ABERGWYNGREGYN

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Chambers Conservation Ltd.

Issue

Issues: - Final Issue

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PART ONE – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 How to use this document

1.1.1 This Conservation Area Appraisal should be read in conjunction with the document ***Introduction to Conservation Areas for the 21st Century***, which can be downloaded from the National Park's website. This document contains an explanation of the purpose and methodology of this Appraisal, together with a general introduction to the history, landscape, buildings and settlement forms and planning and legistlative context.

1.1.2 In addition to the Management Plan which accompanies this area appraisal, a further document ***Advice on Energy Efficiency Measures in Conservation Areas (Planning & Practical Guide)*** has been prepared in order to respond to the current climate change emergency, give practical advice on how to improve energy performance of traditional and locally significant buildings without harming their special character or technical performance.

1.2 Overview of the conservation area

1.2.1 The extent of the study area is part defined by the Conservation Area boundary (see Fig 02), however the immediate surroundings (including the adjacent landscape areas) were included in order to both understand the wider context and determine whether any amendments to the boundary would be appropriate.

Location & Setting

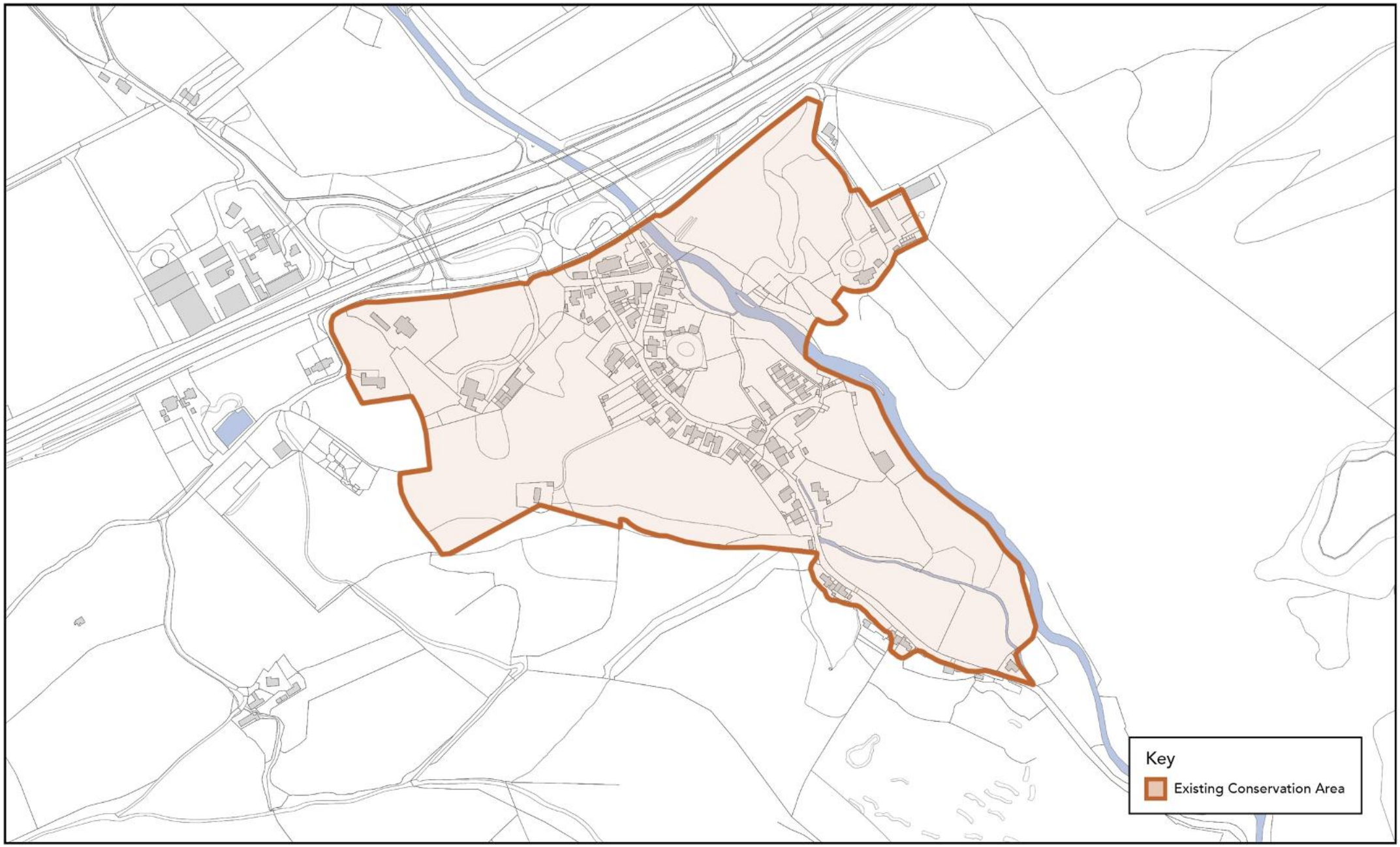
1.2.2 Abergwyngregyn is a small village in Gwynedd. It is situated in the Eryri National Park near the North Wales coast, some 10 km east of Bangor and 6 km west of Llanfairfechan.

1.2.3 The village lies at the northern end of the Aber valley below mountain range. The Afon Aber is formed from the confluence of the Afon Rhaeadr and the Afon Anafon, which converge at Bont Newydd, some 0.75km up the valley, south-east of the village. The combined Afon Aber flows north, between the village and Pen-y-Bryn to the east, onto the coastal plain and out into the sea. The Rhaeadr valley culminates in the nature reserve, the land rising steeply below the Drosgl, Bera Bach and Carnedd Gwenllian

01 Abergwyngregyn from Fridd Ddu

beyond. From these peaks down into the valley flow the renowned waterfall of Rhaeadr Fawr.

1.2.4 Designation date: 1978



Conservation Area
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02 Plan of the Conservation Area (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

2.0 Summary of Special Interest

2.1.1 Abergwyngregyn has a unique place in the history of Wales, as favoured llys of the Princes of Gwynedd and the site of significant events including the death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's wife, Siwan, in 1237 and his son and successor, Dafydd, nine years later. This important medieval history is overlain with significant activity in the prehistoric, Roman and Norman periods as well as later the arrival of eminent picturesque tourists visiting the falls. It is of exceptional historic significance. This historic significance is evident in the fabric of the area in a number of ways:

- The mwd at the heart of the conservation area and the adjacent field, gives evidence to the attempted Norman settlement and the probable development of the llys adjacent.
- The mwd is very evident, especially on key views from above.
- The group of structures at Pen-y-Bryn reflect this medieval history, potentially as a home farm to the llys, supplemented with the later group of listed and scheduled buildings.
- The north-south road, up to Bont Newydd and the falls beyond provide a legible link to the early Roman road over the high-ground to Caerhun and the early route across the sands to Ynys Môn.
- The growth of the village around the east-west road from the 18th century, and it's later realignment leading to the construction of the Aber Falls Halt (now Hotel) have given this area of the village its distinct character.
- The area around St. Bodfan's church and churchyard, potentially the earliest area of settlement and religious activity.

2.1.2 The landscape setting and topography of Abergwyngregyn is fundamental to the special interest. Views to and from from the surrounding hillside and Afon Aber are essential to the sense of place, as is the presence of agricultural land within the heart of the village. These views are identified specifically later in this appraisal. Key views showing this relationship are:

03 Aber from the Ffridd, the Mwd and relationship to the coast are clear.

04 Illustration of Pen-y-Bryn c.1811, Richard Colt-Hoare. (Wikimedia Commons).

- Views of the settlement from Ffridd Ddu across an agricultural foreground with views of the mwd and the relationship with the coast and the setting of St. Bodfan's.
- Views out of the conservation area towards the hills beyond where a more rural setting starts.
- Views across the field to the mwd with the dark backdrop of the forest behind in the centre of the village.
- Views towards Capel Soar and the mill walking up through the village.

2.1.3 The standing built heritage of Abergwyngregyn provides an unusually clear layered picture of its origins and evolution, reflected in the architecture, materials and details. Key elements include:

- The 18th and early 19th Century buildings on the alignment of the old turnpike road, including Ceris, Prince Llewellyn Cottage and Bryn Tirion. Double fronted houses of some stature, rendered, Ceris retaining sash windows
- The Aber Falls Hotel and the former Café Royal, a distinctive grouping reflecting Aber's role as a destination for early motor tourism.
- The Penrhyn estate cottages, with their more picturesque detailing and stonework.
- The Mill and group around the former Capel Soar. Visually important as a group and evidencing the development of religion and industry in Aber.
- Lower houses of potentially earlier origin, standing boundary walls in the context of a more rural setting, towards the southern boundary of the conservation area.
- The distinct, but separate, group (scheduled and Listed) of structures at Pen-y-Bryn.

05 Ceris and other early 19th century buildings behind the Aber Falls Hotel (2021).

06 Listed Penrhyn estate cottages (2021).

3.0 Historic Timeline

Prehistoric

3.1.1 The history of Abergwyngregyn is covered in much detail elsewhere, the summary below is intended only to give context.

3.1.2 The position of the village has long been a strategic one. There are extensive remains of prehistoric monuments, suggesting a presence since the Neolithic period. The site of St. Bodfan's church on a rise in ground to the west of the village is probably the location of the earliest settlement. The original church was demolished and rebuilt in the mid 19th century but it lies within a sub-circular enclosure or llan. Such features usually indicate an early medieval foundation, and the earliest ecclesiastical settlement may well have developed here.

3.1.3 Prehistoric remains are found nearby, albeit not within the study area, dating back to the 2nd millennium BC. Significant remains are identified on the plain, suggesting significant farming activity during the Iron Age and Roman periods.

3.1.4 Aber is also situated on the route between the Roman forts at Caerhun (Canovium), in the Conwy Valley and Caernarfon (Segontium), which passed as a high-level mountain route from Rowen (in the Conwy Valley) to Bwlch-y-Ddeufaen (at the head of the Anafon valley) down to Aber. It is believed that the alignment then followed the former turnpike road, probably crossing the Aber at a similar point. Part of the Roman road on the mountain pass is scheduled (CN402).

3.1.5 Control of the junction of the coastal and upland routes was the key to Abergwyngregyn's importance and the reason why a small castle on a mound or motte was built there, possibly during a campaign by the Norman Earl of Chester during an unsuccessful attempt to subjugate Gwynedd between 1081-1090.

3.1.6 Thirteenth-century Gwynedd was divided into 22 areas, known as cwmwd (commotes), each administered from a llys. The llys comprised a group of buildings which usually included a hall, kitchen, stabling and other associated domestic structures.

3.1.7 The royal court travelled between these centres, collecting taxes, dispensing justice and entertaining. The llys formed the focal point of the maerdref, a royal township with associated land. Abergwyngregyn is known

07 Tithe map of Abergwyngregyn, 1848.

08 Illustration from Pennant's 'Tours in Wales'. Showing the Mwd. Presumably by Moses Griffith. c.1773. (NLW).

from historical documents to have been the maerdref of the cwmwd of Arllechwedd Uchaf and the site of one of the favoured llys of the princes of Gwynedd. Arllechwedd Uchaf is understood to have covered several thousand acres from the sea to areas for grazing on high ground around Drosgl.

3.1.8 The precise location of the llys has been the subject of much debate. In 1537, the English antiquary John Leland related the llys to the position of the church and to the mound (mwd). During the late 19th and early 20th century, it was suggested that it could be associated with the site now occupied by the Pen-y-Bryn complex (CN218). In late 1992 Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT report, Pen-y-Bryn, 55, 1992) undertook excavations at Pen-y-Bryn. The conclusion of this investigation was that the most likely location of the llys is near the mwd or motte, 'the vicinity of the Norman motte must now be the prime candidate for any future work in locating the llys at Aber' (p.11). Excavations in 1993 (GAT report Ty'n y Mwd, 1092, 1994) identified a hall house to the south side of the mwd. Further excavations undertaken in 2010 identified the full extent of the house with dating evidence to the 13th century and after.[1]

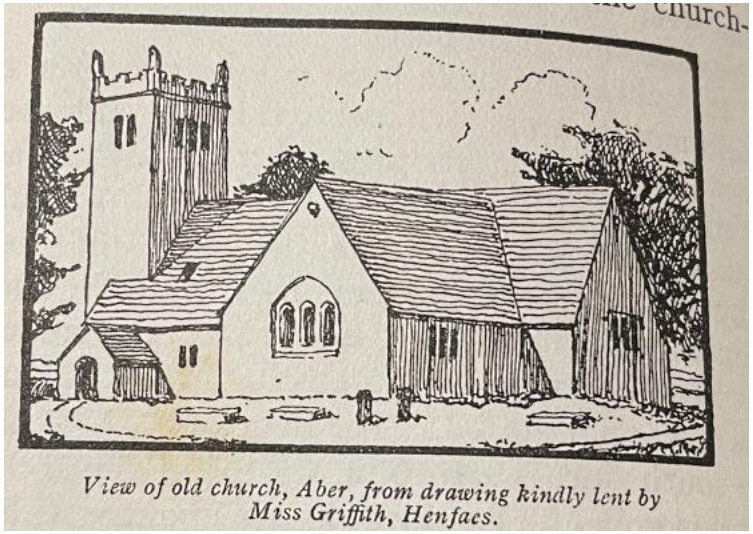
3.1.9 With the defeat of Llywelyn ap Dafydd, who died in 1287, lands were ceded to the English crown. By the time Leland arrived in aber in the mid-16th century, land in the parish was owned by local families. Rice Thomas was the lessee in 1551 and latterly acquired the grant. His, Sir William Thomas, purchased both the lease and grant outright in 1610. The family must have been struggling financially by 1678 they were in negotiations to sell the land within the manor to the Bulkeleys of Baron Hill (Beaumaris). The Bulkeleys held the Lordship of the manor from at least 1715, if not earlier.

3.1.10 The historic route north-south through Aber prevailed until the eighteenth century, broadly following the Roman route.

3.1.11 In 1772 the Westminster and Dublin governments funded improvements to the coast road at Penmaenmawr. This discouraged travel over the high pass and the north-south road diminished in importance, instead the east-west route became the primary route.

3.1.12 The arrival of the improved road from Conwy in the early 19th century reinforced Aber's position as a stopping point on the east-west route. In

09 Aber Mill, c.1820, with cottage (with thatched barn). (Historypoints.org)



10 Illustration from Hughes H & North H. L. 'The Old Churches of Snowdonia' (1924) showing the earlier Church, prior to St. Bodfan's.

[1] https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/North%20Wales%20Snowdonia%20National%20Park_EN.pdf

18th & 19th Century

1839 the road was re-aligned, with the former road (now broadly the same as Bryn Tirion) being replaced by a straighter road further north, involving the construction of the new Pont Aber. This new alignment is clearly shown on the tithe map of 1848 (see Fig 07).

3.1.13 The tithe plan of 1848 broadly reflects the present day plan, comprising the triangle of streets at Gadlys, Bryn Tirion and the village lane. A collection of houses had been developed around this area, with further development towards the mill. Aber Mill was in existence from at least 1731, but may be earlier. At this time the village in its entirety belonged to the Bulkeley family.

3.1.14 The Chester-Holyhead railway arrived with the opening of Aber station on 1st May 1848, but as the station was constructed some distance from the village, consequent development was limited unlike Llanfairfechan.

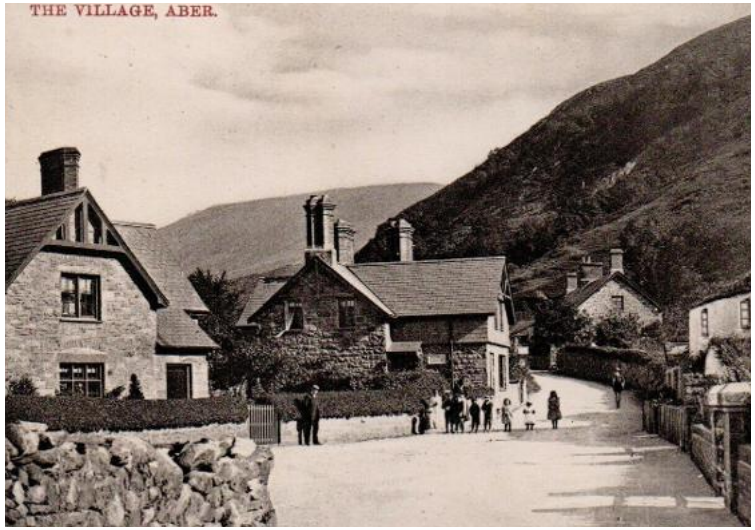
3.1.15 The Penrhyn estate purchased the land from the Bulkeley family in 1863 and held it until 1925. The Penrhyn estate established much of the historic built character which is today associated with Aber. Over the next 30 years they developed Aber as a picturesque estate village in the vernacular revival style, in keeping with the emerging role of the village as a tourist destination.

3.1.16 The estate also sponsored the reconstruction of St. Bodfan's church by the practice Pugin, Ashlin and Pugin in 1878, replacing the earlier church (see Fig.10) It was well regarded at the time, being described as 'one of the most perfect specimens of ecclesiastical architecture in the Bangor diocese'.[2] The first chapel was constructed in c.1820 for the Methodists, sited some 200m to the south of the mill. This was replaced by the current building and converted to a house. Its replacement, Capel Bethlehem, was constructed c.1896 to designs by Richard Davies. Capel Soar, the Wesleyan chapel, near Aber mill was first constructed in 1827, but has been modified since and is also now a dwelling.

20th Century

3.1.17 Small scale industry has played a role in the valley from an early date. A small scale slate quarry is noted on the tithe map (1848), but was already out of use by this date[3]. Before 1889 the small scale mill (evident in early water colours) was reconstructed on the same site as much more

11 The Mwd, viewed from near Capel Soar. (2021)



11 Postcard of Aber, c.1900, showing Penrhyn Cottages and the open hillside (not wooded at this time), Ty Newydd on the right (later replaced by Ty Capel. The Bangor University cottages are yet to be built.

[2] Hubbard et. al. Buildings of Wales, Gwynedd.
3 Hall, E. Hyde (1811), A Description of Caernarvonshire (1809–11) (1952 edition).

substantial water-powered corn mill. This is the building which largely remains today and originally had an enclosed waterwheel on the east elevation. The mill was partly converted into a community facility in 2006.

3.1.18 The Aber Falls hotel and garage was constructed in the early 1930's following the sale of the village by the Penrhyn Estate. The garage was originally a typical corrugated structure with an arched roof, in the manner of a dutch barn, very evocative of the period of early motoring. It was known as the 'Aber Falls Halt' until the mid-twentieth century.

3.1.19 This grouping is an interesting early example, relatively well preserved, of, in effect, an early service station complex. The adjacent bungalow was formerly the Café Royal, and Bryn Tirion housed a 'tuck shop'.

4.0 Spatial Analysis

4.1 Settlement Form & Layout

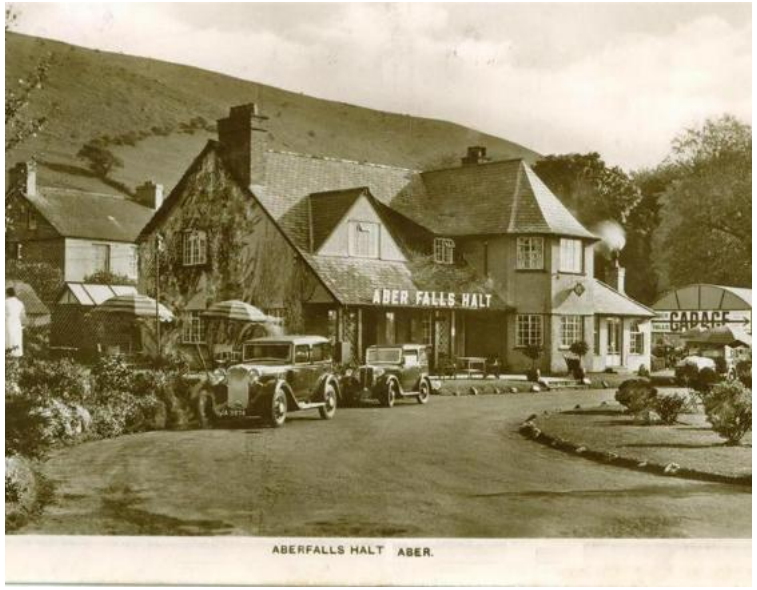
4.1.1 The settlement form of Aber has changed little since the tithe map of 1848, its linear settlement form following the topography of the steeply sided valley.

4.1.2 The 'triangle' of roads forming Gadlys, Bryn Tirion and the village lane is sited at the point where the settlement expands to meet the coastal plain. The extension of this form to meet the later road reflects the evolution of the settlement to respond to the transport route.

4.1.3 More recently, the arrival of the A55 has done little to affect the layout of the settlement, remaining broadly on the alignment of the earlier road, but has clearly had a strong visual impact. Later development is very limited, but a small row of semi-detached council houses was erected to the north-east of the mill, between 1948 and 1962. A row of terraced houses were erected to serve the University College of North Wales' farm in the early 20th Century. The farm itself was sited at Tan-y-Fynwent, a large 19th century farmhouse near the church (now Llys Onnen).

4.2 Key views

4.2.1 Within the conservation area there are a number of key views which illustrate either the historic development of the village, allow appreciation of particular features or key structures or give a proper understanding of its development within the wider landscape. Other views are important glimpsed views,



12 The Aber Falls 'Halt' (later Hotel) c. 1950. Original curved roof to the garage visible to the right.

13 Long view of Aber from the Ffridd (2021).

between buildings or to key features which contribute to the understanding or character of the area.

4.2.2 Views are either static (a specific directional view) or dynamic, encompassing a field of view from a particular point.

4.2.3 These are as follows (see Fig 16):

A-B Dynamic views which clearly show the form of the settlement, it's medieval form and grouping around Pen-y-mwd. These views are taken from the high-level footpath on the slopes of Fridd Ddu.

C Dynamic views up valley and across agricultural land to Afon Aber

D-F glimpsed views of the motte from within the village. The motte is not widely seen, being concealed by later buildings, making these glimpsed views more significant.

G views of gothic-revival façade of rectory across open land and the garden. This view illustrates the early appreciation of Aber as a picturesque setting and the enhancement of the buildings for visual effect – the onset of early tourism.

H views towards Mill and former Soar Chapel. A key view of the primary structures, albeit significantly altered.

I views towards Church tower across agricultural land to the west.

J view of Capel Bethlehem – Open views of the later chapel

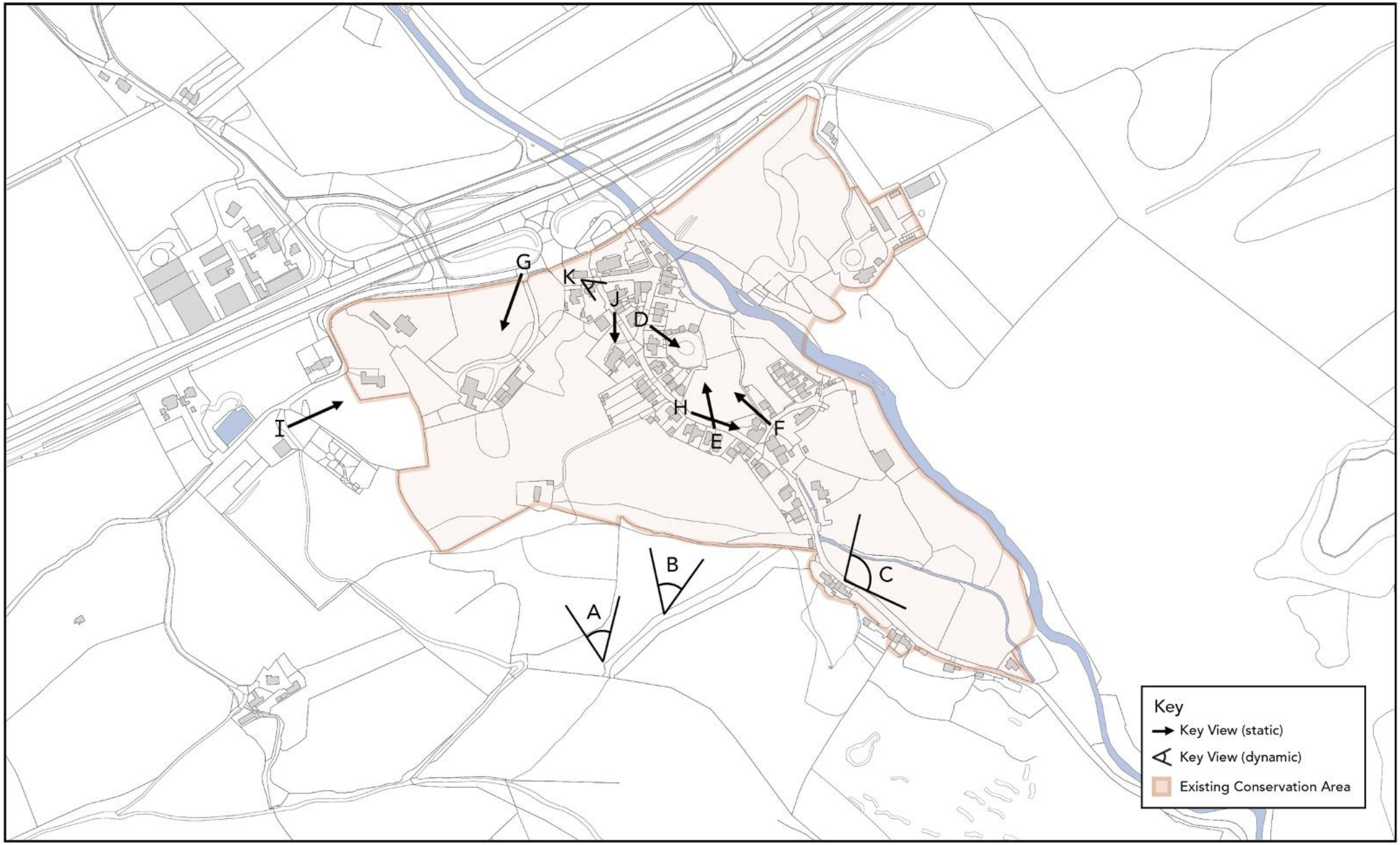
K Dynamic view of group of early 19th. Century (possibly earlier) behind the Aber Falls Hotel.

4.3 Green spaces & Trees

4.3.1 The green spaces of Aber are characterised as open farmland meeting the settlement, or by religious context such as St. Bodfan's churchyard or setting of Capel Bethlehem.

14 View towards the rectory, with gothic revival details. (2021)

15 Glimpsed views of the Mwd from within the village are important (2021).



Key Views
1:5000 @ A4

16 Key views (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

Trees
1:5000 @ A4

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4.3.2 To the east of the village the conservation area encompasses an area of farmland, with stone walls and sheepfold bounding the river. This area has a strong landscape character providing glimpsed views to the river, becoming more benign to the north, with dry-stone walling and agricultural grazing land of a more open character

4.3.3 The setting to the south of the motte, potentially the site of the llys, is particularly significant in terms of defining the special character of Aber, providing a visual and physical link across many centuries of history.

4.3.4 The churchyard is of note, probably being the site of the earliest settlement. Today it's character is defined by high-quality slate gravestones and tombs. The entry to the churchyard is provided by a modern lychgate, which was rebuilt in 2020, and the war memorial relocated from within St. Bodfan's Church.

4.3.5 Other distinctive groups of trees are shown on plan at Fig 17, these include:

- Individual yew trees in the churchyard.
- Groups and dispersed hazel and wych elm (now a rarity in the UK) alongside the Afon Aber and viewed from the road at the southern end of the conservation area.[4]
- The oak atop the mwd is full of character, when seen across the yard at the rear of Tan-y-dderwen, but this may also be having an adverse effect on the archaeology of the mwd.

5.0 Character

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The character of Abergwyngregyn is found in its relationship with its topographical location. This is fundamental to its founding as a maerdref for the princes of Gwynedd, its role at the junction of two routes means Aber has always had strategic significance, reflected in the mwd, and subsequent medieval history.

[4] https://www.first-nature.com/waleswildlife/n-nnr-coedydd-aber.php

18 Fine yew trees and carved slate gravestones characterise the churchyard. (2021)

19 Drystone walling, open agricultural land, wooded hillside, south east of the village (2021).

5.1.2 The development as an estate village is visible in the development of picturesque estate cottages, not only created for practical estate accommodation, but also in support of an emerging tourist market.

5.1.3 Following the development of early accommodation in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, tourism still remains fundamental to the economy of the village.

5.1.4 The 'by-passing' of the village by Telford's post road in the early 19th century meant that Aber developed in a relatively low-key manner, reflecting estate ownership and the changes in the rural economy, with the development of the mill and small scale industrial operations.

5.2 Architectural Character

5.2.1 The present character of the settlement is idiosyncratic and diverse, there are a wide range of architectural styles present. These reflect the evolution of the village and periods where different owners brought new ideas and the economics of the area changed.

5.2.2 The architectural character at the north of the conservation area reflects the developing importance of the east-west road in the early 20th century. The Aber Falls Hotel epitomises the interest in traditional building forms which accompanied 'roadhouse' architecture of the 1930s. The hotel is a well preserved example retaining original crittall-type windows and largely unaltered. Sadly the original corrugated garage adjacent has been lost, its later replacement has now been turned into a café/ice cream parlour. To the south-east of the hotel, the original Café Royal, now a bungalow, of similar period and detailing as the Falls hotel, retaining a wide crittall-type steel window.

5.2.3 Behind the roadside complex, the start of the earlier village, with some good early late 18th/early 19th century double fronted Georgian vernacular dwellings, Ceris and the former Post Office (adjacent to Capel Bethlehem). Further double fronted houses of the period can be seen opposite the mill (Tremynfa) and by the mill stream (Glanrafon). Some of these houses (Tremynfa, Ceris) retain sash windows.

5.2.4 The 'vernacular revival' houses of the Penrhyn estate create a pleasing corner to the junction of Gadlys and village road, then to the west as the road ascends the hill towards Capel Soar, all to great picturesque effect. The listed

20 Aber Falls Hotel (formerly Halt), retaining original steel windows (2021).

21 Listed Penrhyn Cottages Bron Derw and Tan-y-Bryn. (2021).

pair of cottages 1 & 2 Tan-y-dderwen are constructed of random, pitched-face granite, with projecting gable and canopy with bay and gallows brackets. To the east, the later (not listed) row of cottages, introduces a first floor with hung slate and red brick dressings to the ground floor doors and windows, with pitch faced, uncoursed granite between. All beneath a hipped slate roof. The contrast between the Penrhyn hung slate and the granite is distinctive and pleasing. This is a contrast also seen on Bron Derw (south of Tan-y-dderwen, which also has brick stacks, set at 45 degrees to their plinth.

5.2.5 The earlier Penrhyn cottages, possibly by the estate's favoured architect, George Benmore (Pevsner), are all listed. These are generally single story, although Ddol Cottages have been altered with first-floor dormer windows and roof lights. Ddol Cottages and Tyn-y-Buarth have random, pitched-face granite to the street elevation, with random rubble to the sides. Chimneys are of engineering brick and set at 45 degrees, on a stone plinth. Roofs are generally Penrhyn slate (in equal courses). There has been a degree of change to the windows, but Tyn-y-Buarth has the original casements, set in strong mullioned frames, divided vertically into three sections. Those to Bro Dawel also have a vertical sub-division. Projecting gables are detailed with faux trusses. The almshouses (still almshouses), opposite Capel Soar, have been altered (originally they were three cottages), but were the earliest of the 'cottage ornee' style and retain their projecting gabled porches (although now enclosed).

5.2.6 Soar Wesleyan Methodist Chapel is a combination of the sub-Classical and the Vernacular style. It is of the short wall entry type, with a gable facade to the Northwest. The exterior of the chapel is pebble-dashed with stuccoed dressings, including eared architraves and bands. The chapel was entered via a gabled porch below a central round-arched window with flanking segmentally-headed windows. The chapel has suffered from a degree of inappropriate change, the most damaging being the faux timber uPVC windows, which have affected the key view up the hill towards the falls. East of Capel Soar, Ty Capel is well preserved externally in rubble stone, with quoins, it has well proportioned, original windows with mullions and transom, and a projecting gabled porch (N).

5.2.7 Aber Mill is predominantly 19th century, but heavily altered. The northern wing, of rubble stone, with slate (or slate faced) lintels, is now operated as a community facility with café and visitor centre on the ground floor. Windows

22 The almshouses (2021).

23 Hen Felin. (2021).

are modern, all below a Penrhyn slate roof. There is a modern, slate hung, extension to the north. The wing to the south is rendered in poor quality pebble-dash, with uPVC windows, with slate roof over. The scale of the mill, in particular, is important, bringing a clear link to the role of industry in the history of Aber.

5.2.8 The linear development on the road to the falls has a distinct more rural character, in particular the row of low single storey cottages (Glen Cottage & Breichiau).

5.2.9 Agricultural structures are now limited within the conservation area, but there is a small range behind Tan-y-dderwen. These include a early-mid 20th century corrugated dutch barn and small 19th century outbuildings, below the motte, this group has a distinct and particular quality.

5.2.10 Slightly separated from the village, the rectory (refer to listed buildings) provides a telling architectural moment in Aber's history. The early treatment of the building in the fashionable gothic-revival style is part of the early transition of Aber into a destination for visitors. The view across the garden to these gothic modifications and the details themselves are of particular note. The church itself is in the decorated gothic style, well executed and intact.

5.3 Materials

5.3.1 The primary building material of Abergwyngregyn is stone, a local granite can be seen in the earlier dwellings and walls. Early and lower status houses would have used salvaged fieldstones. These can still be seen in some of the boundary walls.

5.3.2 There is a diverse range of stone reflecting the different ownerships and improvements in communications. The stone varies from the local granites, to the slates of Penrhyn (primarily). Slate was quarried for a time in the valley but was not of a high quality. Treatment of the stone also varies significantly. The Penrhyn cottages probably use Penmaenmawr stone, pitch-faced and random coursed, with different types of dressings, including slate and brick. Hung slate is also a feature.

5.3.3 Most of the roofing is slate and of the 19th and 20th centuries, thin split slates in equal courses. Historic photos show the earlier, much thicker slate,

24 Single storey cottages, Glen Cottage and Breichiau (2021).

25 Agricultural buildings of varied age and character, behind Tan-y-Dderwen. (2021).

probably local before the purchase by Penrhyn, in diminishing courses and thatch on agricultural structures.

5.3.4 Render has become a predominant material in the village. Used early to conceal rough rubble stone, it has become a ubiquitous finish, from the early 20th Century. Capel Soar uses render and rendered details to create a refined appearance. Later rendered finishes, such as the pebbledash to the mill or the former Calvinistic Methodist Chapel (Minafon) are damaging to the material quality of the area.

5.3.5 The sandstone dressings and banding of St Bodfan's are unusual in the village, but form an effective composition in contrast with the dark granite pitch-faced stone walling, and are especially striking with the dark gravestones and yew trees which characterise the churchyard.

5.4 Boundaries

5.4.1 Boundaries are most often marked through stone walls, mainly in the local granite, although local examples make use of the now more readily available slates from Blaenau or Penrhyn.

5.4.2 The rubble stone (granite) walls leading up from village lane towards the mill and Capel Soar are particularly important, mainly associated with the Penrhyn estate's buildings (see designated assets), the dressed and swept gate piers are unusual and particularly important. Beyond the main village, road towards Bont Newydd is bounded by dry-stone walling, mostly later in date, but important in the context of the landscape setting.

5.4.3 Later changes have adversely affected this character, modern gates, for example those at Bronant, to the southern boundary of the conservation area.

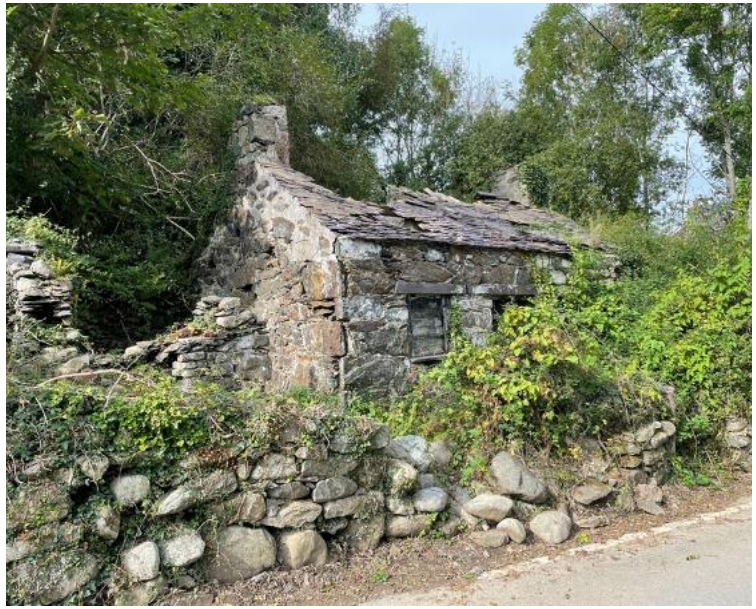
5.5 Other Features, Details and Surfaces.

5.5.1 The village has other features and objects which contribute to the quality and interest of the Conservation Area.

5.5.2 These include small areas of cobbled surfacing, such as those outside 1-3 Gadlys, softer, non-metalled surfaces such as that leading to the agricultural buildings at the rear of Tan-y-dderwen or the drive to Tan-yr-allt.

5.5.3 To Tan-y-dderwen, (to the rear of Llewelyn Cottage), there is the base of a Victorian lamp standard.

26 Rubble, brick dressings and hung slate, Glydfan (2021).



27 Field stones in the early wall to Ty'n Ffridd. (2021).

5.5.4 Also of note is the modern WC and interpretation point by the side of Pont Aber. Whilst this is not a notable structure, it has significance as it engages many visitors with the history of Aber and consequently raises awareness.

6.0 Historic Assets

6.1 Designated Historic Assets

The following designated historic assets (listed buildings and scheduled monuments are found in the conservation area (see Fig 32):

6.1.1 Scheduled Monuments

- *CN007 Aber Castle Mound (Pen-y-Mwd)*
- *CN218 Enclosure & Associated Structures at Pen-y-Bryn*

6.1.2 Listed Buildings

- *3651 Pen-y-Bryn*
- *3652 Pen-y-bryn Cottage*
- *3654 The Old Rectory*
- *3656 Gatehouse/Barn at Pen-y-bryn*
- *22907 (1) Tan-y-dderwen*
- *22911 (2) Tan-y-dderwen*
- *22912 Bron Derw*
- *22908 Tan-y-Bryn*
- *22904 (1) Ddol Cottages*
- *22913 (2) Ddol Cottages*
- *22905 Tyn-y-buarth*
- *22915 Fron*
- *22906 Bryn Hyfryd*
- *22914 Bro Dawel*
- *81043 Ty'n Ffridd*

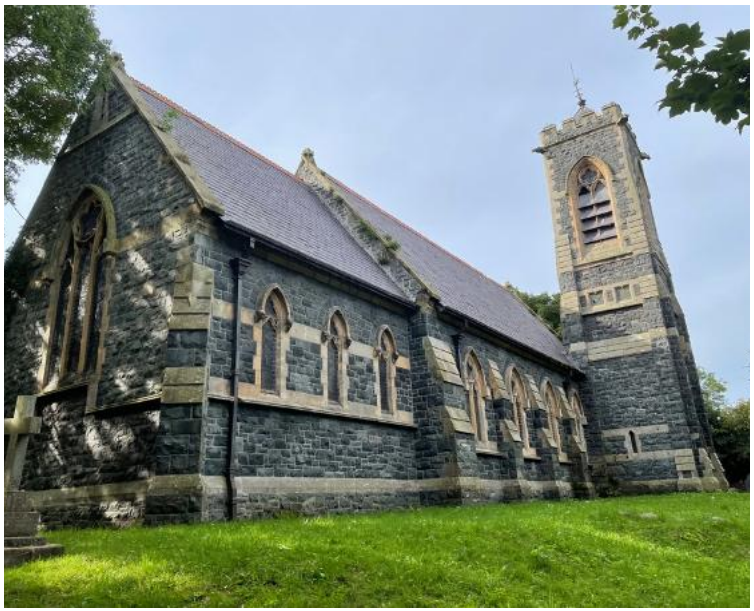
6.1.3 Potential Additional Designations.

It is considered that St. Bodfan's Church should be considered for listing on the national list.

6.2 Undesignated Historic Assets of Special Local Interest

The following undesignated historic assets in the conservation area have been identified as being of special local interest (see Fig 33):

28 Listed cottages, 1 & 2 Tan-y-Dderwen (2021).



29 St. Bodfan's Church from the north-east. (2021).

- *The Aber Falls Hotel.*
- *Capel Bethlehem*
- *Bryn Tirion on corner of Gadlys and Bryn Tirion.*
- *Ceris*
- *Llewellyn Cottage*
- *Terrace adjacent to Tan-y-Dderwen (formerly of the Penrhyn Estate)*
- *Agricultural buildings behind above.*
- *Capel Soar*
- *Ty Capel*
- *Tremynfa*
- *Original Methodist Chapel and Adjacent house.*
- *Nant-y-Felin*
- *Almshouses (Bodalon & Bodfan).*
- *Aber Mill (Hen-Felin)*
- *Single storey cottages en-route to Bont Newydd (Glen Cottage & Breichiau) including adjacent outbuilding.*

6.3 Register of Traditional Buildings

6.3.1 Consideration should also be given to the Authority's '*Register of Traditional Buildings*'. As this list is always under review, it would not be practical to include within this Conservation Area Appraisal. Please contact the Authority should you have enquiries regarding the register.

7.0 The Conservation Area Boundary.

7.1.1 Following the appraisal, no amendments are proposed to the conservation area boundary.

8.0 Hidden Histories (archaeological potential)

8.1.1 Abergwyngregyn was on a major regional transport route from at least Roman times. Consequently there is a very significant potential for archaeological deposits across the conservation area.

8.1.2 The extent of the llys and of any nucleated Medieval settlement is still far from clear, consequently there is a significant potential for archaeological deposits in the vicinity of the mwd and earlier investigation around Pen-y-Bryn

9.0 Other Designated Assets

30 Cobbled surfaces, Gadlys (2021).

31 Capel Bethlehem, was constructed c.1896 to designs by Richard Davies. (2021).

9.1 National Nature Reserve (SSSI)

9.1.1 Coedydd Aber is a designated National Nature Reserve.[5]

9.1.2 All National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Wales are legally protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Most are also declared under the EU Habitats Directive as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Ramsar (wetlands). These designations provide further legal protection.

9.1.3 The nature reserve wraps around the southern boundary of the conservation area, extending onto the hillside below Fridd Ddu and along the eastern bank of Afon Aber.

9.2 Trees Preservation Orders

9.2.1 There is a group tree preservation order covering *All trees of whatever species standing in the area'.* (ref. Gwynedd 40) This area covers the boundary of what is now known as Llys Onnen, a large 19th century farmhouse near the church (formerly Tan-y-Fynwent). See Fig 17.

9.3 Designated Historic Landscape

9.3.1 Abergwnygregyn is situated in the North Arllechwedd Registered Historic Landscape. HLW (Gw) 12. See Fig 34.

http://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/historiclandscape/FullReport?lang=en&id=HLW%20(Gw)%2012

[5] https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/places-to-visit/north-west-wales/coedydd-aber-national-nature-reserve/?lang=en

Listed Buildings and Scheduled Momuments
1:5000 @ A4

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Locally Significant Buildings
1:5000 @ A4

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10.0 Biodiversity

10.1 Trees

10.1.1 See 9.2 for Tree Preservation Orders.

10.1.2 See 4.3 for description of key trees/tree areas within the conservation area that contribute to its special character.

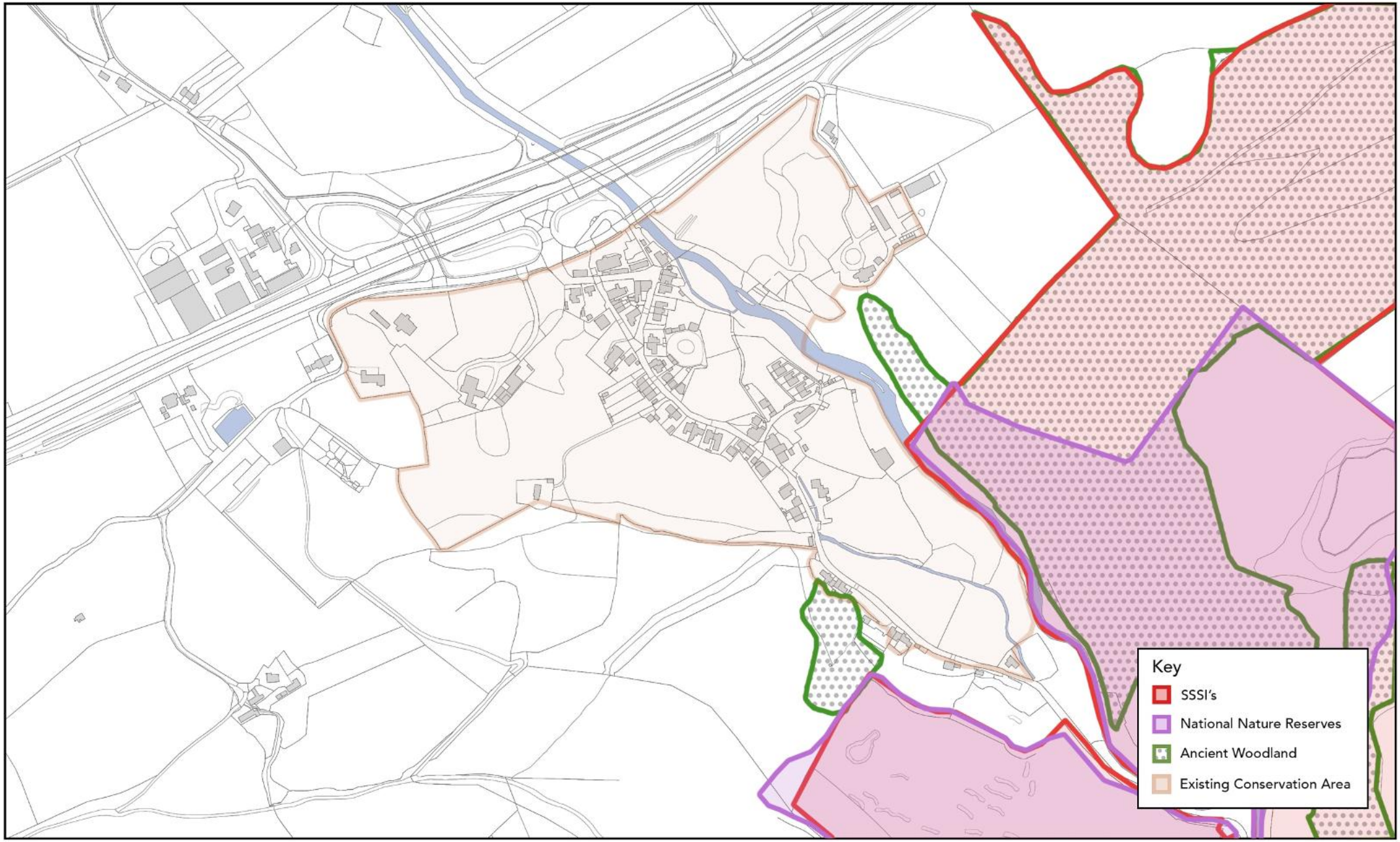
10.1.3 Areas of restored ancient woodland are to be found to the east of the conservation area on the slopes of Breichiau and Allt-y-Bont.

10.1.4 On the Ffridd (the land between the valley floor and the high mountain) hawthorn and crab-apple trees are noted and these create a distinctive blanket of white flowers in May.

10.2 Protected Species.

10.2.1 A number of key protected species are known to be present in and around the conservation area, bird species include:

- Pied flycatchers
- Wood warbler
- Redstart
- Crossbills
- The fast flowing river provides habitat for the dipper and grey wagtail, whilst the ffridd (the land between the valley floor and the high mountain) attracts species like the tree pipit and wheatear.
- Ring ouzels, ravens and flocks of choughs can sometimes be seen on the open mountain slopes and on the steep rock wall at the far end of the valley.
- Red Kite, Buzzard and other bird of prey activity is recorded nearby.



Other Designations
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34 Other Designations (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

10.2.2 The river is known to provide a habitat to an otter population[6] and weasel, bank voles and wood mice are also recorded.

10.2.3 Coedydd Aber, along with many of the oak woodlands in North Wales, is exceptionally good for fungi. Some of the species you might expect to find in Autumn include *Fly Agaric, Oakbug, Milkcap, and Turkeytail.*

10.2.4 Recent survey work associated with modifications to the A55 by EDC identified widespread bat activity at sites north and west of the conservation area[7]. Species included:

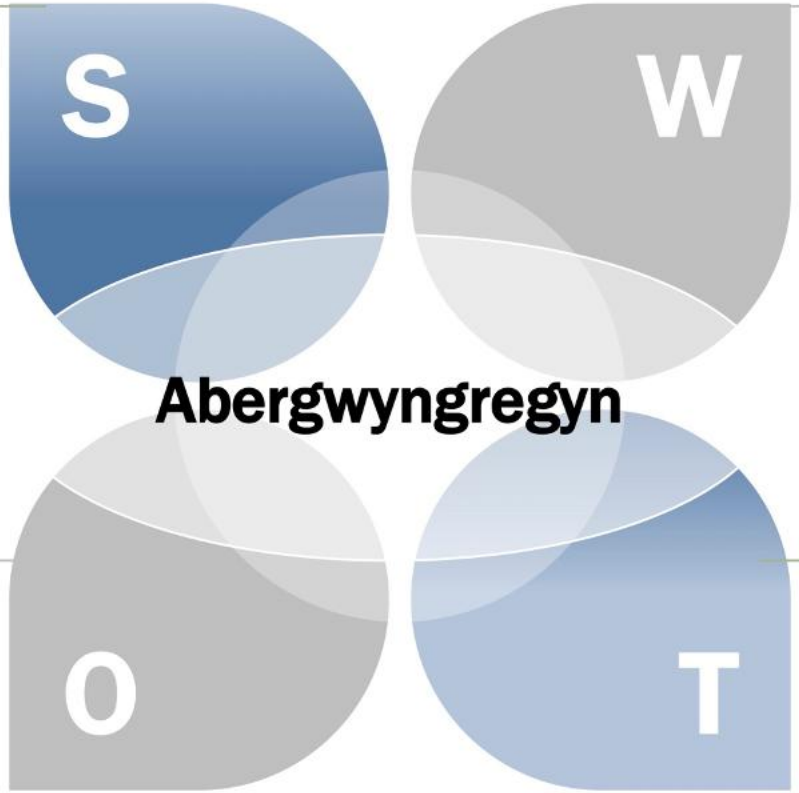
- Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus/pygmaeus*
- BrownLong-eared *Plecotus auratus*
- Myotis *Myotis sp.*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*

10.2.5 Migratory fish such as the salmonids salmon and brown/sea trout and European eel are known to be present in the Afon Aber.

[6] https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Documents---Council/Strategies-and-policies/Environment-and-planning/Biodiversity/Species-Action-Plans/Otter-SAP.pdf
[7] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/a55-abergwyngregyn-to-tair-meibion-improvements-env-statement-vol-2-appendix-c.pdf

PART TWO – CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN.

1.0 Summary SWOT Analysis



STRENGTHS

- Association to the Princes of Gwynedd, exceptional historical significance as a location of a princely llys (court).
- Range of listed buildings and strong historic core to village.
- Active Community Regeneration company which owns and runs part of mill and hydro scheme.
- Adjacency to the falls and fine landscape setting.
- Ecology and Biodiversity.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of visibility of the mound (Pen-y-mwd).
- Amount of inappropriate change to some of the key buildings, especially the Soar chapel and the (non-community) part of the mill.
- Conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Amount of traffic to falls.
- Village entrance and threshold and relationship to A55 is poor with obtrusive highways features.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Community Regeneration Company, has a track record of success which could be expanded.
- Sensitive application of sustainable technologies where appropriate.
- Access to the 'mound' (Pen-y-mwd)
- Improved connections to the falls.
- Repair and restore Ty'n Ffridd.
- 'non community' elements of the mill.
- Building at junction of Gadlys and Village road.

THREATS

- Listed building (Ty'n Ffridd) at significant risk of loss.
- Erosion of the setting of the mound (Pen-y-mwd) and loss of undiscovered below-ground archaeology.
- Redundancy of (non listed) church.
- On going inappropriate change (e.g. plastic windows, roofing materials).
- Level of traffic and tourist pressure on approach to the falls.
- Falls Hotel appears to be closed (Sept 2021).

2.0 Understanding the Issues

2.1 The Condition of the Conservation Area

2.1.1 Abergwyngregyn remains many legible and visible layers of its unique and important history and retains the essential components of its special character. However, later changes are now beginning to threaten its aesthetic value in particular.

2.1.2 Most buildings are occupied or in beneficial use but there are some significant buildings which are either unoccupied, or underutilised. These include:

- Ty'n Fridd, a listed building south of the village centre is derelict and in a poor condition.
- St. Bodfan's church is not listed, but a prominent and important building. It is understood this is currently used for storage. It is, however, deteriorating and this isn't an appropriate long term use.
- The building on the corner of Gadlys and Bryn Tirion, which has a shop (un-used) and is a building of fine proportion and potential.
- The 'non-community' part of the mill which is delapidated and untidy and rendered in modern pebble-dash. It is very prominent especially when approaching from the south.
- At the time of the fieldwork for this report, the Falls Hotel not operational. Change to domestic accommodation would be damaging for the village and the area.

2.1.3 There are some significant issues which adversely affect the special interest of the conservation area. These include:

- The replacement of historic joinery, windows and doors with modern, generally uPVC, replacements.
- Application of modern renders and paints externally.
- Inappropriate or poor quality developments or extensions.

35 Ty'n Ffridd, a listed building in a very poor state and highly at risk.

36 Modern uPVC windows have had a detrimental impact on the character of the village. The modern windows of Capel Soar are particularly prominent.

- Loss of traditional boundary treatments.
- Over dominance of vehicles, parking and traffic.

2.1.4 Specific examples include:

- Replacement of windows and doors to key buildings in the conservation area including Capel Soar, parts of Hen Felin and most of the non-listed houses.
- Render to the southern part of Hen Felin and to many of the 19th century houses.
- The new uses (café and ice cream parlour) for the former garage to the Falls Hotel is positive, but the changes (cladding etc) are very prominent visually at the entrance to the village.

2.2 Buildings at Risk

2.2.1 Ty'n Ffridd is a listed building which currently lies derelict towards the southern-end of the conservation area. It has a consent for conversion to a holiday let (ref. NP3/10/LB79B), but this was in 2018 and no work has occurred to date.

2.2.2 St. Bodfan's church is not listed currently (although this is recommended for review in this report) and no-longer a place of worship. It is understood it is currently in use as storage, but its condition is deteriorating.

2.3 Overview of the SWOT Analysis.

2.3.1 A SWOT analysis has been undertaken for the Abergwyngregyn Conservation Area. This is used to identify the issues, but also some of the opportunities and inherent strengths of the conservation area. It then informs the creation of the positive management proposals which follow.

2.3.2 The SWOT analysis shows a number of key points for action, to build on the strengths and opportunities of the Conservation Area. These include:

- Support reinstatement of traditional building details and sustainable upgrading for improved environmental performance.

37 Missing rainwater goods and plant growth to copings. St. Bodfan's Church.

38 Hen Felin, community element (to the left, unrendered) and residential element to the right (rendered in modern pebbledash).

- Find a suitable new uses for Ty'n Ffridd and St. Bodfan's Church.
- Seek to enhance the appearance of some of the other key buildings, e.g. Hen Felin (south wing), Capel Soar (primarily the windows) and other key windows.
- Build upon the excellent work in developing sustainable energy generation in Aber, which could be a benchmark for other villages in this regard.
- Potential to enable access to the Mwd, and provide better interpretation, building on that provided in the Ty Pwmp.
- Consider enhanced pedestrian connections to the falls.

2.3.3 The SWOT identifies a number of weaknesses and threats, which are identified as action points, these include:

- Seek positive engagement to reverse damaging alterations to key buildings and features.
- Ensure that green spaces and key views are protected through local engagement and when considering applications for development.
- Consider options to better manage and control vehicle flows to the falls and reduce problems of parking, whilst encouraging use of local services such as Caffi Hen Felin.

3.0 Positive Management.

3.1 Boundary Changes.

3.1.1 No changes are proposed to the Conservation Area boundary.

3.2 Local & National Policy Protection

3.2.1 The legislative framework context for Conservation Areas is provided in the introductory document ***Introduction to Conservation Areas for the 21st Century.*** This document also gives general guidance and policies.

3.2.2 As noted in 6.1 of the CAA, it is recommended that St. Bodfan's Church and the Aber Falls Hotel are considered for listing. If this is not possible they should be protected by article 4 directions.

3.3 Enhancing the Special Interest of the Conservation Area

3.3.1 Addressing some of the issues (see 2.0) and weaknesses and threats to the Conservation Area have the potential to significantly enhance its special interest. This can be through extended planning powers or guidance.

3.3.2 Specific issues and opportunities include:

- Potential implementation of development control measures (article 4 direction) to control loss of historic joinery details and features
- Consideration of a design brief to ensure that the redundant, or under-utilised buildings are brought back into beneficial or enhanced use.
- Enhancing connections to the Mwd, and pedestrian connections to the falls.
- Consider options to better manage and control vehicle flows to the falls and reduce problems of parking, whilst encouraging use of local services such as Caffi Hen Felin.
- Seek to control in-fill development and development of inappropriate quality on the periphery of the conservation area.
- Encouraging reinstatement of more appropriate joinery details to locally significant buildings, in place of modern uPVC replacements.
- Building upon and increasing awareness of the wide-range of species and special natural features in and around the village.

3.3.3 It is proposed that a **design-guide** is provided to understand and encourage appropriate change in the conservation area, this should include:

- Appropriate detailing to windows, doors and new joinery.

- Scale, massing and materiality of new buildings and extensions.
- Parking, surfaces, planting and ecological considerations.

3.3.4 Using the above tools and through the consultation (see below), raise awareness and the profile of the Conservation Area and encourage appropriate development and change. To include:

- Awareness with owners and the community of Abergwyngregyn.
- Raising awareness and (with support in the future) skills for local contractors and crafts people.

3.4 Sustainability & Environmental Upgrading

3.4.1 Guidance on the right approach for the introduction of energy efficiency improvements, and the necessary consents in Snowdonia's Conservation Areas is given in the document: ***Advice on Energy Efficiency Measures in Conservation Areas (Planning & Practical Guide).***

3.4.2 Aber has natural opportunities for micro-power generation and these have already started to be utilised. Micro-hydro generation takes place at the Anafon Energy hydroelectric scheme above the village. The scheme was developed by the Abergwyngregyn Regeneration Company (ARC) through a specially created community benefit society, Ynni Anafon Energy Cyf. ARC also promotes green improvements to houses in the village and provides grants through the Dwr Anafon Charity, funded by Ynni Anafon Energy Cyf.

3.4.3 Sustainable energy generation schemes should be supported and encouraged where they don't adversely affect the special character or biodiversity of the conservation area.

3.5 Biodiversity

3.5.1 Trees are critically important to the biodiversity and aesthetic significance. A variety of trees are protected by preservation orders (see 8.3). Other trees are identified as having significance in the conservation area (see 4.3).

3.5.2 It is considered that the trees in the churchyard, predominantly yew and those around the village green, could be considered for preservation orders.

3.5.3 The potential to enhance biodiversity in the conservation area is significant, example actions could include:

- Installation of bird and bat boxes and development of a box management plan.
- Appropriate use of grass roofs and other built features in extensions or new buildings, where appropriate to the built heritage, can enhance wildlife habitats.
- Hedgerow management and enhancement.
- Protection of trees during construction work
- Non-intervention to allow trees to mature
- Retention of standing deadwood and creation of deadwood piles for insects and other wildlife.

3.5.4 Ensuring that development is informed by, and is sympathetic to, the distinctive character areas of the Conservation Area and takes account of other evidence of historic characterisation and landscape sensitivity of the surrounding area.

3.5.5 Ensuring that development proposals will enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests.

3.5.6 Working with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to develop and secure the implementation of projects to enhance the landscape and create and improve habitats of nature conservation value.

3.5.7 Encouraging development to include measures to contribute positively to the overall biodiversity of the area.

3.5.8 Enhancing green infrastructure in a way which provides for the energy needs of the area without adverse impact no biodiversity or the character of the conservation area.

4.0 Consultation

4.1.1 The draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management plan have been subject to the following consultation:

- Abergwyngregyn Community Council.

- Abergwyngregyn Regeneration Company (ARC)
- Online survey distributed via Abergwyngregyn Community Council and Abergwyngregyn Regeneration Company
- Via the National Park's website.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Sources

The main published sources of information used in the production of this Appraisal were as follows:

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