

An aerial photograph of the Greenock West End area, showing a dense urban layout with streets and buildings. A specific area is outlined in a dark green line, indicating the conservation area. The background is a light green color.

GREENOCK WEST END

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

March 2016



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1 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND JUSTIFICATION

1.1 Date and reason for designation

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas *“are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”* Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.

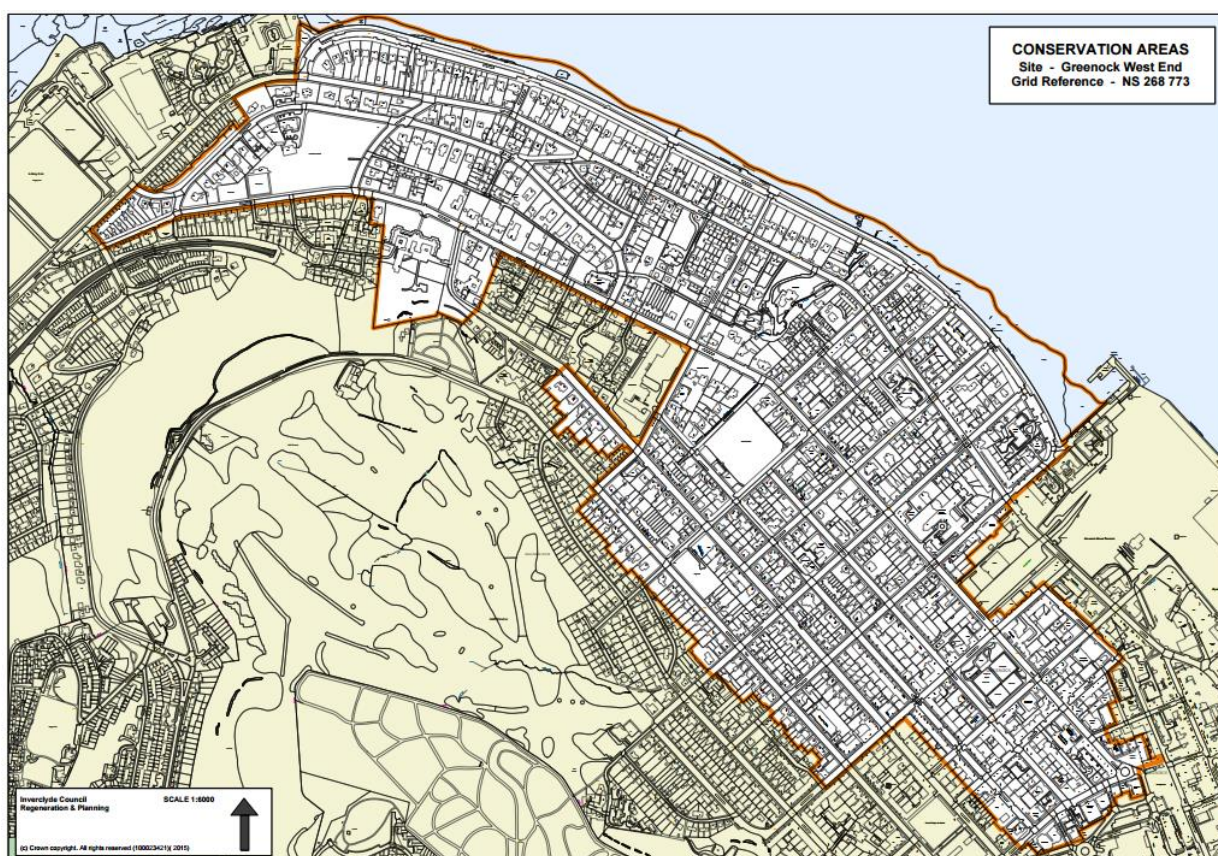
Greenock West End is a unique part of the urban heritage. It is an area in which a variety of styles of domestic and public architecture set in tree lined streets combine to provide a pleasant and desirable environment for residents and visitors alike. The architectural and historical significance of the West End was recognised in 1987 with the designation of the Conservation Area. The rationale behind the existing boundary is not

extant though it is understood that it was intended to be based on the Reid Plan of 1818. After extensive consultation, the conservation area was amended in 2007 to take account of the changes that had occurred since 1987. An Article 4 Direction for this new boundary was approved in 2009.

Conservation area status brings the following works under planning control:

- Demolition of unlisted buildings and structures
- Removal of, or work to, trees
- Development involving small house alterations and extensions, the installation of satellite dishes, roof alterations, solar panels, stone cleaning or painting of the exterior.

It is recognized that the successful management of conservation areas can only be achieved with the support and input from stakeholders, and in particular local residents and property owners.



Map 1 Conservation area

Source: Inverclyde Council

1.2 Purpose of appraisal

The purpose of the Conservation Area study is to identify and assess the special architectural or historical interest of the area along with those key elements that contribute to its character and appearance. These can then assist in defining the conservation area boundary and justifying any proposed alterations to it.

In addition, the study provides a basis upon which a programme can be developed by the Council to protect and enhance the conservation area through the identification of opportunities for enhancement and priorities for future management.

Planning authorities have a duty to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, although there is no imposed timeframe for doing so. The Act also indicates that planning authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated area in making planning decisions that affect the area. A more considered and careful approach is therefore needed in considering development proposals in a conservation area.

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the conservation area and identify any issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and assist in the enhancement of the conservation area
- Provide Inverclyde Council with a valuable tool with which to inform its planning practice and policies for the area

The appraisal conforms to Scottish Government guidance as set out in Planning Advice Note 71: Conservation Area Management (December 2004).

Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within Scottish Planning Policy (2014), Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) Historic Environment Scotland's series of Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes. Please note that SHEP should be read in conjunction with the legislation and regulations set out in the Historic Environment Circular which explained the legislative requirements of the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014.

This appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within and in the vicinity of the conservation area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the planning policies in the current Inverclyde Local Development Plan (2014):

- HER1 – Development which affects the Character of Conservation Areas;
- HER2 – Demolition in Conservation Areas;
- HER3 – Proposed New and Amended Conservation Areas;
- HER4 – Alteration, Extension and Demolition of Listed Buildings;
- HER5 – The Setting of Listed Buildings; and
- Any other relevant Local Development Plan policies

and the Supplementary Guidance on Planning Application Advice Notes. (PAANs)

1.3 Methodology

This appraisal has been prepared by the Scottish Civic Trust. The Trust was contracted in February 2016 to undertake a Conservation Area Character Appraisal of the Greenock West Conservation Area on behalf of Inverclyde Council.

A site survey of Greenock West End Conservation Area was carried out including a character assessment comprising: setting, views, activity and movement; street pattern and urban grain; historic townscape; the evidence of change from historic photographs and maps; spatial relationships; trees and landscaping; and negative factors.

The conservation area character appraisal and analysis are intended to help understanding and management of Greenock West End Conservation Area.

2 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE

2.1 Location

The Greenock West End Conservation Area lies to the west of Greenock and on the south bank of the River Clyde where it opens into the Firth of Clyde. Greenock is a town and administrative centre in the Inverclyde council area in Scotland located in the west central Lowlands of Scotland. It forms part of a contiguous urban area with Gourock to the west and Port Glasgow to the east.

2.2 Relationship to Greenock

The Greenock West End Conservation Area is one of eight conservation areas designated by Inverclyde Council, and one of two in Greenock. The Greenock Cathcart Square and William Street Conservation Area is a very small area separated from the West End Conservation Area by the A78 and modern development and interventions in the town centre.

2.3 Geology and topography

Greenock West End overlooks the widest stretch of the Inner Firth, east of the 'gateway' formed by the narrowing at Kilcreggan and Kempock Point. Greenock West extends inland on gentle slopes to reach the main through road of the A770. From here, the settlement extends uphill, rising to the Greenock Golf Course on the summit of Bow Hill.

Greenock sits in the Central Belt of Scotland. The rocks which form the foundations of the Central Belt are buried by younger rocks. The exact nature of the geological foundations of the Central Belt, therefore, is uncertain. However, fragments of rock which are thought to have been eroded from the foundation rocks of the Central Belt (before they became buried) are largely volcanic in origin.

3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The late mediaeval village of Greenock grew rapidly during the eighteenth century. The Act of Union in 1707 opened up the English colonies in America and the Caribbean to Scottish merchants. Providing a safe harbour between the mouth of the Clyde and Glasgow, Greenock was ideally placed to benefit from this new westward orientation of trade.

The town grew wealthy on the sugar trade, shipbuilding and related industries. By the end of the century pressure was growing for further expansion. Figure 1 shows the town in 1796.

A number of plans were prepared, at least two prior to 1800. In 1818 the Council adopted David Reid's 'Plan of the Town of Greenock and Its Environs, with the Intended Improvements'. This plan (see figure 2) envisaged four new grid style developments to the south and west of the existing town, of which the largest was the area now known as Greenock West End.

Reid's plan for Greenock West was for the grid to start at George Square and continue along the

existing Gourock High and Low Roads as far as Whitefordland Point. George Square had existed in theory since at least the 1790s. However, in practice it still was largely undeveloped in 1818. Figure 3 shows a detail from John Wood's map of 1825. It is clear that George Square, Ardgowan Square and the grid of streets still existed more on paper than on the ground.

The development of the area continued in an ad hoc way throughout the course of the nineteenth century with, on the whole, Reid's plan being adhered to.

McFarlane's map of Greenock (see figure 4) shows that by 1842 the shore was starting to be built up. Away from the coast, Brougham Street and Union Street were starting to take form.

The OS map of 1857 (see figure 5) shows the continuation of this trend. River front development now extended as far as what would become Roseneath Street. The building of the Mariners' Asylum extended the town along Newark Street (known at the time as High Gourock Road). The bowling green had appeared in the middle of Ardgowan Square, which itself was only partly built up.



Figure 1 Detail of Greenock on J Ainslie's map of County of Renfrew, 1796

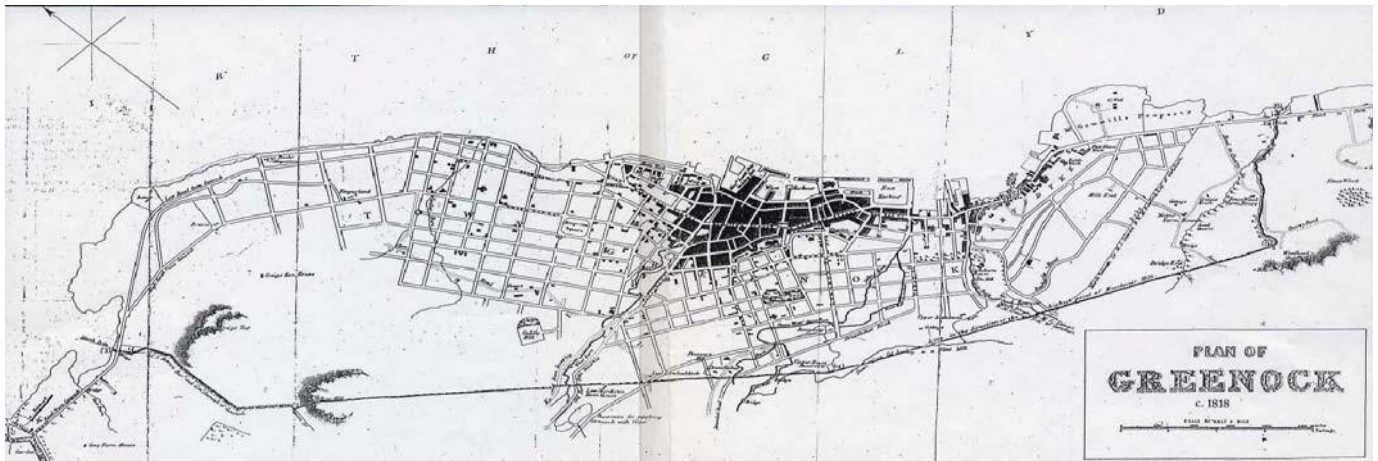


Figure 2 David Reid's plan of 1818



Figure 3 Detail of Ardgowan Square-George Square area from John Wood's map of 1825

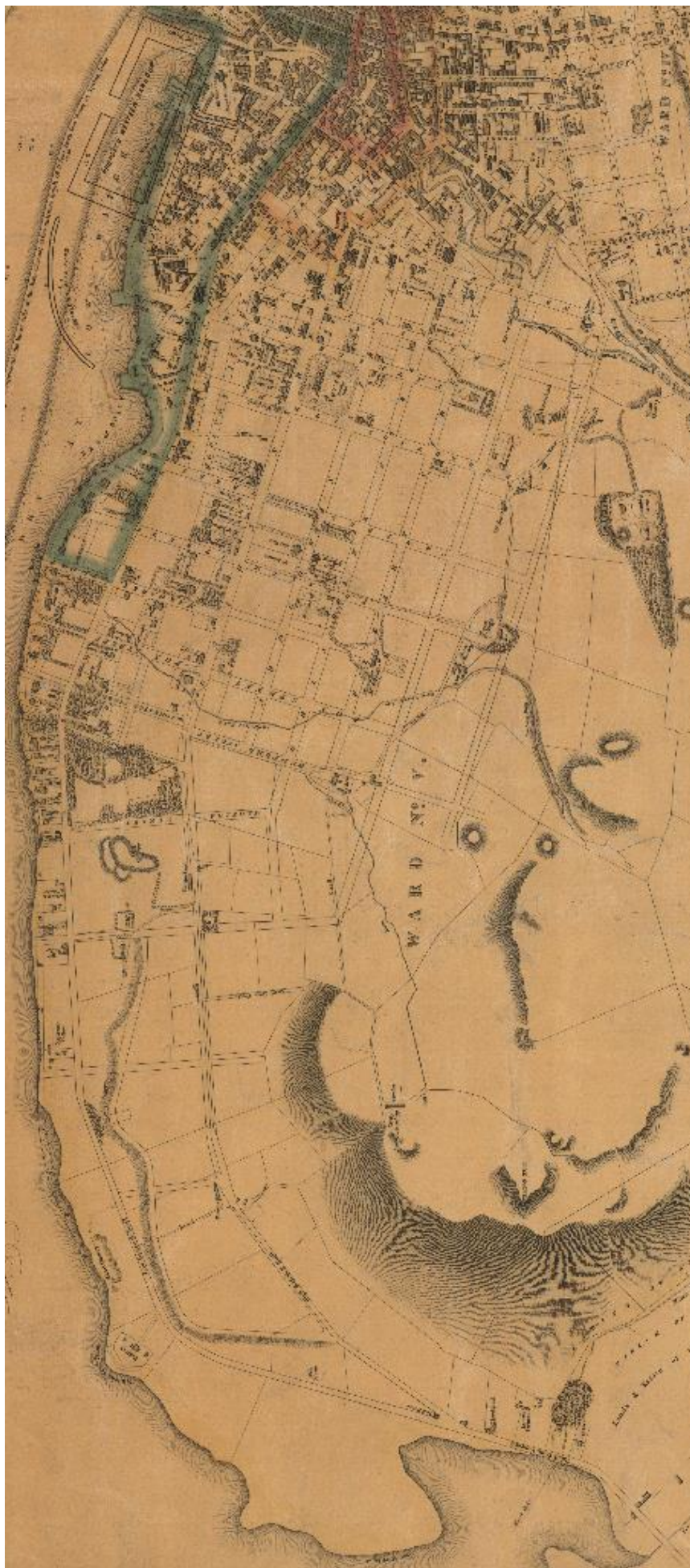
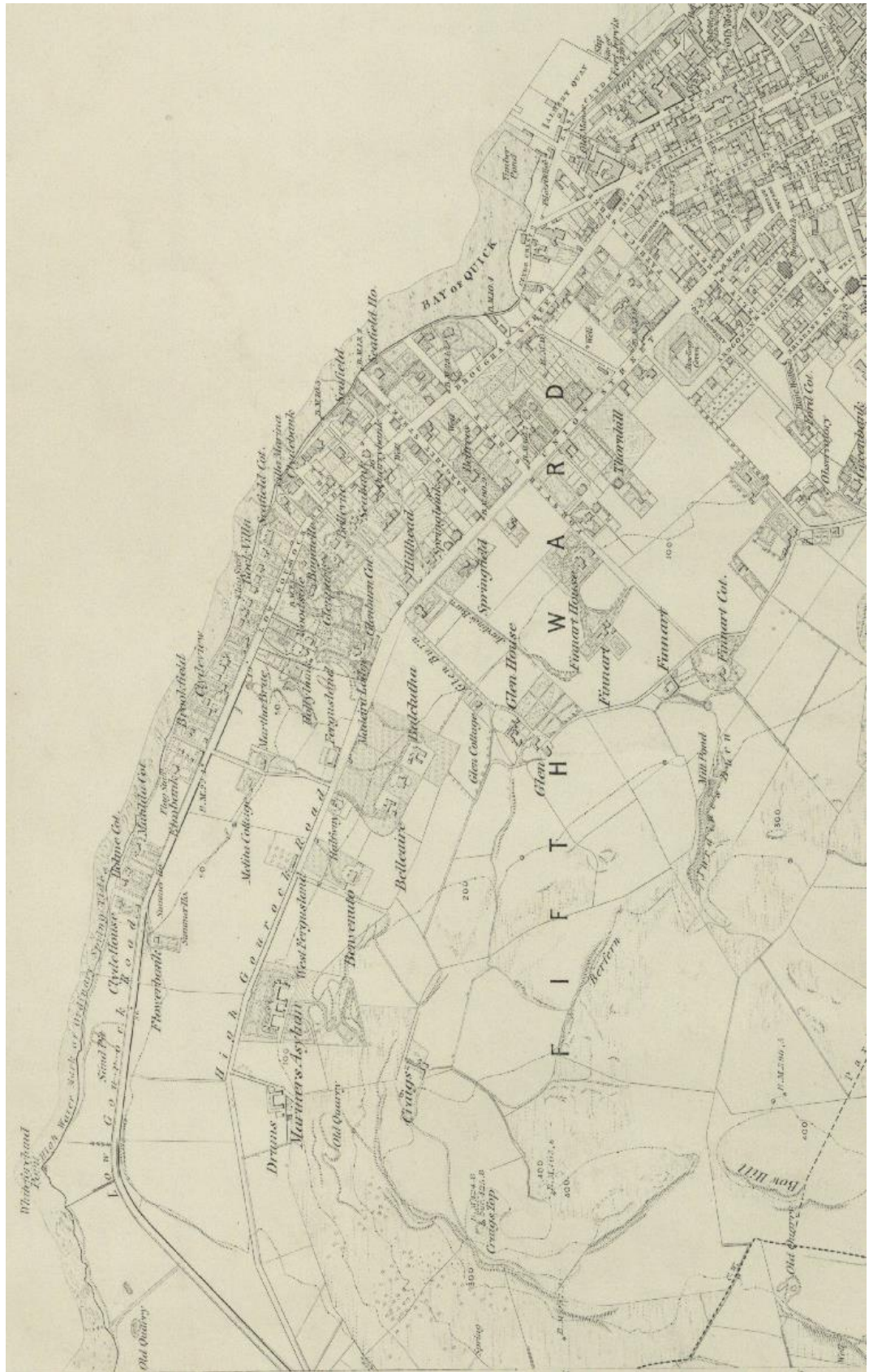


Figure 4 Detail from A McFarlane – Greenock 1842



The 1857 map shows that most of the linking roads between Newark Street and Eldon Street had not been constructed. At this point the Esplanade had not been built. Road access to these grand villas was from Brougham/Eldon Street. The Esplanade was built from 1863-76 using material excavated during the construction of the Albert Dock.

Lack of a water supply had acted as a break on expansion of the town. This was finally overcome in 1872 with the completion of the Gryfe reservoir. The 1897 OS map (Figure 6) records a very different picture from the 1857. The grid envisaged by Reid was largely complete as far as Finnart Street. Newton Street and South Street were

partially developed. The grid pattern was never to be fully extended along these streets as proposed in the 1818 plan.

The street pattern from Newton Street up to the shore had largely been finalised in form that it exists today. A notable exception is Houston Street from Patrick Street to Robertson Street. In Reid's plan Houston Street was to run from West Stewart Street through to Campbell Street (Figure 3). By the time of the production of the 1910 OS map the Patrick Street to Robertson Street section had been laid out. However, Reid could not have anticipated the impact of the railways which took up much of the land between Robertson Street and Campbell Street.



Figure 6 Detail of OS map of 1897

4 Character and appearance

4.1 Spatial analysis

4.1.1 LAYOUT AND ACTIVITIES

The Greenock West End Conservation Area stretches north westward from the town centre occupying a broad section of land along the Clyde Estuary. The area is predominately residential, however by the very nature of such a large suburban area there are other commercial and public uses. The pattern of use is broadly related to proximity to the town centre. At the eastern end of the conservation area there is a concentration of public buildings and commercial uses, diminishing as the streets progress to the west. As will be described in section 4.3, spatial pattern and activity are significant factors in defining three Character Areas within the conservation area: South East, Central and North West.

The **South East Area** is bounded by Nelson Street, Brisbane Street, Robertson Street and Union/Houston Streets, chiefly developed during the first half of the 19th century. The area from George Square to Ardgowan Square is urban in nature with a concentration of civic buildings around George Square and on Nelson Street including seven churches (or former churches), and the Greenock Sheriff Court. The principal thoroughfare is Union Street with the Watt Library and its late Georgian villas which are commonly occupied by professional services such as solicitors' firms. Beyond this commercial activity the streets become residential.

By contrast, the **North West Area** is almost entirely residential. This area extends along the waterfront Esplanade and uphill on Eldon Place and Bentinck Street to encompass Octavia Terrace and the west end of Newark Street including the Sir Gabriel Wood's

Mariners' Home. The area is separated from the bustle of the town centre, although the principal east – west roads including the Esplanade and Eldon Street are busy traffic routes.

The **Central Area**, spans between the denser urban core and lower density North West. Like the latter it is also largely residential but the density of development is greater.

As discussed in Section 3, the layout of the conservation area was set out on a formal grid plan with principal streets running east – west and cross streets connecting those. The grid blocks are not uniform in size and vary in particular in length north to south to meet the principal streets. This is partly due to Reid's Plan accommodating the existing Gourock High Road (now Union /Newark Street) and Gourock Low Road (now Eldon /Brougham Street).

The regular grid realigns itself west of Johnston Street to accommodate the curve of the coast line and the block pattern is larger and looser, becoming more organic in the gently curving Octavia Terrace. The street pattern changes from buildings addressing the street and built close to the street line, to detached houses set back from the road in larger plots. A large section of the area between the Esplanade and Eldon Street has large single plots addressing the Esplanade, with houses originally accessed from Eldon Street.

4.1.2 OPEN SPACES, TREES AND LANDSCAPE

The tight urban grain of the east end of the conservation area means that open space and landscape are not a prominent feature. The principal open space is Ardgowan Square occupying a full urban block where a bowling green and curling pond were established in the early 19th century (McFarlane), now a

bowls and tennis club. Its well-tended grounds enclosed with decorative iron railings include an attractive Arts and Craft pavilion (1926). This was the only square indicated on Reid's Plan apart from the transitional George Square, a much smaller organic space where the new grid met the existing late 18th century town. The other major green spaces are the playing fields on Newark Road, the cricket club occupying another full block on Brisbane Street between Fox and Bedford Streets, and a small play park on the corner of Newton Street and Fox Street. Significant green open spaces lie outwith the conservation area to the south-west just beyond development including Lyle Park and Lyle Hill and adjacent Greenock Golf Club and Greenock Cemetery. These major, semi-natural landscapes provide an important green backdrop to the conservation area.

The most prominent open space in the conservation area is the Esplanade, set out from 1863-76. This broad shore line promenade is over a mile long along and offers open views out over the Clyde Estuary extending from the docks to Whiteforeland Point.

Whilst open green space is not prevalent, private gardens and mature trees introduce greenery through many parts of the conservation area. Road side trees are an attractive feature in several of the urban blocks; for example Campbell Street, Forsyth Street, Glen Street and on Union Street west of Campbell Street. In the west end of the conservation area where larger garden grounds exist their contribution is very positive in softening in particular the broad thoroughfares of Eldon Street and Newark Street.



Figure 7

Top left: Esplanade

Bottom left: Ardgowan Square, Ardgowan Bowling and Tennis Club showing pavilion

Right: Tree-lined Forsyth Street

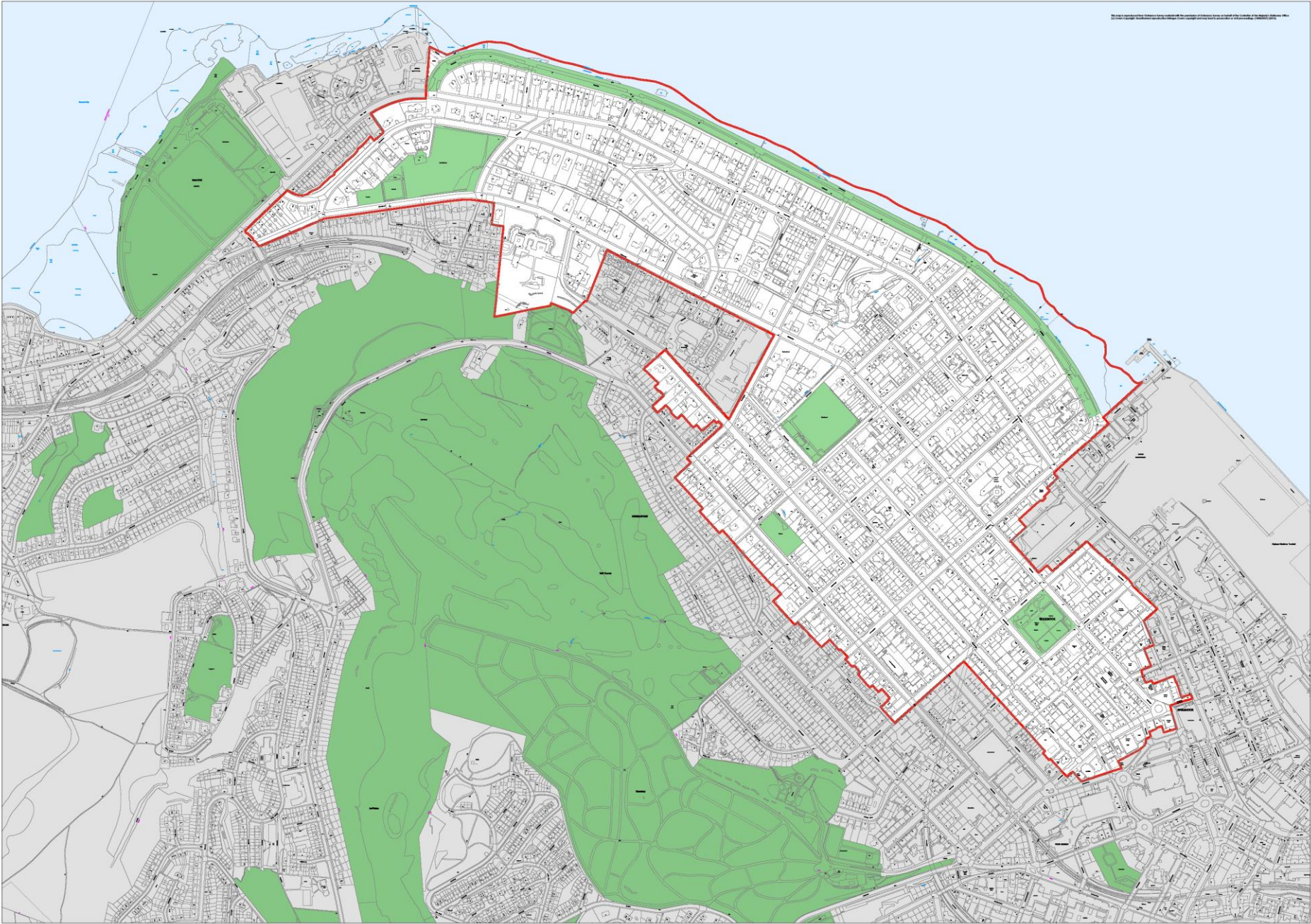




Figure 8 View from Finnart and Madeira Street across the roofscapes of the conservation area and over the Clyde Estuary to Helensburgh



Figure 9 View on Brisbane Street to Westburn Church enclosed by 3-storey tenements



Figure 10 Cross Street view north on Margaret Street closed by the River Clyde



Figure 11 Sir Gabriel Wood's Mariners' Home

4.1.3 VIEWS, LANDMARKS AND APPROACHES

In an area which was predominately designed for residential use, the landmarks are frequently public buildings, especially churches and larger houses. There is a concentration of landmarks around George Square and extending from there on Nelson Street and Union Street, namely: Greenock Sheriff Court, former St George's North Church, Greenock West United Reformed Church, St John's Episcopal Church, Westburn Church and the Watt Library / McLean Museum and Art Gallery.

Churches played an important role in 19th century Scotland and the diversity and scale of worship has left its legacy in the number of surviving church buildings. Around George Square alone there were ten churches in the mid-19th century (1st Ed. OS Town Plan, 1857), before the construction of St George's and the Baptist Church which is close to the south and east sides of George Square today. Eight of these churches remain in the conservation area boundary although only four are in use as they were designed.

A further two churches notably punctuate the grid: the Lyle Kirk (Union St) just east of Campbell Street provides a marker on this long route and further west the red sandstone Lyle Kirk (Newark Street; former Finnart St Paul's) stands out on its corner site at Bentinck Street. On the Esplanade, the Old West Kirk occupies the corner site at the eastern end of the promenade.

The most significant landmark in the North West Area is the Sir Gabriel Wood's Mariners' Home set back in large grounds on Newark Road.

The grid form plan of the conservation area creates long vistas east – west especially on its broad principal streets. On Union Street looking west, the predominate low 2-storey scale of the early 19th century town houses is broken by the tall square tower and steeple of St John's Episcopal Church. In the distance trees which line the mid-section of Union Street /Newark Street after Campbell Street are visible. Other tree-lined streets also create a green enclosed view during much of the year.

Travelling east on Union Street and Brisbane Street the vistas are closed by the landmark church towers of St George's North Church and the Westburn Church respectively, each providing an important marker to indicate the town centre is approaching. A good example is the vista on Brisbane Street at Campbell Street where the tall 3-storey tenement blocks frame the façade and slender spire of the Westburn Church.

Passing cross streets, views are glimpsed downhill (north) to the Clyde and south to the rising ground and Lyle Hill beyond. Madeira and Johnston Streets provide good open views to the Clyde; others at the east end of the conservation area are closed by buildings.

On the Esplanade wide open views are available across the Firth of Clyde to Helensburgh on its northern shore and westward to the confluence with Gare Loch and Loch Long. The conservation area rises gradually uphill from the waterfront to the elevated sites on Octavia Terrace and Newark Street providing views across the roof scape of the suburb and beyond.

4.2 Buildings and townscape

4.2.1 TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

The Greenock West End Conservation Area was largely constructed over the course of the 19th century and this has created a rich and diverse townscape character. The range of traditional building styles and periods reflect the town's historic development and includes some fine late Georgian town houses constructed in the early 19th century, mid and later 19th century tenements and terraces, and grand embellished Victorian civic buildings and churches. There are also a small number of early 20th century buildings.

Spatially, there is a strong linear theme generated by the broad thoroughfares east to

west. The height and density of development recedes toward the west and this creates variety in the townscape character despite the regular grid plan. Throughout there is a consistency of scale, with 2 and 3-storeys predominating. The denser urban core of the South East Area is defined by a stronger street enclosure due to its large civic buildings, 2-storey town houses and 3-storey tenements close to the street line. In contrast, the North West Area is lower in density and has a looser physical enclosure due to houses set back from the road. Here the street line is often maintained by boundary walls and hedging. In contrast the cross streets can be more intimate, narrower and tree-lined such as Forsyth Street.

The townscape of the **South East Area** reflects its earlier development. The earliest survivors are 2-storey 3-bay symmetrical town houses often with basement and attic. There are good examples on Union Street with those on the west corner of Kelly Street and Jamaica Street appearing on Wood's 1825 map. The Tontine Hotel, built in 1803, is a very fine example of the period addressing Ardgowan Square. These early 19th century buildings are refined and restrained in their classical detailing with polished ashlar facades. The simplicity and subdued architectural refinement of these buildings is interrupted by grander Victorian public and religious buildings which add architectural vibrancy and articulation of the skyline.

Beyond Nelson Street and Union Streets, much of the South East Area comprises 3-storey tenements constructed in the second half of the 19th century. Earlier tenements are plainer, without the later Victorian preference for projecting bay windows, and following 3, 5 and 7 bay patterns with large expressed stair entrances. Travelling west on Brisbane Street illustrates this architectural development very well.

The **Central Area** is more varied in architectural style and property type. The range of residential property in this area includes single storey cottages (Glen Street), small to medium sized detached and semi-detached houses, terraced houses and a small representation of tenements. The consistency of traditional property varies, with Finnart Street providing good examples of the principal building styles i.e. small early Victorian detached houses 3-bay and 2-storey, and more elaborate mid Victorian semi-detached houses with semi-circular entrances and projecting bow window bays. Brisbane and Ardgowan Streets are more mixed and Eldon Street has the largest percentage of later 20th /21st century development.

The **North West Area** was largely developed in the later decades of the 19th century. The property style is predominately detached and semi-detached villas set back from the street in garden grounds. Villas are positioned to take advantage of the rising ground and views across the Clyde Estuary. The principal streets, the Esplanade, Octavia Terrace, and the west end of Newark Street provide numerous examples of this property type. Houses on the Esplanade reflect the street's longer period of development with several houses from the first half of the 19th century. Houses become more elaborate in their architectural detail, and larger in size as the century progresses such as those at the west end of the Esplanade and on Octavia Terrace. There are later houses (infill or redevelopment of earlier sites) on both. South of Octavia Terrace on Newark Street a group of large mansions provide a fitting context for the Mariners' home and former Finnart St Paul's Church.

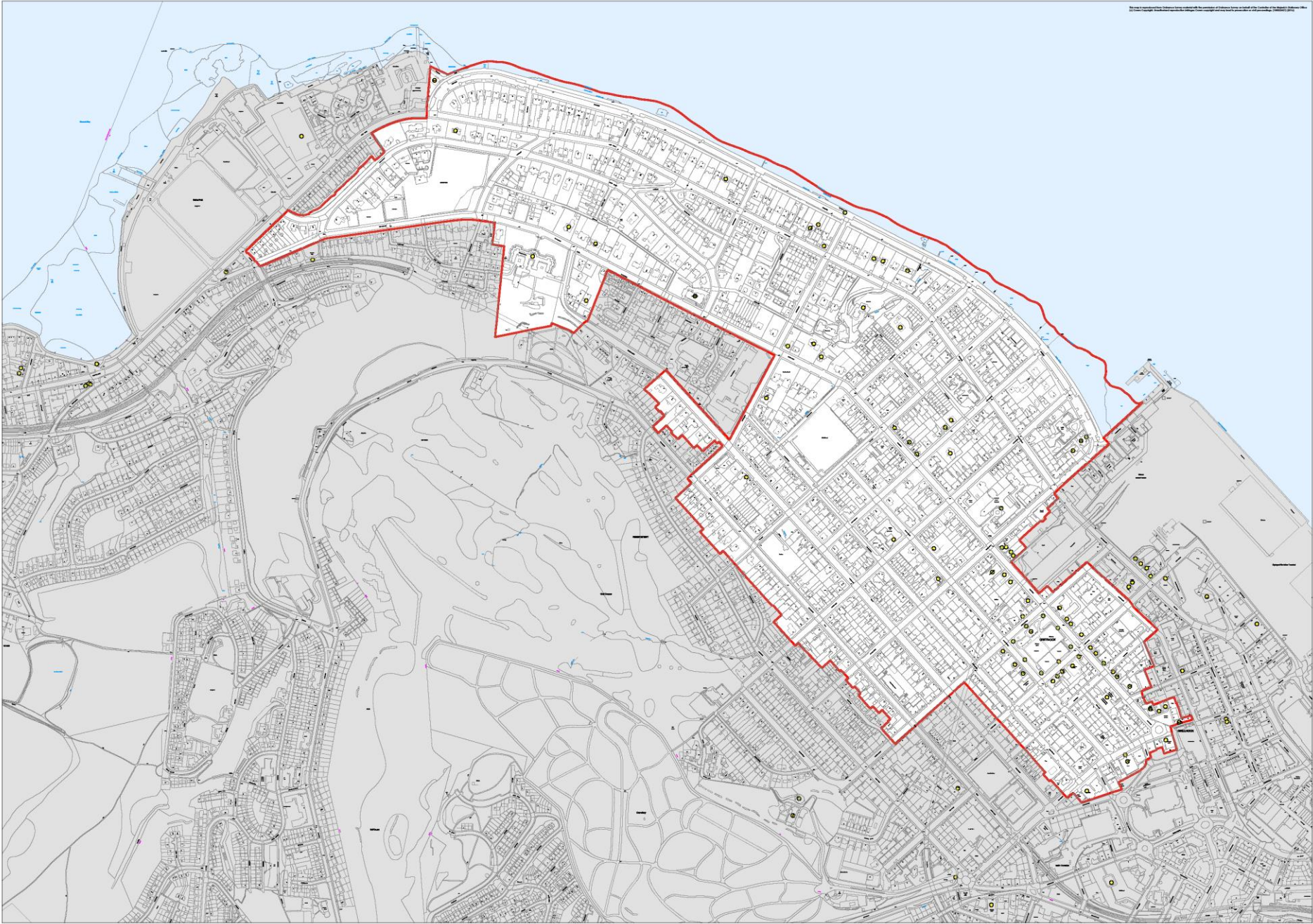
4.2.2 KEY LISTED AND UNLISTED BUILDINGS

There are 109 listed buildings in total in Greenock (Appendix 1). Map 3 below shows listed and unlisted buildings in the Greenock West End Conservation Area. Each list entry may cover more than one building. Several buildings are also listed for their group value.

The conservation area contains a significant proportion of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Such buildings are generally historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This principally includes: late Georgian/ early Victorian town houses; mid and late 19th century tenements and terraced houses; and later Victorian and Edwardian villas.

Map 3 Listed and unlisted buildings

Source: Inverclyde Council



Key buildings and building groups



Former St George's North Church, George Square

Category B

A refined Renaissance style church built in buff sandstone ashlar dominated by its tall stone steeple with open crown. Designed by Salmon Son & Ritchie in 1870 for United Free Church. Not in use as a place of worship since at least 2009, it is understood to have been disused since that time but currently under repair (BARR, 2016, Restoration in Progress).



Greenock West United Reformed Church, George Square

Category B

Tudor Gothic in style with a well detailed ashlar façade which addresses the square opposite St George's. Designed by John Baird I in 1839-40. Formerly the George Square Congregational Church until union with the Nelson Street Congregational Church.



St John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, Union Street

Category B

St John's was built for the Episcopal faith, replacing their earlier church on this site, and still in use as such. Designed by Paley & Austin, Lancaster 1877 in Gothic style using coursed snecked buff sandstone. The south-east tower, with a very finely slated pyramid roof, marks the corner of Union Street and Jamaica Street.



Greenock Sheriff Court

Category B

A significant example of civic architecture and important early example a public building in Scots Baronial style. Designed by Peddie & Kinnear 1867-69 and built in buff sandstone ashlar. The Court has a distinctive central 4-stage tower with pyramidal roof, bartizans and open spire and elaborate roofline with crow-stepped gables and pinnacle dormers. It forms a focal point on Nelson Street.



Tenements

Unlisted

Tenements are a significant building type in the conservation area especially in its eastern section. Examples range from the early Victorian blocks on and around Brisbane Street without projecting bays and distinguished by their tall expressed stair entrances; to the stand alone blocks some of which have flamboyant details such as the red sandstone block which extends between Margaret and Fox Streets on the Esplanade, which distinguishing tall corner bays capped with cast iron crown finials.



Westburn Church, Nelson Street

Category A

A simple classical style church built in 1840-1 for the Church of Scotland by architect D Cousin (formerly The Old Kirk; St Luke's). The central 5-stage steeple, which includes clock faces, was added in 1854 and vies for attention with that of the neighboring St George's.



Nos 12-22 Union Street

Category C

Good examples (although some with incremental change) of the 2-storey 3 bay and basement symmetrical town house model used for the earlier development of Reid's Plan. All with expressed entrances such as the Ionic portico on No.12, some built before 1825.



Tontine Hotel Category A and

153 /155 Finnart Street Category B

Two examples of early mansions. The Tontine Hotel was built in 1803, a grand 3-storey, basement and attic mansion with 5-bay 'palace' frontage in fine ashlar and single storey wings. No. 153/5 Finnart Street predates Wood's Plan (1825) and appears as 'Glen' on McFarlane. Whilst more modest in size it exhibits the key features of central pediment and side wings (now painted).



Lyle Kirk, Newark St

Category A

This finely detailed church in Late Gothic style was built in 1893 and formerly known as Finnart St Paul's. Designed by Sir R Rowand Anderson, it does not have a tower, however it stands out on the corner of Bentinck Street due to its contrasting construction in red sandstone squared rubble.



Birnam, Nos. 88 and 90 Newark Street

Category B

A more unusual villa designed by T.L. Watson in Early Renaissance style with an ogee-domed octagonal tower. One of several large villas in this section of Newark Street opposite the Mariners' home.



Sir Gabriel Wood's Mariners' Home, Newark Street

Category A

Gabriel Wood (1767-1845) bequeathed funds that a Mariners' Home be established for the reception of fifty Merchant Master Mariners and Seamen. The seven acre site was chosen on the outskirts of the town and Exeter architect Robert MacIntosh designed this extensive 2-storey Tudor style frontage with central tower. Set back with manicured lawns and an imposing gateway on Newark Street this is still in use as a care home.



Finnart Street

Unlisted

Finnart Street provides good examples of the more elaborate mid to late Victorian semi-detached houses with semi-circular entrances and projecting bow window bays. Similar examples can be found in the conservation area including Brisbane Street.



Esplanade Houses

Unlisted

Later Victorian houses at the west end of the Esplanade display typical architectural features of the period such as projecting canted and bow bay windows and expressed eaves with timber detailing. The fenestration is generous taking advantage of the open Clyde views and easier availability of plate glass.



Lyle Kirk, Esplanade /Campbell Street Category B

The current church, dating from 1926 and attributed to James Miller architect, incorporates components from a much longer history. The previous church completed in 1864 to designs of James Salmon, was on a site close by, and purchased by Harland and Wolff who in turn provided this new site. The church is said to have been moved 'stone by stone' and followed the previous church plan with a new steeple. The single storey, steeply-pitched church hall (1925) was built by Harland and Wolff to provide a temporary place to worship while the new church was built.



Figure 12 Buff sandstone



Figure 13 Turret with fishscale patterning and finial



Figure 14 Crown finials

4.2.3 MATERIALS AND LOCAL DETAILS

Throughout the conservation area the traditional buildings use a coherent palette of building materials and techniques, including sandstone masonry, Scots slate roofs and timber windows and doors, the detailing on each dependant on the period of the building. In general buildings in the conservation area take three forms: 1) architecturally refined late Georgian and Regency; 2) plain / transitional mid-Victorian; and 3) more elaborately detailed late-Victorian work. The development of architectural styles, building techniques and availability of materials are all reflected in their construction and design.

Masonry walls most clearly illustrate the period of building. The late Georgian buildings have dressed ashlar, often restricted to the façade with raised stone margins and quoins to add refinement. The Victorian period favoured dressed stonework in a variety of finishes such as coursed snecked or squared rubblework. There is a predominance of buff sandstones (possibly of local origin), but there are also red sandstones, commonly used for later tenement blocks. There are also one-off buildings for example the Former Eye Infirmary (1893; now Ardgowan Hospice) on Nelson Street with attractive red brickwork and red sandstone detail in Arts and Crafts style, but these are exceptions.

Roofs are predominately pitched, commonly double pitched with gable end chimney stacks or piended (hipped) roofs on later Victorian buildings. There are several striking turrets often with detailed slate work including fishscale patterning. Examples include both grand public buildings (Greenock Sheriff Court) and Victorian houses (No. 43 Brougham Street).

Properties without piended roofs have skews, all flat skews exception where crowsteps have been used for architectural effect. Later Victorian houses have projecting timber eaves with gable bargeboards and embellishment at the roofline with cast iron finials, weathervanes and decorative ridges. There are notable examples such as the crown finials which terminate the octagonal corner bays of the imposing red sandstone tenement of the Esplanade.

Roof finishes are generally continuous without original



Figure 15 Canted dormers



Figure 16 Timber windows, and door with rectangular lay light



Figure 17 Glazed ceramic tiles

rooflights or dormers. There are exceptions including the single storey and attic houses on Finnart Street with original gable fronted dormers with decorative timber bargeboards. However, there are examples of traditional dormers often canted which are likely to be additions to earlier properties.

Chimney stacks were an essential part of traditional properties and remain an important functional and aesthetic feature. There is considerable variety in the conservation area ranging from short plain stacks to tall expressive stacks, an important feature of the roofscape and skyline.

Windows are generally timber sash and case and vertically proportioned. Windows are now commonly painted white, but there are also frequent examples of a tradition to paint windows black with contrasting white painted putty. There are various glazing patterns found within the conservation area, again reflective of the building period, with six over six panes for the earliest buildings, later two over two, or one over one. There are examples of distinctive curved windows, for example on the bow corner bay on No 43. Brougham Street. Timber doors are generally panelled and painted in a variety of colours, often with a rectangular lay light above the door.

Door surrounds are a particular feature on properties from all periods ranging from early examples with simple pilastered door pieces to more substantial columned porticos in a variety of Classical designs on larger villas. A strong feature of the earlier tenements on and around Brisbane Street are tall elongated stair entrances with stone pilasters and cornices above. Unfortunately very few retain their original timber panelled doors and large rectangular lights above, but there is a good surviving example at No.15 Robertson Street. Other later tenements have glazed ceramic tiles to their closes for example on Campbell and Brougham Streets.

There appears to have been little commercial activity in the conservation area however there are a small number of traditional shopfronts for example a short row on Union Street /Kelly Street corner and Kelly Street/Brisbane Street with some surviving traditional detailing and fabric including slim windows mullions and cornicing.



Figure 18 George Square hard landscaping



Figure 19 Cast iron canopy



Figure 20 John Galt Memorial Fountain and staircase

4.2.4 PUBLIC REALM

Road and pavement surfaces are generally tarmac, with several areas of more recent brick pavements. Whin kerbs are generally used alongside these modern finishes. Whilst tarmac surfaces are unobtrusive, they do not enhance the conservation area, and brick pavements can detract from the adjacent traditional buildings and structures. The hard landscaping and traffic management of the small open space in George Square has been recently renewed in modern materials with some planting alongside existing ornamental flowering trees. The modern finishes do not contribute to this historic setting and the significant buildings which enclose the square. Areas of original road setts can still be found, commonly at driveways and there is also a surviving section of pavement setts on Bentinck Street.

Throughout the conservation area, including key public spaces such as the Esplanade, the street furniture comprises the usual litter bins, benches, street lamps and bus shelters of standard off-the-peg designs. There are also frequent runs of galvanized metal pedestrian roadside railings. These standard modern designs do not enhance the conservation area or the setting of the adjacent traditional buildings.

More positively, boundary walls from the Georgian and Victorian periods make an important contribution in all character areas. This includes both public, religious and private residential properties. In general public buildings and churches have low sandstone boundary walls and cast iron railings; the Watt Library has a more robust sandstone balustrade on a low rough faced rubble wall which encloses its grounds on Union /Kelly and Watt Streets. Further along Union Street, the Ardgowan Club grounds are enclosed by tall decorative cast iron railings and stone gate piers. In the South East and Central Character Areas properties are commonly raised above the street level over basements. Their light-wells are enclosed in traditional cast iron railings and handrails to the stone slab entrance staircases. Good examples can be found on both the individual town houses and tenements along Union and Brisbane Streets. On the latter there are two very good examples of decorative cast ironwork: Nos 42-48 with highly decorative Grecian style enclosures, and Nos 27-32 with decorative railings and staircase handrails.



Figure 21 Low walls with hedges



Figure 22 Buoy on the promenade



Figure 23 Painted stone walls



Figure 24 Cement-based repairs

Cast iron work appears to have been used less in the North West Area where earlier properties have higher stone boundary walls for enclosure evident along the Esplanade and on Eldon Street. In the later villas for example on Octavia Terrace, low stone walls and hedging are more frequent.

There appear to be few public monuments from the Victorian era in the conservation area. There are three items of interest on the Esplanade: a small cast iron fountain / canopy in the grounds of a property close to the Old West Kirk; the prominent John Galt Memorial Fountain and staircase which leads up to Roseneath Street; and a large buoy placed on the promenade.

4.2.5 CONDITION

The vast majority of the buildings within the conservation area are traditionally constructed and remain robust and functional. On observation from the street level, their general condition appears to be fair, however stonework on some properties showed signs of water ingress particularly at high level which may be an indication of repair and maintenance issues.

One of the greatest threats to any heritage site is the loss of primary fabric through lack of maintenance or inappropriate repair and replacement, reducing the authenticity of the site. A common significant threat is the use of inappropriate modern materials and details, such as replacement windows, doors and shopfronts, and impervious cement mortars, renders and paints.

Several buildings had minor stone decay and spalling particularly around entrances and at low level were affected by water erosion. Several buildings and boundary walls appear to have inappropriate cement based repairs. A small number of buildings appear to have cement based render and /or modern film forming paints applied to their masonry walls or the features such as entrance porticos. Attention should be drawn to the risk associated with impermeable materials and finishes and opportunities taken to repair in traditional materials



Figure 25 Windows replaced in uPVC

when they arise. Painting of stone walls should be discouraged on both technical and aesthetic grounds.

A significant number of original windows and doors have been replaced particularly on the tenement properties. Replacements in uPVC and/or non-traditional fenestration patterns and opening methods can have a negative effect on both the character and quality of individual buildings and a cumulative impact on the character of the conservation area as a whole. Similarly, whilst few in number, traditional shopfronts are an essential part of the townscape, and low quality and inconsistency of design and materials can visually detract.

There is only one entry within the conservation area on the Buildings at Risk Register, compiled by Historic Environment Scotland. This is the former St George's North Church, however the property has been moved to 'Restoration in Progress' status in March 2016.

4.3 Character Areas

An analysis of the Greenock West End Conservation Area indicated that it can be divided into three character areas, roughly according to historical development; street pattern and layout; built form; and uses and activities.

These are:

1. South East Area
2. Central Area
3. North West Area

Buildings and Townscape character and appearance of each area has been described in Section 4.2. A brief definition and summary is given below.

4.3.1 SOUTH EAST CHARACTER AREA

Boundaries: Eastern section of the conservation area from George Square /Nelson Street to Brisbane Street (south), Houston Street (north), and as far west as Robertson Street.

Activity: Mixed; residential, public, religious, professional office, limited retail.

Date / style: late Georgian – early Victorian

Pattern: regular grid plan with relatively higher density / smaller plot size; buildings close to the street line.

Building types: 2-storey and basement town houses; 3-storey tenements

Later development: c. 15%

4.3.2 CENTRAL CHARACTER AREA

Boundaries: Adjoining the South East Area in the east at Robertson Street; occupying the full extent of the conservation area between Finnart Street (south) and the Esplanade (north), and as far west as Octavia Terrace and Eldon Place.

Activity: Largely residential, some religious, limited retail.

Date / style: early, mid and late Victorian

Pattern: generally following regular grid plan with relatively higher density / smaller plot size; western section less formal with larger plot size. Buildings close to the street line.

Building types: 1 ½ storey cottages, 2-storey detached and semi-detached houses, some short terraces, some 3-storey tenements

Later development: c. 20%

4.3.3 NORTH WEST CHARACTER AREA

Boundaries: Adjoining the Central Area in the east at Octavia Terrace and Eldon Place before extending the full length of the Esplanade as far as Fox Street. Extending west to include the remainder of the conservation area.

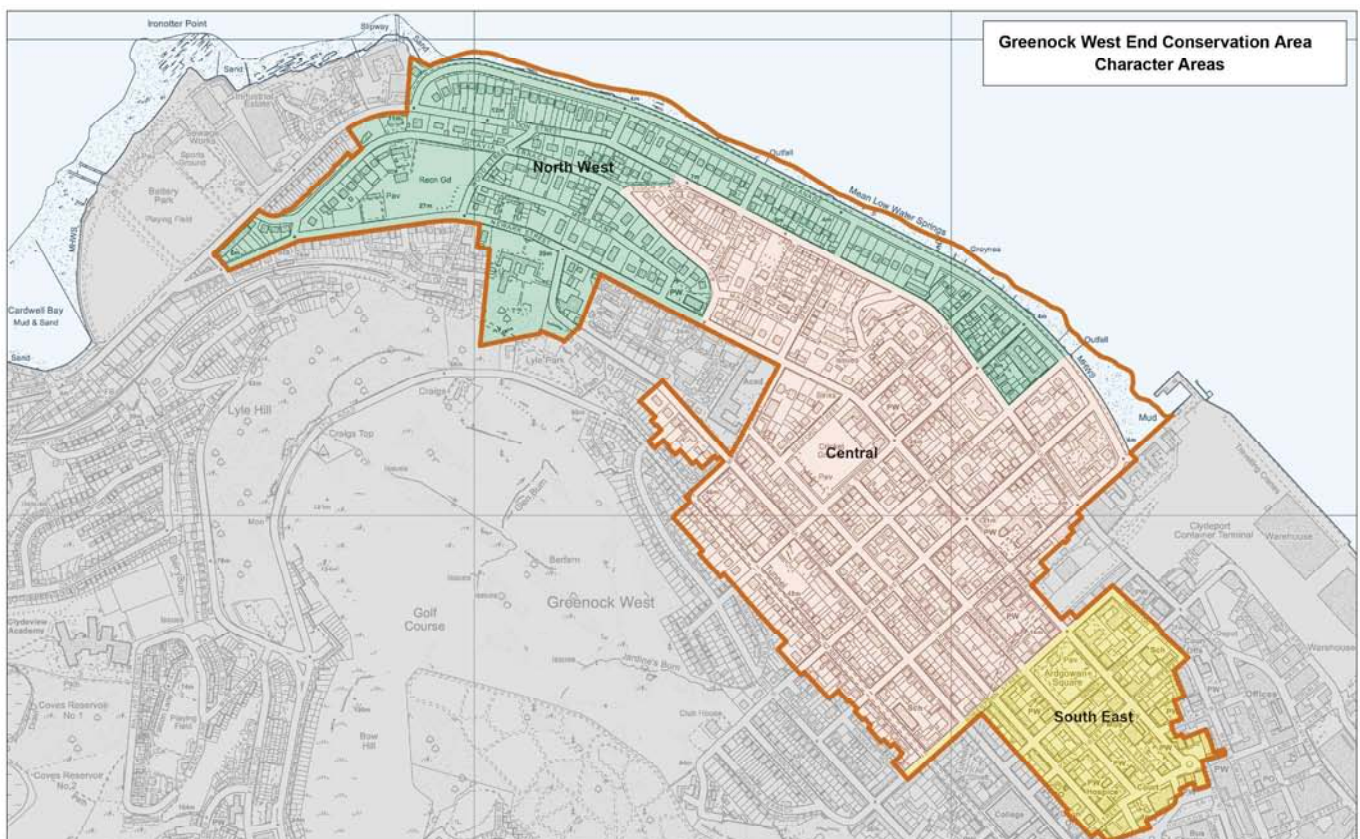
Activity: Predominately residential.

Date / style: early, mid and late Victorian

Pattern: less formal with larger plots set out along main broad thoroughfares; relatively low density; buildings set back from the street in garden grounds.

Building types: 2-storey detached and semi-detached houses

Later development: c. 10%



5 KEY FEATURES / ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Having carried out an assessment of the buildings and areas it is now possible to identify the key features that define the special architectural and historic character of the area. These are:

- A significant portion of Greenock's suburban expansion westwards in the 19th century, as a result of the town's flourishing industry and trade.
- An attractive waterfront setting on the Clyde Estuary.
- A residential area excepting the civic and religious buildings chiefly concentrated on George Square, Nelson Street and Union Street.
- Three Character Areas broadly reflective of the area's development: South East; Central and North West.
- Long broad thoroughfares and cross streets set out on a formal grid plan, this street pattern evident in much of the South East and Central character areas.
- Four principal building types:
 - Late Georgian town houses often 2-storey and basement symmetrical 3 bay form raised above the street with light wells and railings.
 - Early and Mid-Victorian modest detached, semi-detached and terraced houses set in small garden plots, often close to the street line with low boundary walls and hedging.
 - Traditional 3-storey tenements.
 - Late Victorian 2-storey detached and semi-detached houses on larger plots set back from the street in garden grounds.
- A coherent palette of building materials and techniques including buff and some red sandstones, Scots slate roofs, and

traditional timber sash and case windows and panelled doors.

- Traditional boundary treatments with considerable architectural detail including boundary walls, stone gate piers, stone entrance stairs and decorative cast iron railings
- An important contribution made by tree lined streets and private gardens.

6 CONSERVATION ISSUES

A number of conservation issues have been identified which have the potential to have a detrimental impact on the conservation area. These are listed below. These form the basis for the Sensitivity Analysis and the Opportunities for Enhancement.

- The replacement of traditional materials and details has led to a loss of historic fabric and a negative impact on the character of the conservation area.
- The conservation area contains one entry on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland and other building maintenance issues have been identified during the appraisal process.
- Modern development in the area is not always sympathetic to the traditional materials and styles of the historic buildings.
- Subdivision and adaptation of traditional houses is not always sympathetic to the traditional materials and styles of the historic buildings.
- The public realm is utilitarian in character and in some places detracts from the high quality built environment.
- Poor quality boundary treatments, or loss of physical boundaries, which can have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area.

7 SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

7.1 Loss of original architectural details and building materials

Although the majority of the buildings in the conservation area appear to be in fair physical condition the area as a whole is at risk from small changes which can cumulatively dilute the special character of the area. Examples which have adversely affected some of the buildings in the conservation area include the replacement of original timber windows or doors with materials such as uPVC or unsympathetic designs or methods of opening; the replacement of natural roof slates; removal, inappropriate repair or poor modern equivalents of boundary treatments; painting of masonry. These changes in detailing and the loss of original features affect both the external appearance of individual buildings and the local streetscape. It is important that future changes are managed, ensuring that appropriate materials and designs are used, in order to protect and enhance the character of the conservation area.

7.2 Buildings at Risk, repair and maintenance

There is only one entry within the conservation area on the Buildings at Risk Register, the former St George's North Church. This property has been moved to 'Restoration in Progress' status in March 2016. Progress on the building's appropriate repair and re use should be monitored particularly considering the townscape value of this former church. Updates should be provided to Historic Environment Scotland for any changes to the Register entry.

Notwithstanding Buildings at Risk in the conservation area, there are properties and boundary walls in need of repair and

maintenance. This is important to prevent the loss of original fabric and details and to ensure buildings are energy efficient and safe.

7.3 Quality of new development, alterations and extensions

There is new development in the conservation area, the majority of which is fairly recent. Sensitive development maintaining the scale and density of the character area can be accommodated reasonably well. This is better concentrated on brownfield sites. A high proportion of the villas have retained their grounds and maintain the character of the area.

A number of houses have seen adaptation and subdivision creating extensions to create access to upper floors. Insertion of dormers is also fairly common and also not always sympathetic to the original design intent or scale of the property.

7.4 Quality of public realm

The utilitarian character of some parts of the public realm does not reflect the character and significance of the conservation area. It is vital to ensure that public works and traffic management measures do not detract from the otherwise high quality historic environment. Where traditional and original finishes and architectural detail such as wall and railings survive these should be appropriately maintained and repaired.

7.5 Protection of trees, hedges and traditional boundaries

Trees make an important contribution to the townscape, particularly on tree-lined streets, and enhance the setting of historic buildings; they should be properly managed and protected. There are no Tree Preservation



Orders in the conservation area and therefore trees should be protected through the additional powers which conservation area designation brings.

Hedges, railings, gates, gate piers and boundary walls also make a major contribution and similarly need to be retained. There are a few instances of poorly maintained /lost boundaries and the use of inappropriate or poor quality materials for walls or gates, which detracts from the character of the conservation area.

Private gardens similarly make an important contribution and replacement in hard surfaces should be discouraged where possible.



Figure 26 Examples of extensions and dormer windows

8 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

8.1 The control of unlisted buildings

The conservation area has a number of individual or groups of buildings which retain original architectural detailing and which add interest and vitality to the appearance of the conservation area.

8.1.1 DEMOLITION

There is a general presumption in favour of the retention of all buildings in the conservation area. (LDP Policy HER2) Any application for the demolition of a building will therefore need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification as to why it should not be retained, similar to that required for a listed building. Where the building is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, and is still deemed capable of repair, the owner must also have made positive efforts to market the building, or to find a suitable new use, before an application may be approved.

8.1.2 ALTERATIONS

The Council will consider applications for external alterations to unlisted buildings extremely carefully and will refuse any which adversely impact upon the conservation area (LDP Policy HER1).

8.2 Quality of new developments, building alterations and extensions

In assessing planning applications within the Greenock West End Conservation Area or which might impact on its setting, the Council shall consider them in relation to the relevant Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Guidance Planning

Application Advice Notes (PAANs) and pay particular attention to the following:

- New development, building alterations and extensions should be in accord with the prevailing form of historic development, including the scale, massing and historic layout of buildings using traditional and/or compatible materials.
- New development, building alterations and extensions should respect the setting of existing buildings.
- There will be a presumption against development within the original plots in the conservation area and new development should follow existing plot ratios.
- New development should protect significant views within the public realm.
- Original or historic features should be retained wherever possible.
- New development, building alterations and extensions should use materials which are high quality, durable and which complement the palette of materials traditionally found in the conservation area.
- Where stonework is not currently painted or covered, a coating should not be applied.
- Colours should be muted and in keeping with the rest of the conservation area.
- New development should protect important trees, hedges, boundary walls and other established boundaries. (Trees and private gardens are an important townscape asset and the Council will encourage their maintenance and management).
- Hard landscaping, roads and pavements should be maintained and where repair or resurfacing is required,

careful consideration should be made to the choice of materials respecting the original character of surfaces. Soft landscaping should be retained.

- New boundary treatments should use traditional and/or compatible materials and be of appropriate design to suit the locality.
- Historic photographs may be consulted to inform the design of new development, building alterations and extensions.

Where necessary, the Council will require applications for new development which may have an impact on the Conservation Area to be accompanied by a Design Statement explaining and illustrating the principles and concept behind the design and layout of the proposed development and demonstrating how the proposal relates both to the site and its wider context. Applicants can use this Character Appraisal to assist them in this.

Further reading:

Inverclyde Council Local Development Plan
Supplementary Guidance on Planning
Application Advice Notes (PAANs):

- No.1 Backland and Tandem Residential Development
- No.2 Single Plot Residential Development
- No.9 Replacing Windows in Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings
- No.10 Signage and Advertisements
- No.11 Shopfront Design

(Appendix 2)

- [New Design in Historic Settings \(Historic Scotland, Scottish Government and Architecture + Design Scotland\)](#)

8.3 Buildings at Risk

Historic Environment Scotland maintains a Register of buildings that are at risk from deterioration due to neglect, vacancy or threat of demolition (the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland). This is updated as necessary and the Council has powers to protect all listed buildings and also, in certain instances, unlisted buildings in a conservation area, where they make a positive contribution to the area's special character.

Where the condition of an historic building deteriorates to a point where it is considered vulnerable and detrimental to the character of the area then Inverclyde Council in conjunction with the Scottish Ministers will consider appropriate action to enable its return to a reasonable state of repair. The Council will encourage the reuse of existing vacant buildings over new build construction where possible.

Further reading:

- [The Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland](#)

8.4 Building maintenance and repair

It is important that historic buildings are adequately maintained and repaired using traditional materials and techniques and property owners are encouraged to get specialist professional advice. The council will encourage owners of historic buildings to use traditional materials and repair techniques through advice and publications.

8.5 Public realm enhancement

Any new public realm design should be considered in conjunction with surrounding areas, which provides the opportunity to

emphasise and coordinate the public realm across a broader area.

8.6 Trees and landscape

Inverclyde Council will continue to enforce the relevant policies to ensure that the very special qualities of the Greenock West End Conservation Area are protected from unsympathetic change. New development should protect important views, trees, hedges, boundary walls, gates, and other established landscape features.

Further reading:

- [Designing Streets \(Scottish Government\)](#)
- [Inform guide - Domestic Boundary Walls \(Historic Environment Scotland\)](#)
- [Managing Change in the Historic Environment - Boundaries \(Historic Environment Scotland\)](#)
- [Managing Change in the Historic Environment - Setting \(Historic Environment Scotland\)](#)

8.7 Article 4 Direction and planning controls

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order

1992 (known as the GPDO) sets out certain types of development that do not require planning permission, known as permitted development rights. In line with guidance, it has been common practice among planning authorities to extend control within Conservation Areas by way of an Article 4 Direction. Essentially, this requires planning permission to be sought for certain specified types of development where this would not normally be required.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 Householder Permitted Development Rights changed the permitted development rights for homeowners, and in conservation areas. These changes came into force in February 2012 and further restricted permitted development rights for dwelling houses and flats in conservation areas (Appendix 3).

It is therefore considered that the existing Direction in relation to Class 1 (Development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse) is no longer required and could be cancelled. The other classes (2, 12 and 16) will remain.

Inverclyde Council will monitor unauthorised changes in the conservation area and will use its statutory powers of enforcement where necessary.

9 MONITORING AND REVIEW

This document should be reviewed every 5 years from the date of its formal adoption by Inverclyde Council. It will be assessed in the light of the Inverclyde Local Development Plan and government policy and guidance on the historic environment. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been, particularly in relation to:
 - Protection of unlisted 'positive' buildings
 - Quality of new developments and building alterations re: Section 9.2
 - Buildings at Risk
 - Tree works
 - Protection of views
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action
- Publicity and advertising

It is possible that this review could be carried out by the local community under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the council. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement. Work towards the review will be taken throughout the period leading up to the formal review.

10 FURTHER INFORMATION AND LINKS

Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep

Historic Environment Scotland's Managing Change

Guidance Note series

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/managingchange

Historic Environment Scotland - Advice for Owners of

Listed Buildings

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/historicandlistedbuildings.htm

Historic Environment Scotland's INFORM Guides

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/learning/freepublications.htm

Historic Environment Scotland's Knowledge Base website

<http://conservation.historic-scotland.gov.uk/home/resourcecentre.htm>

Historic Scotland - Grants

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/grants

Funds for Historic Buildings

www.ffhb.org.uk

Scottish Civic Trust

www.scottishcivictrust.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund

www.hlf.org.uk

Buildings at Risk Register

www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk

SOURCES

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Walker, Frank Arneil. *The South Clyde Estuary: An Illustrated Architectural Guide to Inverclyde and Renfrew* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press for RIAS, 1986).

Clark, B. and Brown, G. *Greenock and Gourock Through Time* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013).

National Library of Scotland Map images website [maps.nls.uk] Accessed March 2016.
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LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Conservation area

Map 2: Open space

Map 3: Listed and unlisted buildings

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Listed Buildings in the conservation area

Appendix 2: Inverclyde Council Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance on Planning Application Advice Notes

Appendix 3: The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 Householder Permitted Development Rights



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