 1254, but now largely of 1930's construction.

Other notable public buildings include the clock tower that was erected in 1884 at the cost of £600. The idea originated from a £50 legacy by Captain Brown for a clock on the church tower. Lack of enthusiasm for this idea led to it being expanded into a grander plan for a town clock, public hall and corn exchange although, in the end, only the clock tower was built.



*The Clock Tower, (left) and a view along Market Street (right) with the Butter Market to the left hand side of the photograph.*

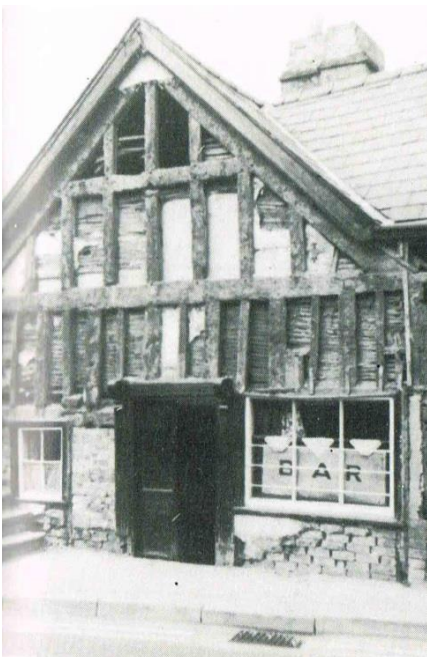
## Industrial buildings

Although Hay was never an industrial town, being primarily an agricultural community and market centre, several industrial activities developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, chiefly associated with the woollen industry and the manufacture of malt. The mill building at the southern end of Belmont Road remains, whilst others, such as a fulling mill in Heol Y Dwr, and a corn mill on the site of the new housing at the southern end of Newport Street, have been demolished. The Agricultural Hall, Lion Street, now a book shop, but originally premises for Robert Williams, manufacturing farm machinery and tools and employing some 200 people. Built in 1886, it is an imposing structure on two floors, with an extensive basement, ornate tiled frontage and a vast wooden ceiling supported by timber pillars.

## Domestic Buildings

Whilst some buildings of the original medieval buildings were simply demolished and replaced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, others were re-built or re-faced around their original timber-framed structure. These include:

- The Three Tuns Pub, which has been a pub since 1830 but incorporates part of a three-bay 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame building within its structure;
- 13 and 14 High Town, a pair of 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed structures, originally with projecting jetties;
- 41, Lion Street; and
- The Bear, Bear Street, which started out in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century as a single bay, timber framed house with a gabled front, and was extended in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century they were combined and largely encased in stone.



*The Gable ended wall of the Three Tuns Pub, on the corner of Broad Street and Bridge Street. Left, photographed during refurbishment, revealing the 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame beneath and right, as seen today. Also of note is the mounting block to the left of the doorway, typical of many of the inns in the area.*



Other buildings that retain parts of their original timber frame include:

- Café Royal, Broad Street;
- 2-4 Market Street;
- 1, The Pavement;
- 6, Market Street;
- 46-47, Lion Street;
- West House, Broad Street;
- Wheatsheaf Inn, Lion Street; and
- Paris House, High Town



*The variety of elevational treatment within the town adds to the richness of the environment and reflects the availability of different materials at different stages of the development of the town*

The **building materials** used within Hay, changed over time and also reflect those most available in the immediate area and, later in the C19 and C20, those that were brought in by tramway, railway and road. The variety of different treatments, combinations and detailing of stone, render and brick can be seen in the photo examples above. For roofs, although the principal material is Welsh slate, some of the earlier structures still retain natural stone tiles, for example the Rose and Crown and Seven Stars pubs in Broad Street as well as the 17<sup>th</sup> century Hay Castle building.

**Windows and doors** are important architectural details, and wooden sashes are the most common window type, reflecting the major period of re-building in the town, through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is considerable variety in the detailing and design of different sash windows, which is achieved, principally, through the overall size and proportions of the window and in the number of individual panes in each of the two sashes. Fashions changed through the decades, as did the technological possibilities of the glass available and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the size of windows began to grow, to let in more light. The availability of larger panes of plate glass, allowed for fewer panes within each sash, typically 2/2 rather than the earlier norm of 6/6. The heavier glass required a stronger timber structure and 'horns' were often used to strengthen the corners of the frames. Each individual building within the town has its own particular design and combination of glazing reflecting the era it was built, and / or re-built and the extent and approach to maintenance and repair.

**Shop fronts** are a very significant part of the overall streetscape and character of the town, with attractive retail frontages along much of Castle Street and within the core of the town centre including Lion Street, High Town, Market Street and The Pavement. Many of the shops retain traditional designs, following the principles set out in the National Park Shop Front Design Guide.



*Traditional shop fronts in Castle Street*

**Boundary walls** are very important in enclosing and defining space and ownership. The town has many good examples of random rubble sandstone walls and the topography of the area results in the use of retaining walls in many locations, including around much of the perimeter of the castle grounds, along Belmont Road and the small retaining wall along much of Broad Street. Walling also contributes significantly in unifying the streetscape, linking buildings together to form a cohesive whole.





*In Broad Street, the low retaining wall and natural stone paving on the raised pavement above are augmented by metal railings which help reinforce the steps between the two levels*

There are relatively few examples of traditional and / or original **surface materials** on roads and pavements within the town. Where, for example, stone cobbles have been retained, such as within the castle grounds, in front of George house, Church Street and in the passageway adjacent to the Kilvert's Hotel, they provide a very welcome contrast of texture and character. The predominant material is black tarmac for roads and pavements, although where alternatives are used, some of the more modern replacement materials within the streets of the town are not of a standard that matches the heritage qualities of the buildings and spaces around them, for example the concrete paving setts used for the Castle Street pavement and within the core of the town centre including, ironically, The Pavement!



*Attractive stone cobbles in Church Street (left) Hay Castle (centre) and close to Kilvert's Hotel (right)*

Hay-on-Wye has 145 Listed Building entries, of which Hay Castle is Grade 1 - all the others being Grade II. The majority of these are located within the current conservation area boundary and are identified on Figure 4.1. There are also a very significant number of buildings regarded as being of local importance that are categorised as being 'locally listed', also indicated on figure 4.1. Both the castle sites are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

One of town's strongest and most important assets is the manner in which the individual buildings form integrated and unified streetscapes and building groups. Only a few of the buildings within the conservation area are detached and the 'ensemble' of the street elevations is a major element of the character of Hay.

The **extent of intrusion and damage** to the qualities of the conservation area is an important issue that can manifest itself in a variety of ways:

- Poor maintenance leading to deterioration of the built fabric and potential loss of original materials and details;
- Inappropriate modern alterations with a dilution of heritage character and authenticity;
- Derelict or underused buildings that have a negative impact on the streetscape as well as being vulnerable to rapid deterioration;
- Gap sites that are visual eye-sores and damage the economic viability and value of adjacent buildings and businesses;
- Insensitive modern buildings that damage the integrity of the character of the area.

Hay is fortunate to have a relatively sound economic context with few buildings unused and sufficient commercial value of the building stock to encourage and facilitate good maintenance. The



book-selling function allows a great deal of flexibility in the types of space that is suitable allowing the reuse of a range of building typologies within the town. However, there are examples of each of the damaging criteria listed above and it is important to ensure that high standards are maintained and strengthened to retain the high quality environment that supports and reinforces the qualities of the town and its attractions as a tourism destination as well as a very pleasant place to live, work and visit.

The most prevalent of the issues that have a negative impact on the conservation area is the cumulative effect of small alterations to heritage buildings, particularly windows and doors, but also including gutters and downpipes, chimney stacks and pots, boundary walls and railings, roofing materials and architectural details. Replacement windows in uPVC materials come in a range of styles and some provide a close match to the original designs, incorporating sliding sashes. However, many have only a very superficial relationship with the character of the original timber windows with crude proportions, tilting opening mechanisms, and clumsy mouldings and detailing. Many are fitted closer to the plane of the building elevation than the original windows, with the loss of perceived depth of the building fabric and the consequent shadow and subtlety of appearance.

Satellite dishes usually sit rather uncomfortably in a heritage context and sometimes are grouped in clusters and unsympathetically located.



*Clusters of satellite dishes have a cumulative and detrimental impact on the heritage context when located unsympathetically (left). The uPVC window above the shopfront in this locally listed building (right) has the superficial appearance of a sash window but lack the subtlety of the detailing and mouldings of the genuine article. They look particularly inappropriate when the tilting mechanism of the upper pane is in the open position, for ventilation. The projecting satellite dish is again rather prominent in the streetscape.*

More detail on these issues is provided on section 13 of this document.

## 9. Definition of the Special Interest of the Conservation Area

Hay-on-Wye has the following particular assets:

- A spectacular, wider setting in a varied and high quality landscape, on the northern boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park and beneath the northern escarpment of the Black Mountains;
- A local setting adjacent to the River Wye (below right) and Dulas Brook and commanding a strategic position on the edge of the Wye Valley, a key route linking between England and Central Wales;
- A colourful history from its original founding in the Norman era as a defensive stronghold and garrison;
- Hay Castle as the focus for the town's history and development as well as the most prominent visual landmark within the town (below left);
- A potentially rich archaeology through the early medieval period to the transport and technological advancements of the C19;
- An intact medieval town plan focused around the castle;
- The physical traces of the town walls and their imprint on the layout of the town;
- An intricate townscape created by the combined effects of street layout, topography, the variety of building form and scale and the many small, characterful details that give a rich physical environment;
- 145 listed building entries and two scheduled ancient monuments;
- A substantial number of other locally important buildings and building groups, which have townscape value and which retain intact original details;
- A series of set-piece urban spaces including Broad Street, Castle Street, and the core of the town centre around the market area - Market Street, High Town, The Pavement and Lion Street;
- Local building materials, from the Old Red Sandstone and local bricks and, up to the late C19, lime based render; there are also extensive runs of rubble boundary walls and some traditional cobbles and setts ;
- Many building details that contribute to local distinctiveness, such as shop fronts, ironwork, sign writing, sash windows and panelled doors, chimney stacks and pots and decorative ridge tiles;
- A more recent history of 're-invention' as a town of books, with an international reputation reinforced by an annual festival of literature and arts and a programme of events through the year;
- A focus for tourism and leisure within the wider area, which has brought economic benefits to the town and contributed towards the restoration, repair and maintenance of many of the heritage buildings within the town.





## 10. Summary of Issues

Hay-on-Wye is a small town with a big history that has managed to find an identity and role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that brings economic benefits and income to the town, thus avoiding, to a significant extent, the fate of many historic buildings - to become disused and neglected with the consequent loss of heritage details and value. The retail function, particularly books, which is at the heart of the town's activities, allows a flexibility of building usage, such that former warehouses, shops, houses and recreational buildings are all potentially suitable to be used productively in the business. The many former inns and pubs that served the town in its market heyday provide a supporting stock of buildings offering food, drink and accommodation to augment the facilities for tourism, which also benefits from the broad range of activities available in the wider area, including walking, cycling, canoeing and riding. The charm and enjoyment of the town is intrinsically linked to its physical character and identity which in turn is integral with its history and the historic buildings that form the setting for the conservation area and town as a whole. There is therefore every reason why it should be to the benefit of residents, business owners and visitors to maintain the heritage value and quality of the town and its buildings.

There has been relatively little new development within the conservation area, largely due to the lack of significant suitable land and sites for development and the availability of existing buildings to provide the accommodation requirements for the town. What development there has been - generally small infill housing schemes - has been on sites that have not had a very direct impact on the overall quality and environment of the conservation area and which provide additional housing within the area, on brown field land.

The existing conservation area has a number of great physical assets, such as the listed buildings, a large number of characterful locally important buildings, coherent groups, a complex townscape, varying topography and a myriad of small but enjoyable details, such as the stone boundary walls and many good shop fronts.

There is some loss of heritage detail and character - and general design quality - in the replacement of original timber windows and doors with uPVC alternatives and in the loss of chimney stacks and pots, original (or replacement cast iron) rainwater goods, and in crude or poorly applied pointing or other repairs. There are few original or high quality replacement paving materials for roads and footpaths, although boundary walls and railings are largely retained throughout the area. The open spaces within the conservation area are important and provide the setting for the dense urban townscape. The trees within these spaces are also of importance.





## 11. Local Guidance and Management Proposals

Inappropriate modern alterations can adversely affect the subtlety, balance and proportions of building elevations and can also be physically damaging to the fabric of historic buildings. Important original features threatened by such alterations include shop fronts, timber sash windows, doors and door cases, cast iron handrails, railings, rainwater goods, and chimney pots and stacks. It is important, therefore, that property owners and occupiers adopt the right approach to repairs and the replacement of these features.

The key to the effective conservation of the built environment is in understanding it and the impact of any changes. Works should not be carried out without establishing:

- Why they are necessary;
- What they are trying to achieve; and
- Whether or not they might have any adverse consequences.

This involves assessing each site and building in terms of its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, its historic value, form of construction and technical performance, including the presence of defects or any other threats to the survival of its fabric. Expert advice should be sought on all major projects, preferably from an architect, building surveyor or planner who is experienced in working with historic environments. Even the simplest of operations should be based on an understanding of how a particular building 'works', in itself and in relation to its setting. Any work to larger buildings and buildings of exceptional historic value should be based on a comprehensively researched conservation plan. Conservation area designation does not prevent change but forms a framework in which the town can develop without losing any of the attributes which make it special.

### Maintenance

Regular maintenance of a building is the best and most economical way of conserving its fabric. Looking after a building is the responsibility of owners and occupiers. A building that is looked after will retain its value and the need for extensive repairs will be avoided. Protection from water and damp penetration is the most important issue. Roofs, gutters and down pipes should be the first to be repaired. Owners of large buildings might consider creating a maintenance plan based on annual visual inspections and a detailed survey every five years

### Day-to-day maintenance

Building owners and occupiers should ensure that the following tasks are carried out on a regular basis:

- **Clearing leaves** especially after the autumn with particular focus on gullies and rainwater goods. A period of heavy rainfall is the best time to identify faults.
- **Controlling plant growth** that can accelerate decay and sometimes cause structural damage. Ivy should be killed by cutting near the ground and allowing it to wither before attempting to remove its roots from the wall.
- **Removing bird droppings** that contain damaging salts. However, there are health and safety issues involved and large deposits should be removed by a specialist firm.
- **Looking for insect attack and fungal decay** both of which can be caused by damp penetration and poor ventilation.
- **Checking ventilation** to ensure that any grilles which ventilate the spaces under floors are not blocked. Lack of ventilation may lead to conditions in which fungal decay can take hold.
- **Clearing snow** which can accumulate in gutters and other areas, allowing moisture to bridge flashings and damp proof courses

## Purpose

Regular maintenance should minimise the need for major repairs to all buildings and repair of original features should always be the first option to be evaluated. However, some elements will eventually reach the end of their life, in which case consideration will have to be given to replacing using traditional materials and proven techniques of repair. The alternative is the loss of the historic value of individual buildings and the gradual erosion of the special interest of the conservation area. The purpose of the repair of any buildings within the conservation area is to prevent, or at least slow, the process of decay without damaging or altering features which contribute to its historic / architectural importance.



*A lack of on-going maintenance can lead to the deterioration of the built fabric if, for example, gutters are missing or roofs leaks are not repaired, with resultant water penetration into the vulnerable parts of the building.*

## Roofscape

The roof-scape of an urban area forms the skyline and visual profile of a streetscape and is a very significant part of its identity. The combination of materials, details, form and massing creates the 'hat', which sits above the building and is critical to its character. Although much of the detail may not always be visible from street level, the topography of Hay allows views towards, across and over the roof-scape from different parts of the area. The roof is, by its very nature, a critical part of a building's defence against the elements and, as such, is one of the most significant focal areas for regular maintenance and repair. This offers frequent opportunities for reinstatement and improvement as part of a buildings on-going care.

## Roof Coverings

Some older properties use stone tiles, but the predominant roof covering of traditional buildings within Hay is natural Welsh slate, which should be used for any works of repair or replacement. Ridges, verges and other details should all be bedded in natural lime mortars. Plastic clips or other such trim should not be used. Concrete and clay tiles are not appropriate on heritage buildings. Apart from the detrimental visual impact of the much 'coarser' appearance, they can also weigh significantly more than the original slate materials with resultant problems in the timber supporting structure. Imported natural slates that match the grey or heather blue colour of the original Welsh slate are a more cost-effective solution but it is important to source the slates from a reputable quarry to avoid longer term problems of compatibility when the slates weather. Artificial slate, although sometimes difficult to distinguish from natural material when new, weathers in a different way and will, over time, appear different from the genuine product. If insulation is introduced into the roof it should be placed at ceiling level, or between the rafters, subject to the provision of adequate ventilation (via eaves gaps, not proprietary vents fitted to the roof slope). Insulation on top of the rafters will raise the profile of the roof causing potential problems of detailing at the eaves and



where it abuts adjacent buildings. However, the introduction of high levels of insulation into older buildings can cause condensation and consequent decay.

### **Rooflights and dormers**

Where loft spaces are converted and roof lights or dormers are a necessity, they should only be situated on rear elevations as they break up the plane of the continuous roof slope on the street side. New dormer windows, where no previous dormers existed, should be avoided where possible, as they have a detrimental impact on the roof profile, scale and balance of the building's form and massing. Where original dormers exist, any changes to the proportions and overall size should also be avoided. Consideration should be given to using modern, double glazed versions of early cast-iron roof lights (to the correct proportion and size, complete with a vertical glazing bar) to retain the character of the roof as much as possible. Many window manufacturers have special Conservation Rooflights, which are designed to sit within the plane of the roof, rather than project significantly above it. These can be much less obtrusive and, combined with suitable materials, colours and details can fit comfortably into a heritage context.

### **Chimneys and Chimneypots**

Chimney stacks and pots add to the interest and variety of the skyline and streetscape. Chimneys should be retained and repaired with new clay pots provided as necessary. The stability of some tall chimney stacks might have to be investigated by a structural engineer. Where an original stack has been reduced in height (often capped with concrete slabs) then it should be rebuilt to its original height. Where no evidence of the pattern of the original stack exists, the style should be kept simple, but always with over-sailing corbelled courses at the head. If possible concrete bricks should be avoided and chimneystack should not be rendered. Lead flashing (the joint between the vertical surface and the roof covering) at the junction between the chimney and the roof should be stepped in the traditional manner and to Lead Sheet Association detail



*Chimneys are an important part of the roofline of a streetscape but the chimney pots form a very important element of the overall profile and it is detrimental to the overall character of the area if they are missing or damaged (left). Plastic guttering does not have the robustness of cast iron or aluminium and can warp (right) leading to poor drainage that may cause damage to the fabric of the building*

### **Guttering and downpipes**

Consideration should be given to using traditional cast iron (or cast aluminium) gutters when restoring heritage buildings. Simple half-round gutters should always be used on earlier buildings. Half-round and ogee pattern gutters are suitable for later buildings. Cheaper uPVC materials are not as robust as cast-iron or cast aluminium and are more susceptible to impact and weather damage, as well as warping, sometimes affecting the gradient and natural fall of gutters with consequent risk of leaks and water penetration into the building's fabric.

## Windows and glazing

Windows are the 'eyes' of a building and are the central focus of its character. The double-hung sliding sash window is typical of the majority of buildings in the town that were built before the early 20th century. Changes to the proportions of window openings and / or windows themselves invariably have a detrimental impact on the building facade as a whole. The incorporation of trickle vents should be avoided, due to their detrimental impact on overall character.

Original sash windows should always be retained and repaired, unless completely unfeasible. Replacement is very rarely necessary. Decay is usually focussed on the lower parts of the window where new timber can be spliced in. The original crown or cylinder glass is thinner and more uneven in surface than modern float glass giving more subtle reflections and where it has survived, should always be retained. Heavier modern glass is likely to require heavier sash weights to counter-balance the window. Where the window has to be replaced, rather than repaired, the new window should be in timber and an exact match of the original. Original stone cills should be retained wherever possible. If the stone cill is damaged beyond repair a reclaimed stone cill to match is the best alternative, or a concrete cill to the same proportions.



*The proportions of the replacement windows (left hand side of photo left) have no historic authenticity in contrast to the timber sash windows of the dwelling to the left side of the photo. Alternative designs such as those in the photo right, do not sit comfortably within the facade of the building.*

## Entrances and doors

Many of the issues that are relevant to windows and glazing are also applicable to entrances and doors. Where possible, traditional timber doors should be retained and repaired. Replacements, where necessary, should reinstate the original door style if known, or be in keeping with the period of original construction. Whilst traditional door patterns are, on the whole, more varied than windows there are some general principles that apply. Front doors were not generally glazed, where they have fanlights above, although later Victorian and Edwardian properties often had upper panels replaced by frosted and / or decorated glass. Fanlights, door cases and other ancillary features must always be preserved, repaired and maintained. The design and style of the ironmongery is also important and should match the design and style of the original door. External lever handles should be avoided.

**Porches and canopies** should reflect local traditions of simplicity and utility, with either flat, bracketed canopies or lean-to roofs on supports.



### **Access for the disabled**

It is necessary to provide access for the disabled, to conform with accessibility legislation. It is always important to ensure that the regulations and supporting guidance in the Disability Discrimination Act and in Part M of the Building Regulations are correctly interpreted for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. Where works of this nature are applied they should be done sensitively and with regard to the overarching principles of proportions, design, materials and workmanship that apply for the building as a whole. Early consultation with the building control department of Pembrokeshire County Council is recommended.

### **Street Level**

The quality of buildings at street level is particularly important in the commercial areas where buildings are frequently built tight to the back of the pavement and the combination of shop fronts, signage, canopies and fascias form the dominant visual impression of an area's character.

### **Pointing and wall finishes**

Lime mortar is preferable to hard cement mortars on repairs and extensions to historic buildings and pointing of stone and brick, on repairs and new-build, should follow traditional details, with flush, recessed or double-struck joints, ensuring that mortar does not extend over the surrounding brick or stonework. Existing lime mortar should always be replaced by the same material and advice on composition or techniques should be sought from the Authority's Building Conservation Officer. The employment of render is acceptable in most cases, with a preference for smooth finishes – lime-based render should be used for historic building repairs or extensions and cement based renders should be finished in white, off-white or a grey stone colour.

### **Repairing and reinstating traditional shop fronts**

The traditional shop front forms a 'frame' for the window display, comprising the fascia above, stall riser below and pilasters to either side. The proportions of each component should form a balanced composition. Entrance to the building may be central or to one side depending on the width of the property. Decorated steps in recessed doorways should be retained and repaired. The fascia should be finished at the top with a cornice moulding and contained on each side by a console or corbel, which acts as the capital to the pilasters. The use of tiles on stall risers will help to repel water and provide for a traditional detail.

Existing traditional shop fronts, or surviving components, should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Original features may be concealed beneath later facings. Where shop fronts have been completely lost but photographic evidence of their original design exists, a detailed replica is most appropriate. Where no evidence of the original exists, a modern design that follows the principles of the original 'framing' could be used. Where separate buildings have been combined to form a single unit, each building should have its own distinct frontage to maintain the rhythm and proportions of the streetscape. The same fascia should not be carried across both facades. The window should be sub-divided vertically to maintain proportions characteristic of the building and the context.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Shop Front Design Guide provides detailed guidance on the matter, with the following key principles for new and refurbished shop fronts:

- Respect the character of the existing building and its neighbours;
- Reinforce the local character of the area and contribute to or create a sense of place;
- Work towards enhancing the overall quality of the street scene;
- Clear identity, not a mixture or styles;
- Conserve existing historic features where possible - essential if the building is listed;
- Ensure neighbouring shop fronts are visually separate as to relate to each individual building;
- Maintain existing proportions to ensure each floor/element is clearly defined;

- Use symmetry and rhythm to relate shop fronts to upper floors, unless a strong horizontal emphasis exists to allow a different pattern;
- Clearly define the entrance to the shop and make it accessible;
- Integrate signs, lighting, and security measures into the overall design concept;
- Adapt company 'house styles' to suit the individual character of the area and building, avoid using arbitrary repetition and stretched logos;
- Use high quality materials and craftsmen; and
- Where a quality traditional shop front remains, the shop front shall be refurbished unless it can be fully justified that replacement is a better alternative.

### **Fascias, signs, canopies and blinds**

The dimensions and proportions of the fascia is a critical component of the overall character and appearance of the shop front. The fascia board should, generally, be no deeper than 400mm and should be kept well below the level of upper floor windows or projecting bays. Hand painted or individually fixed lettering in simple styles are preferable and should normally be no larger than 225mm in height. Perspex, plastic or box type signs should be avoided. Well designed and crafted projecting signs can enliven the street scene, although symbols are usually more effective than writing. Retractable blinds and canopies, without lettering, should be encouraged and should be a minimum of 2.1 metres above ground level.

### **Illumination**

Illumination of buildings is generally discouraged and rarely permitted, particularly following BBNPA's recent successful bid for Dark Skies status, which requires careful control of background lighting levels in all parts of the National Park.

### **Colour**

Colours are also an important part of the town's overall character. Render should normally be white, off-white or grey and painted timber should be white or the use of modern 'conservation' colours is acceptable; the use of black, other dark colours or dark stains on windows tend to deaden the effect of sub-divisions such as glazing bars; shop fronts should have more flexibility but the use of bright, discordant colours is discouraged and reflective, shiny surfaces should also be avoided.



*Overly bright and discordant colours should be avoided for painted render or for shop front designs (above left and right)*

### **Boundary walls and railings**

Although the retail areas of the town centres have buildings generally built tight to the back of the pavement, the boundary walls and railings within the conservation area as a whole are particularly important in their contribution to the overall character and quality of the street scene. Particular attention needs to be given to ensuring that boundary walls and railings are not removed to allow on-plot car parking. Ironwork should generally be painted in black, with dark green or a deep purple-



bronze as acceptable alternatives. In general, a limited range of colours will be more successful and result in a more coordinated and subtle overall appearance.

### **New development within heritage areas**

Generally, where new development and / or extensions are proposed it is important that they are guided by sound principles of urban design, as well as sympathetic detailing in relation to its historic context. It is particularly important to avoid standardized solutions, based on rigid and limited house types (in the case of a national or regional builder) or insensitive, badly detailed and scaled commercial responses (in the case of shop fronts and signage). All forms of new development within the conservation area should:

- Preserve and reinforce the 'local distinctiveness' and character of the town, including street patterns, open spaces and trees, plot boundaries and boundary treatments;
- Have regard for existing building lines and the orientation of existing development;
- Respond to the particular rhythm and articulation of the subdivision of the street scape and individual buildings in terms of bays and openings that break up the façade;
- Reinforce the distinctive character and grain of the particular character area of the town, through an informed understanding of its building forms and styles, features and materials. Pastiche forms of development and the superficial echoing of historic features in new buildings should be avoided;
- Respect the scale and massing of surrounding buildings. It is essential that new development is not out of scale with existing buildings by way of its height, floor levels, size of windows and doors, overall massing and roof scape;
- Maintain key views and vistas within, into and out of the Conservation Area; and
- Where possible, minimise the visual impact of parked vehicles and the provision of parking areas on the streetscape and landscape setting of historic streets and buildings.

Where new development is proposed for areas that are adjacent to, rather than within, the conservation area, it will be equally important to have care and consideration for the impact of the intended scheme on the qualities and character of the town as a whole. Where appropriate, all forms of new development should respect the principles listed above, with particular concern to:

- Ensure new development continues the local scale, form and materials in order to reinforce the distinctive architectural character of the immediate context;
- Consider the impact of new development on key views and vistas; and
- Ensure that new road layouts and parking arrangements have a limited impact on the streetscape qualities of the locality.

Good quality, contemporary designs may be appropriate in the conservation area, but the concern must be to avoid incongruous and low grade development

**Highway design standards** are very important determinants of design excellence and sensitivity in historic areas. The Highway Authority is encouraged to continue to work with the NPA and Town Council to maximize the considered use of design standards, to be flexible where appropriate and to use the most appropriate materials and finishes where financial resources permit.

### **Management and enforcement**

The National Park Authority (NPA) has existing planning powers to remedy such matters as the poor condition of land and buildings, urgent works and repairs notices for listed buildings and unlisted buildings and structures. The Town and Country Planning (General Development Order) 1995 provides permitted development rights for minor building works on residential properties, with some restrictions in conservation areas. By the use of an Article 4 Direction, permitted development rights may be further restricted, for residential developments. This may be seen as a last resort and the use of awareness-raising and positive advice may be the preference.

## **12. Contact Details**

The officer contact at the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is Rosie Burton, Senior Heritage Officer, on 01874 620433 or [rosie.burton@breconbeacons.org](mailto:rosie.burton@breconbeacons.org).

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