

Y BALA

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Chambers Conservation Ltd,

Issue

Issues: **5** Final Version

Chambers Conservation Ltd
Registered in England and Wales, no. 09787239
Registered address: Mercury House, High Street, Tattenhall, CH3 9PX
www.chambersconservation.com

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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 legislative context, including guidance on what development is controlled and where consents are required.

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 Y Bala is a small town in Gwynedd. It lies in a broad valley at the north-eastern end of the glacial lake of Llyn Tegid, the largest natural lake in Wales.

1.2.3 The lake and town lie within the Bala Cleft. A fault which runs broadly south-west to north-east, eventually extending offshore into Bae Ceredigion.

1.2.4 To the east of Bala, south of the cleft, are Mynydd y Berwyn, extending up to over 800m AOD at Cadair Berwyn (832m) and Moel Sych (827m). The Hirnantau, visually foothills of the Berwyns lie between the town and the higher peaks, heavily wooded around Cwm Hirnant. To the south of the



01 Y Bala in context of Llyn Tegid, looking towards Aran Fawddwy. © Dronepics.Wales. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

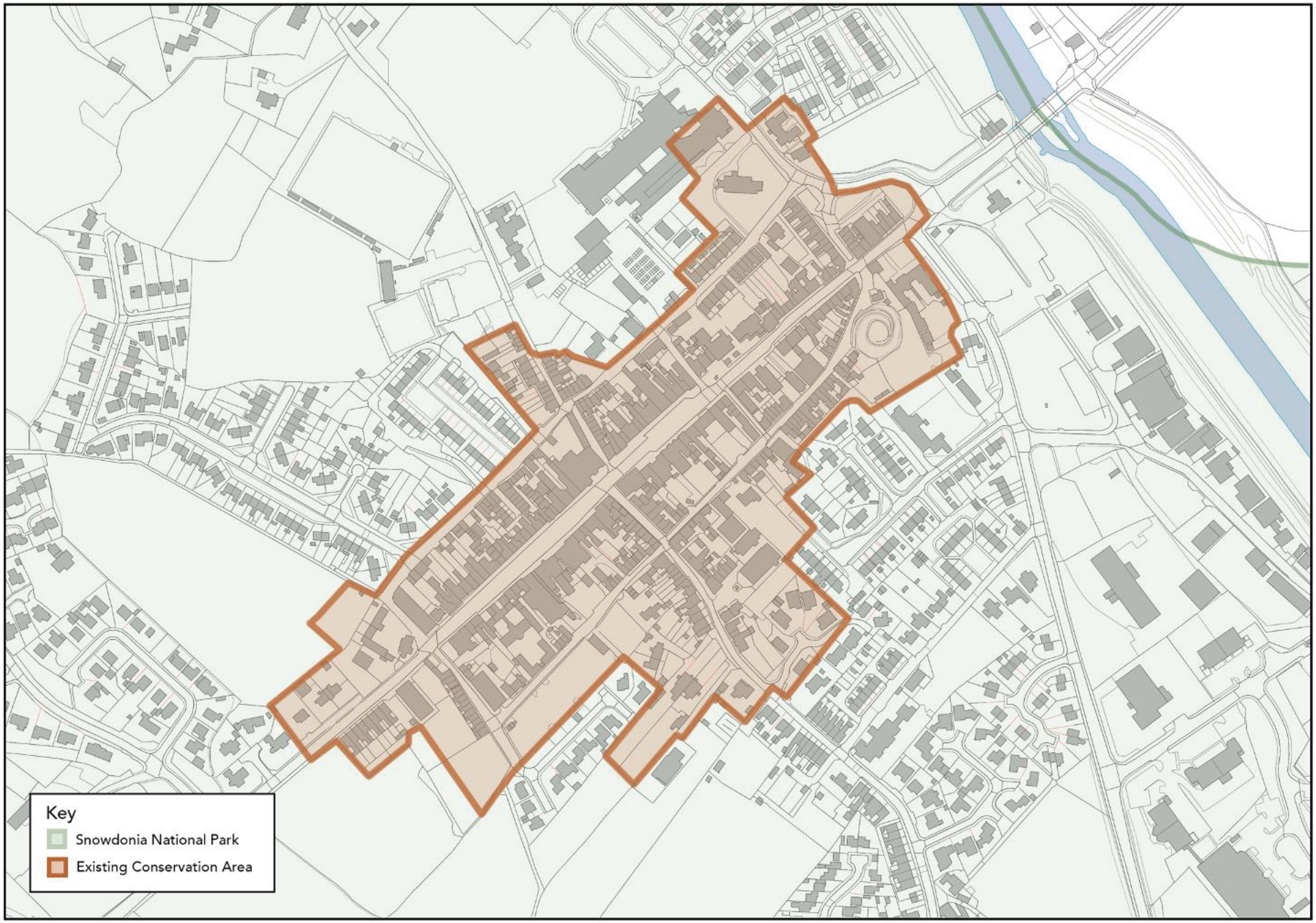
town is Aran Fawddwy which reaches a height of 905m. To the west, rising above the reservoir of Llyn Celyn is Arenig Fawr (854m).

1.2.5 Llyn Tegid flows into the Afon Dyfrydwy (River Dee) to the north-east, which flows to Llangollen and on to Chester. The Afon Tryweryn joins the Dyfrdwy just north of the town. At Llanuwchllyn there is the confluence of the Dyfrydwy, the Afon Lliw and the Afon Twrch which come together just south of Llyn Tegid.

1.2.6 Bala lies at an important road junction, with the route following the Dyfrydwy crossing the high passes which link the town to Trawsfynydd and Cwm Prysor to north-west and towards Cwm Pennant to the south and east.

Designation

1.2.7 The Conservation Area was designated in 1971.



Existing Conservation Area
1:2000 @ A4

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

2.0 Summary of Special Interest

2.1.1 The Medieval town of Bala was laid out by Roger Mortimer in the early 14th century. His plan, which was defined by three parallel streets with dimensions influenced by the 12th century mwd, is still clearly evident today.

2.1.2 Landscape setting is important to the special interest and consequent aesthetic value. The essential character is well captured by the Picturesque traveller Roscoe who, in 1853, who describes the contrast between the wilder and fiercer landscapes of the adjacent mountains with the *'milder landscapes'* around the quiet hamlet and the *'smooth, unvarying lake'*.[1] This contrast still holds true and is inherent to the experience and landscape approach to the town. Whilst the experience of the landscape, unlike Dolgellau or Betws for example, is not so immediate, especially within the town.

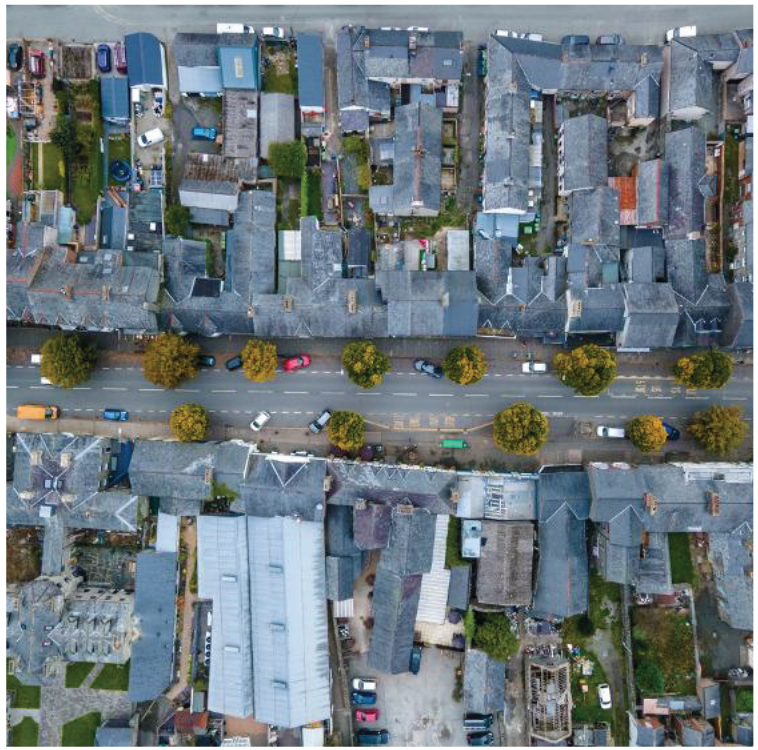
2.1.3 Y Bala is a very well defined and preserved example of a planned English borough, and certainly the best in Meirionnydd and this medieval origin still very legible. This is important in both communal and historical value. Primary elements include:

- The parallel street pattern of Y Stryd Fawr, Heol Arenig, Heol Plasey and Heol-y-Domen, together with the perpendicular roads of Heol Aran and Heol Tegid, which comprise the footprint of Mortimer's planned town.
- The relationship of both Heol-y-Domen and Y Stryd Fawr to Tomen-y-Bala, which helps define the plot scale and size. The dimensions influenced the setting out of the burgage plots and it interrupts the street pattern. [2]
- The width and scale of Y Stryd Fawr, designed to take the town market.

2.1.4 The present day character is heavily influenced by the town's role as place of religious radicalism. This is very important to the communal value of the



03 Tomen-y-Bala (2021)



04 Aerial view, Y Stryd Fawr. The Burgage plots are still discernible. © Dronepics.Wales. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

[1] Roscoe, T. (1853), *Wanderings and Excursions in North Wales* (London), p.245.
[2] Aston, M & Bond, J (1976) The Landscape of Towns. (Sutton Publishing Limited)

town, but also has strong aesthetic and historical significance. Key aspects include:

- Views to and from the town from Coleg-y-Bala on raised ground adjacent to Heol Ffrydan.
- Relationship to and from places of worship of different denominations. Views of Christ Church, the first Presbyterian Chapel (off Y Stryd Fawr), glimpsed views to Congregational Chapel and Capel Tegid with the forecourt, site of the first Coleg Bala.
- Home of Thomas Charles and the original *Calvinistic Methodist College.*
- Independent College on Heol y Domen (Fig 06).
- Prominent statuary of Thomas Charles and Lewis Edwards.

2.1.5 The town had a period of prosperity in the 18th and early 19th Century through, primarily a trade in woollen goods and hosiery in particular. A range of fine buildings remain from this period, of distinct quality and detail. They predominantly are of stone with large sash windows and start to define the 'modern' town.

- Buildings on Y Stryd Fawr. Including Henblas, R M Roberts, the Spar, Y Cyfnod and others.
- Neuadd y Dref and the other listed structures extending from Y Stryd Fawr along Heol Tegid, with Siop Bapur Newydd on the corner.
- Terraces on Heol Tegid together with Y Gelli, Plas Teg and Plas yn Acre.
- The first phases of hotel building.

2.1.6 The coming of the railway and the development of the town as a destination or stopping point for travellers has given it an eclectic architectural character, essential to its aesthetic significance.

- Terraces near the former station site, with polychromatic brick.
- Diverse materiality of Y Stryd Fawr and varied building scales and materials, including stone, brick and render.



05 First Calvinistic Methodist College, behind the home of Thomas Charles, latterly Barclays Bank (Wikimedia Commons)



06 The independent College (Congregationalist) left, opposite the Congregationalist Chapel. (2021).

3.0 Historic Timeline

Prehistoric & Roman

3.1.1 The history of Bala is covered in detail elsewhere, the summary below is intended only to give context to the appraisal and the assessment of special interest.

3.1.2 The earliest origins of Bala are not very well understood and there are few prehistoric structures identified in the area. The location is clearly strategic however and this is reflected by the adjacency to various Roman roads. The most notable of which ran from Caer (Chester) via the military complex at Llanfor (1 km north-east of the town) along the north-western side of the lake, towards Caer Gai and Brithdir near Dolgellau.[3]

3.1.3 At Llanfor was a large Roman campaign fortress.[4] The fort was significant in scale, with twenty-two barrack blocks which could accommodate 1,760 soldiers. This was relatively short-lived and is thought to have been replaced by the later Flavian (AD 69-96) fort at Caer Gai, south of Llyn Tegid.[5]

Medieval

3.1.4 Evidence has also been found of the presence of early medieval structures at Llanfor and there was a church here by the 10th century, suggesting some of the earliest significant settlement. There is also a castle-ringwork, Pen-Ucha'r-Llan, north of the church.

3.1.5 The steeply sided circular castle mwd (motte) of Tomen y Bala, to the eastern side of Y Stryd Fawr, is likely to date from the twelfth century. The pattern of earthwork castles along the Afon Dyfrdwy, westwards from Glyndyfrydwy to Bala, suggests a Norman, rather than Welsh, origin.

3.1.6 Latterly Tomen y Bala is associated with the Maerdref of the Uwch Tryweryn Cwmwd (commote) in the cantref of Penllyn. Traditionally associated with Powys, but subject to incursions from the Princes of Gwynedd. By the end of the 12th century Penllyn was held by Elis ap Madog ap Maredudd.[6] But refusal to support Llywelyn ap Iowerth (of Gwynedd)'s incursions into Powys meant Llywelyn took the castle at Bala, and Gwynedd held Penllyn until the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in 1282.



07 Extract from the Tithe Map, showing significant settlement along Y Stryd Fawr (1841)



08 View from 'Tommen y Bala'. From an original by Moses Griffith (c. 1784) from 'A Tour in Wales' by Thomas Pennant (1726-1798).

[3] Historic Landscape Characterisation Project http://www.heneb.co.uk/hlc/balathemes.html
[4] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=&id=3228
[5] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=&id=284
[6] Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), *Bala Draft Conservation Area Appraisal/Urban Characterisation Study, (section 5.1).*

16th & 17th Centuries

3.1.7 It seems likely that Bala itself began to develop around the mwd (motte) of Tomen y Bala from the late 12th century.

3.1.8 In 1310 a planned borough was established by Roger Mortimer, predominantly using the lands identified with the Commotal centre. It seems part of the intention was to quell disorder in Penllyn. Mortimer laid out 53 burgage plots, comprising a house and garden, each 200ft x 26ft. A burgage being a tenure by which land in a town was held in return for a service or rental.

3.1.9 The burgage plots were laid out along what is today Y Stryd Fawr, with the two lanes running parallel (now Heol Arenig, Heol Plasey and Heol y Domen).

3.1.10 By this time Y Bala was becoming the dominant settlement as the market was transferred from Llanfor. In 1324 the town received its first borough charter.

3.1.11 Deeds from 1350 indicate that a chapel had been constructed, and that the settlement was following broadly the street pattern of today.[7] At that time the parish church was still at Llanycil. By the turn of the 14th century, the town had a barracks, mill and court house.

3.1.12 In 1485 Rhys ap Meredudd raised a band of men from '*Y Berfeddwlad*' and led it to Bosworth Field to fight in support of Henry VII and, following Henry's victory, the family earned considerable privileges from the new king, which in turn led to the establishment of the Rhiwlas estate north of the town, which would remain influential in subsequent centuries.

3.1.13 Bala remained a small settlement and by the mid sixteenth century it was recorded as having as few as 13 taxpayers and described by the antiquary John Leland (1532-4) as a 'poor little market'.

3.1.14 By the 16th century the town was gaining a degree of prosperity through the wool, knitting and cattle trade. References from William Camden (1551-1623) and the hearth tax records suggest the town was now relatively prosperous.

3.1.15 During the 18th century, small scale development was promoted by wealthy families including the the Prices of nearby Rhiwlas, the Lloyds of Rhiwaedog, who lived at Plas-yn-Dre, and the Williams-Wynn family of

[7] Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), *Bala Draft Conservation Area Appraisal/Urban Characterisation Study, (section 5.2).*



09 Y Stryd Fawr, c.1875 (John Thomas). White Lion has now been redeveloped.



10 Y Stryd Fawr (John Thomas) before 1875 (note the original White Lion).

Late 18th & Early 19th Century – Woollen trade

Wynnstay, who had a town house and other property in the town. At this time the town was recognised for locally knitted goods, with Rev. J. Evans recording in 1812 'a vast trade in woollen stockings, gloves and caps'.[8]

3.1.16 The slow growth of the town is evidenced by the lack of its own church until the construction of the first Christ Church in 1811. Contemporary accounts reveal the town was still largely within its medieval limits at the beginning of the 19th century.

3.1.17 The tithe map of 1841 (see Fig.07) shows development along Y Stryd Fawr, clearly showing the courtyard outside the White Lion and building along Heol y Castell and Heol Tegid.

3.1.18 Y Bala is known for the rise of non-conformism during the eighteenth and early 19th century, heavily influenced by prominent local landowner Simon Lloyd of (1756-1836) of Plas-yn-Dre. Lloyd, who was a committed Methodist, consequently favoured non-conformists in granting leases. He granted a lease for the construction of a chapel in 1778 to a group of prominent Methodists including Daniel Rowlands and Peter Williams.

3.1.19 Lloyd was a good friend of Revd Thomas Charles, to whom a 16-year old Mary Jones famously walked some 25 miles from Llanfihangel-y-pennant in order to buy a bible. Through Charles, the story of Mary led, ultimately, to the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

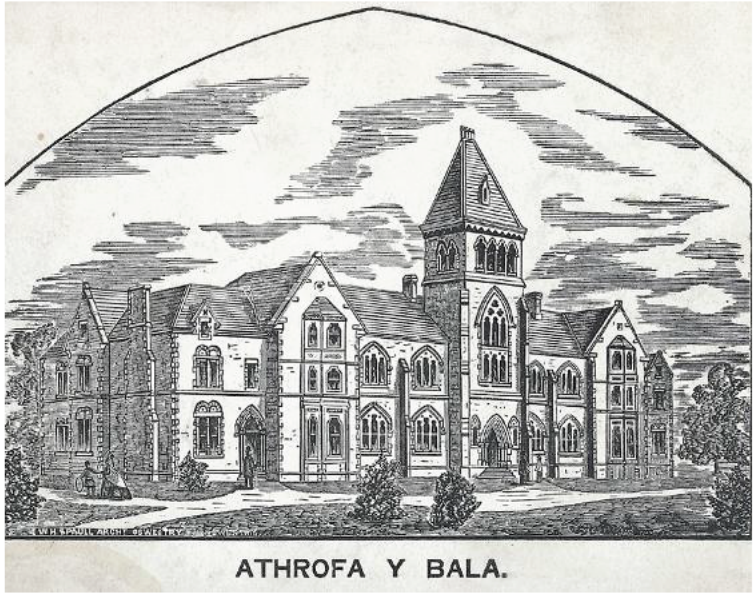
3.1.20 The establishment, by Rev. Lewis Edwards, of the Presbyterian Church in Wales' seminary pushed Bala to the forefront of non-conformism and Calvinistic Methodism in particular. A specific building was constructed for the seminary in 1867, replacing a room behind Plas-yn-Dre. This is now Coleg-y-Bala, a Christian youth centre, which stands in a prominent raised position beside Heol Ffrydan (outside the conservation area).[9]

19th Century – Religious Radicalism

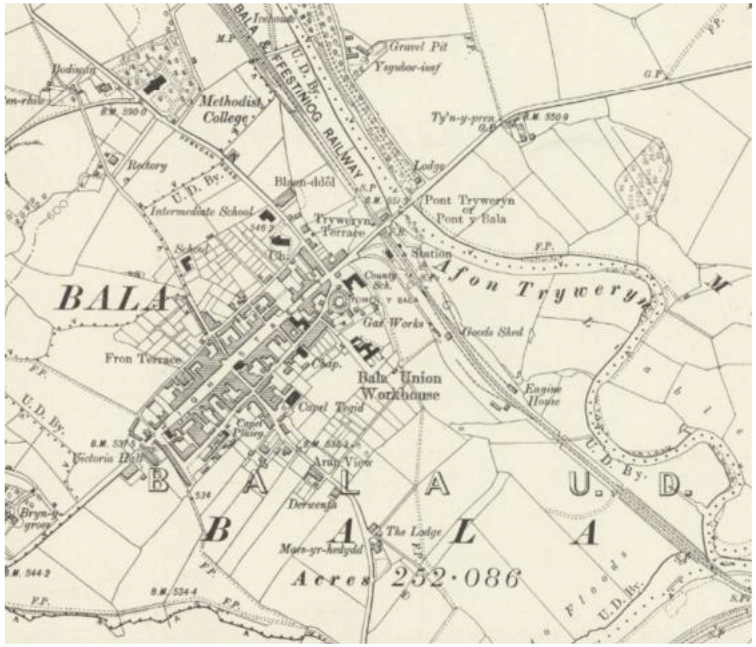
3.1.21 The college was linked to the town by the new Ffrydan Road, which now replaced Heol y Castell for traffic towards Trawsfynydd. The new Christ church was built 1855 on the corner on Arenig Street and Ffrydan Road.

3.1.22 The presence of the Anglican church was the small chapel (c.1811) on Y Stryd Fawr, until the prominent Christ Church was constructed in 1853-4, at a scale to challenge the non-conformists.

[8] Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. (2009) *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd, p.545.*
[9] http://www.heneb.co.uk/hlc/bala/bala3.html



11 Etching of proposed Coleg y Bala (c.1865).



12 Extract from the 6" – 1mile OS map, surveyed 1888. The railway and the Methodist College have arrived, but otherwise the town is very compact.

Late 19th Century – The railway arrives.

3.1.23 By the mid 19th century the number of hotels and taverns indicate the town was becoming a centre for visitors and travellers heading further west to the coast, this pattern is still inherent in the townscape today.

3.1.24 The Great Western Railway arrived in Bala (at what would become Bala Junction, east of the lake) from Corwen in 1868, increasing the accessibility of the town to visitors. A further line was constructed from Bala to Ffestiniog via Cwm Prysor, opening in 1882, and resulting in the construction of a station (gorsaf 'newydd') north of the town adjacent to Pont-y-Bala.

3.1.25 The proximity of the Ffestiniog line brought some further development as well as different building materials, notably brick and terracotta. Speculative development near the new station started with Ffrydan terrace c.1890 and shops facing Neuadd-y-Cyfnod.

3.1.26 School provision in the town had included Neuadd-y-Cyfnod, established by a bequest by Edward Meyrick in 1713-14 (the present building dates from c.1851). Ysgol Beuno Sant, the National School, was established in 1872-3, and then Ysgol y Berwyn, the Intermediate School, in 1899.

Modern Bala

3.1.27 The town has always held appeal for visitors, but this is now it's primary business, seeing a distinct change in its cultural nature. More development has also followed in the 20th century with housing spreading both south and west of the town, including significant local authority housing to the north of Heol Arenig. The college and Bodiwan have also provided a focus for new housing, losing the distinct 'gap' which existed between them and the town.

3.1.28 The railways gradually closed in the mid-late 1960s and the station near Pont-y-Bala was demolished, but Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid a narrow-gauge steam railway was established on part of the trackbed in 1972. A new Town station behind the former cinema is subject of a current planning application (2021). [10]



13 Bala Station c.1950. Note the castellated goods shed at the behest of the Rhiwlas estate.



14 View ot Bala from the Coleg, postcard, c.1920.

[10] https://www.balalakerailwaytrust.org.uk

4.0 Spatial Analysis

4.1 Settlement Form & Layout

4.1.1 The current form of the town is still discernibly that laid down by Roger Mortimer in the 14th century. The long, wide, Y Stryd Fawr and its parallel back-streets Heol-y-Domen and Heol Arenig reflect the burgage plots and are bisected by the early route from Montgomeryshire to Caernarfonshire (Heol Tegid and Heol-y-Castell).[11]

4.1.2 The pattern of Mortimer's town was dictated by the relationship of Y Stryd Fawr and Tomen-y-Bala, so the broad pattern is actually even earlier. The alignment of the town may be derived from the Roman roads. The medieval relationship of Tomen-y-Bala to Afon Tryweryn and Llyn Tegid is still legible, although much altered by later buildings.

4.1.3 The identification of Bala with Non-conformism was prominently displayed in the relationship of Coleg-y-Bala, sitting prominently above the town, east of Heol Ffryddan. This relationship has been eroded by later expansion of Ysgol y Berwyn and further development east of Heol Ffryddan.

4.1.4 The area around Pont-y-Bala has changed substantially with the arrival and removal of the railway and a new road alignment of the A4212 which cut-off the former cross-roads and created a series of unsatisfactory spaces to the rear of the terraces. The relationship of the Gateway of Rhiwlas Estate to Pont-y-Bala is still distinct, but the former railway station is now a large car-park (see Fig 15) and fire station and industrial units on the former trackbed.

4.1.5 Later developments have moved away from the medieval layout, with expansion through local authority housing (initially) north-west of Heol Arenig, housing developments at Heol-y-Fron, south of the town and both sides of Heol Tegid to the east.

4.1.6 The town has a number of distinct character areas, explored in more detail in section 5.



15 View across the former station site towards Tomen-y-Bala (2021).



16 Y Stryd Fawr (2021).

[11] Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. (2009) *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd, p.545.*

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, 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 also Fig 21):

A Dynamic view from the edge of the conservation area towards Pont-y-Bala, Rhiwlas and Llanmor.

B View towards Coleg-y-Bala and Bodiwan along Heol Ffrydan.

C View of Tomen-y-Bala from B4391, behind Neuadd-y-Cyfnod.

D View of Tomen-y-Bala from Y Stryd Fawr.

E Dynamic view along Y Stryd Fawr as it widens adjacent to Plas yn Dre.

F View of former Presbyterian Church from Y Stryd Fawr.

G Dynamic view along Y Stryd Fawr looking north-east from the White Lion.

H View east along Heol Tegid.

I Dynamic view of early building on the corner of Y Stryd Fawr and Heol Aran.

J Dynamic view with farm buildings on the corner of Heol Arenig.

K&L Views into unusual courtyard houses, perpendicular to Heol Arenig.

M Narrow view between outbuildings to White Lion and terrace opposite on Heol Castell.

N Narrow view along Heol Castell.

O Open dynamic view from Heol Castell.

P Narrow view along Stryd yr Eglwys toward Y Stryd Fawr.



17 View through archway to the former workhouse. (2021).



18 Graveyard of Christ Church, looking towards Ty Seren. (2021).

Q View into the courtyard at the rear of the former Workhouse from Heol Plasey.

R View east along Heol Tegid towards Y Gelli.

S Dynamic view of frontage to Capel Tegid and listed houses adjacent.

T View along Heol y Domen towards Tomen y Bala.

U View along Heol Berwyn towards Congregational Chapel.

4.3 Green spaces & Trees

4.3.1 There is limited green space within the Bala conservation area. The most significant, and prominent, is Tomen-y-Bala and it's fine tree.

4.3.2 The graveyard of Christ Church has several good Yew trees, but is otherwise a relatively simple space. The gravestones and memorials are generally quite simple in nature, especially east of the church.

4.3.3 Lawned forecourt to Neuadd-y-Cyfnod provides an important threshold to the town and conservation area on approach from the north-east.

4.3.4 Trees lining Y Stryd Fawr are important to the street scene and character.

4.3.5 The green areas near Heol Ffrydan, in front of and opposite the terraces are disjointed partly green spaces, punctuated with ad-hoc parking.

4.3.6 The lawned frontage to the Presbyterian Church provides an rewarding moment and setting to this early 19th century building, viewed from Y Stryd Fawr.

4.3.7 The field (partly in the conservation area, between Bro Eryl and Stryd y Fron is important to the context of the conservation area, especially with the footpath adding communal and amenity value.

4.3.8 There are no trees protected by tree preseron orders within the y Groes and to the north-west at Coleg-y-Bala.

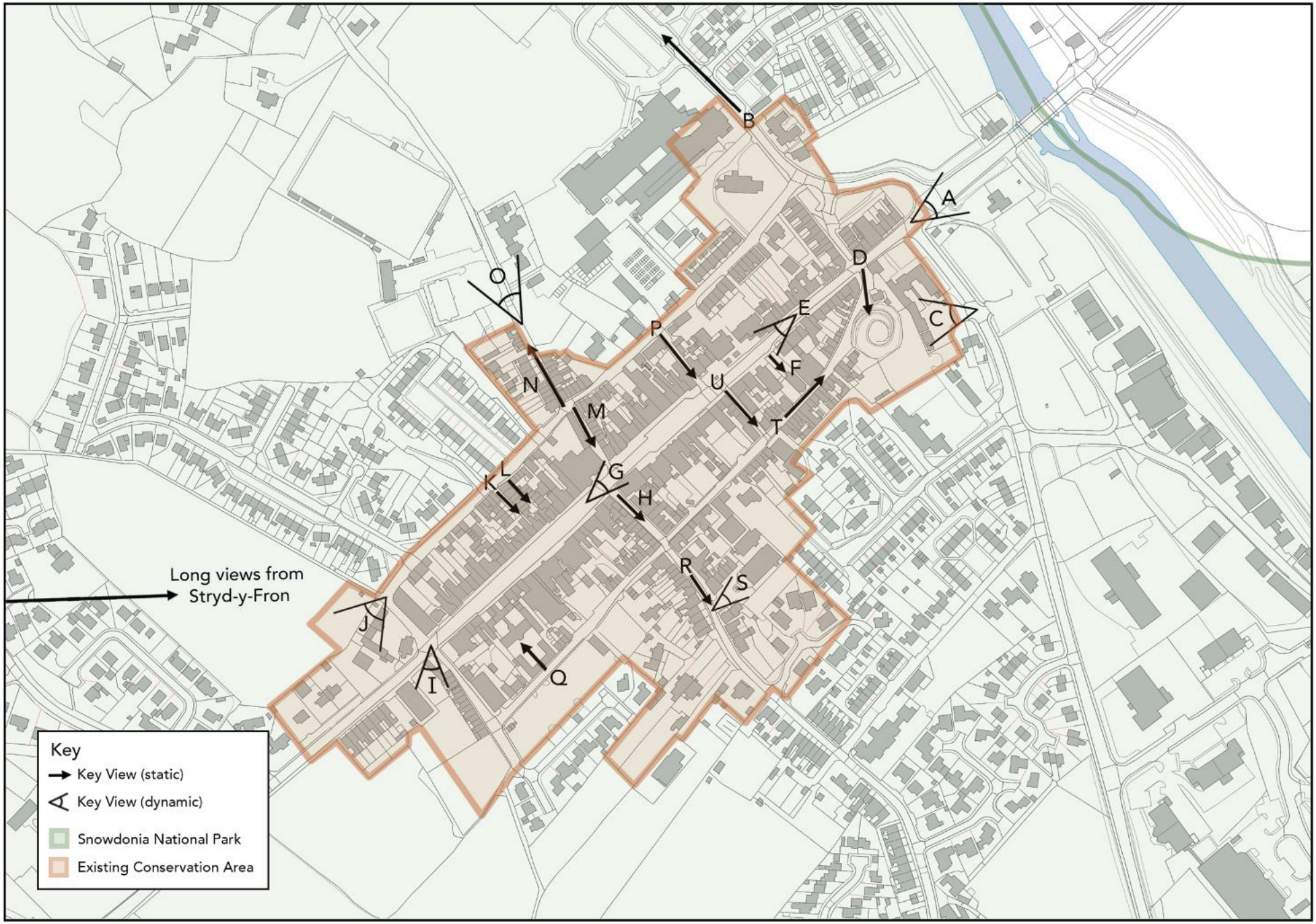
4.3.9 The other trees of note are the Yews in the churchyard, those lining Y Stryd Fawr and that which stands atop Tomen-y-Bala, which is particularly prominent (see fig 52).



19 Heol Tegid towards Y Gelli. (2021).

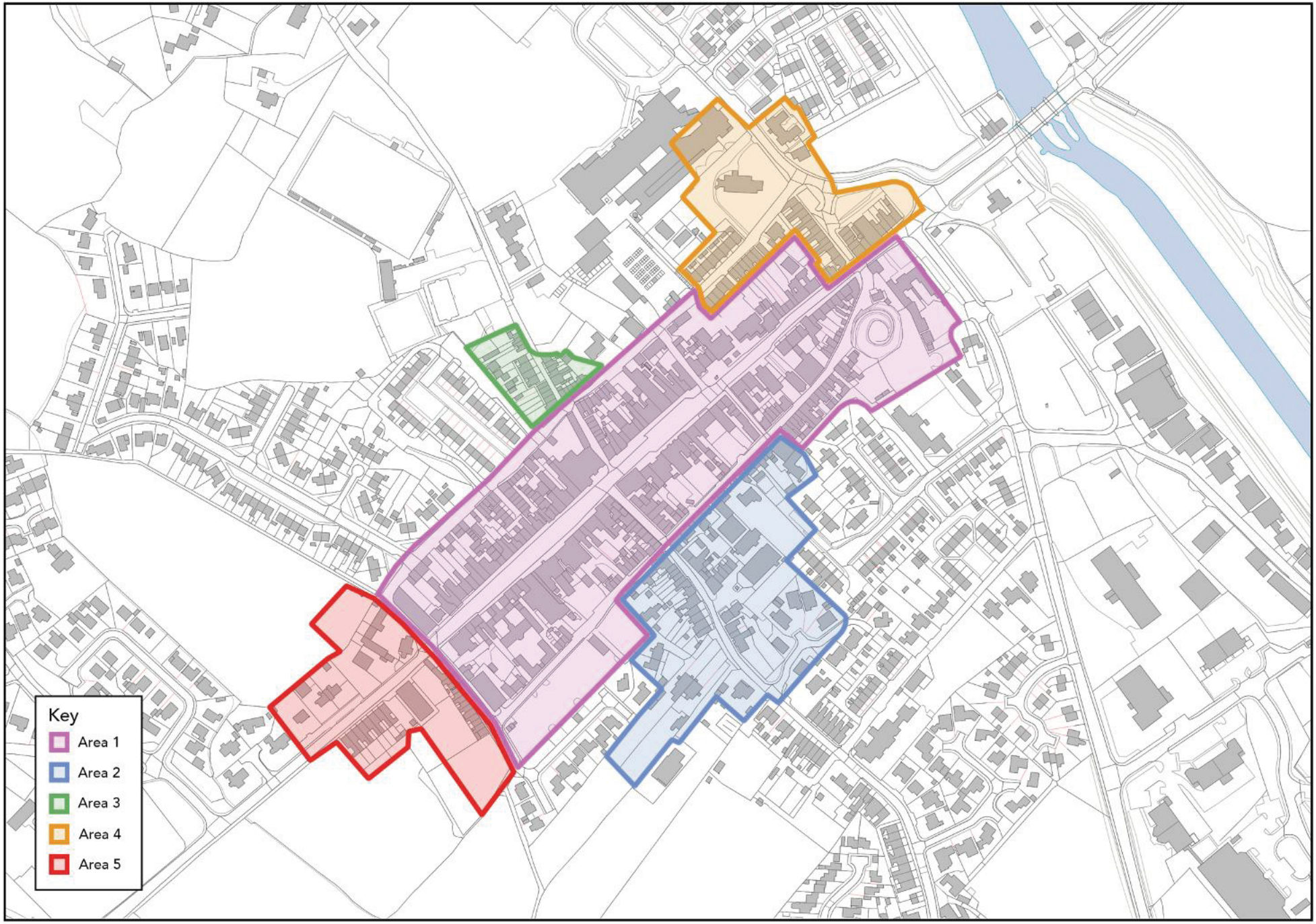


20 Heol-y-Domen towards Tomen-y-Bala. (2021).



Key Views

21 Key Views in the Conservation Area and Adjacent (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)



Character Areas

5.0 Character

5.1 Character Areas, Overview.

5.1.1 Bala is a larger conservation area and has a number of distinct character areas.

5.1.2 The origins of the town are to be found around Tomen-y-Bala, and the medieval town laid out by Roger Mortimer. **Character Area 1** is generally the medieval core of the town, extending to include the parallel roads of Heol Plasey, Heol-y-Domen and Heol Arenig, which are dictated by the medieval burgage plots defining the nucleated settlement.

5.1.3 South-east of the medieval core of the town, 18th and 19th century development extends down Heol Tegid, with small square in front of Capel Tegid, this area comprises **Character Area 2.**

5.1.4 North-west of the medieval core, a small area of development extends along Heol-y-Castell. A small, but distinct, section of 19th century housing very tight onto the road. See **Character Area 3**.

5.1.5 The large Christ Church (1855) was constructed on the corner of Heol Arenig and Heol Ffrydan, prominently visible on the approach from the north-east. Adjacent, speculative development happened following the arrival of the railway line to Ffestiniog in 1882, resulting in the creation of the red brick and terracotta terrace facing Y Stryd Fawr and the distinctive perpendicular terrace, following the original alignment of Heol Ffrydan. Heol Ffrydan was realigned north of the terraces in the second half of the 20th century, which has altered the character of this area. See **Character Area 4.**

5.1.6 **Character Area 5** captures the area to the south of the medieval core. This area retains agricultural elements which would have adjoined the early town. A single-storey building on the corner of Y Stryd Fawr and Heol Aran has a particular character. Other important aspects include the cinema/theatre (Neuadd Buddug) and a 19th century terrace on the south side, which forms the built threshold of the town.



23 White Lion Royal Hotel (2021).



24 Tomen-y-Bala from Y Stryd Fawr (2021).

5.2 Character Areas.

Character Area 1, The Medieval Town

5.2.1 Whilst extensively re-built in the 17th-19th centuries, this area comprises the 'square' plan of the medieval borough and the relationship of the borough to Tomen-y-Bala. The building plots often still reference the medieval burgage plots and the arrangement of Y Stryd Fawr (known as Heol-yr-Orsaf near and over Pont-y-Bala), the parallel roads of Heol Plasey, Heol y Domen and Heol Arenig, together with the north-south road of Heol Tegid and Heol-y-Castell still reflect the early plan.

5.2.2 Heol y Domen sweeps to avoid the mwd at the north of the town and joins Y Stryd Fawr. Crossing there are a series of cross streets between Y Stryd Fawr and the parallel roads these are characteristically slightly off-set (i.e. not forming a direct crossroads).[12]

5.2.3 Y Stryd Fawr is a straight, wide thoroughfare which indicates Roman origins. It's generous width was partly to accommodate the town market. Latterly it has become tree-lined with parking bays narrowing the carriageway. The height of the buildings, up to three-storeys, indicates that the town had wealth to construct on a scale during the 18th and 19th centuries.

5.2.4 Pont-y-Bala, a listed three-arch bridge over the Afon Tryweryn indicates the start of the town and the relationship of this crossing point (the current bridge is 18th century with later modifications), the mwd and Llyn Tegid allow an appreciation of the town's origins. Pont-y-Bala is outside the current conservation area boundary.

5.2.5 Neuadd-y-Cyfnod forms the northern edge of the town. Constructed in a new-tudor style c.1850-51 to designs by Wigg and Pownall. The master's house would have been to the right, the hall to the left. The building was built under the terms of Edward Meyrick's will, with its governance entrusted to Jesus College, Oxford.[13] The building has been empty for some time, but repair works were being undertaken at the time of survey.

5.2.6 At the junction with Heol y Domen there is an important glimpsed view of Tomen y Bala, past a three-storey 19th century house (which has

[12] Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), *Bala Draft Conservation Area Appraisal/Urban Characterisation Study, (section 9).*
[13] Haslam, R., Orbach, J. and Voelcker, A. (2009) *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd, p.549.*



25 Neuadd-y-Cyfnod (the Old Grammar School), 2021.



26 The filling station at Henblas, 2021.

unfortunately gained uPVC windows since 2009). Continuing south-west along Y Stryd Fawr,

5.2.7 Rows of 19th century stone terraced houses lines both sides of the road between the junction and the range 'Henblas'. This pair of buildings the town council office and a characterful filling station. The building has large sashes and is probably early 19th century. A plaque with goat device dated 1658 is assumed to be from an earlier building and this motif is often associated with the Wynnstay estate.

5.2.8 On the north-western side of the road are RH Roberts cycle shop and Ty Gm, both good early 19th century buildings (both listed), retaining sashes and early detail including shop front.

5.2.9 South-west of Henblas is the Presbyterian Chapel (c.1810) an unusual building of some character. with a projecting tower facing Y Stryd Fawr and lunettes over the primary arched windows below. It was superceded by Christ Church in c.1854. It is now an antique shop. The forecourt survives with good rubble walls and railings. The nave also a prominent feature on Heol-y-Domen. The clock is a modern addition (c.1996).[14] South is the 19th century Canolfan Bro Tegid (formerly the British School), with gable facing the street. c.1855, important as a group with the church.

5.2.10 Adjacent is Y Llong (the Ship), a substantial building 18th century in origin, now finished in 20th century render with rusticated plinth. Immediately opposite is the much-altered Plas yn Dre, former home of Rev. Simon Lloyd. It is thought the current exterior, with 20th century bay windows conceals 17th century origins. The building had gardens and open space to the north, a space now occupied by a modern building.[15]

5.2.11 Opposite Heol Berwyn is a statue of erected in 1903 to commemorate Thomas Edward Ellis (1859-1899), MP and Liberal Chief Whip, by W.Goscombe John. The plinth has limestone reliefs of Cynlas (his birthplace); Aberystwyth (his Alma Mater); Oxford, and Westminster. It defines the space and creates a pleasing group with the regency house Heulfryn, which retains good railings and boundary wall.

5.2.12 On the western side of the road, south of Stryd yr Eglwys, the group comprising the Spar, Tenovus, Yr Eryr and Siop De are a good group of late

[14] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=4910
[15] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=25993



27 Former Presbyterian Church. (2021).



28 Y Cyfnod and vacant buildings adjacent (44-46 Y Stryd Fawr) 2021.

Georgian buiidings, in rubble stone with sash windows. They are unfortunately punctuated by Y Badell Aur, a 20th century building, much altered with uPVC windows.

5.2.13 Opposite, the Pharmacy & Y Cyfnod are listed, good Georgian buildings, between them, the rendered and much altered 44-46 (Y Stryd Fawr) is vacant and has suffered from much alteration. It would benefit from more appropriate windows and render.

5.2.14 No's 38-40 and The HSBC Bank (c.1880 by Edmund Kirby of Liverpool), reflects the arrival of the railway, constructed in red brick with terracotta. The latter with sandstone dressings from Cheshire. Opposite, buff brick is used (again late 19th century) with buff sandstone dressings in 53-57 Y Stryd Fawr. 53 & 55 both have modern windows.

5.2.15 The Neuadd y Dref, at the junction with Heol Tegid, is a good late 18th century building, generally well preserved, now with a restaurant in the ground floor (the former Court of Great Sessions). This forms a fine group with the other listed structures extending from Y Stryd Fawr along Heol Tegid, with Siop Bapur Newydd on the corner.[16]

5.2.16 The large White Lion Royal Hotel, very prominent, originates from the late 17th century, although much altered since the coming of the railway. The word "Royal" was added to the inn's name after Queen Victoria visited in 1889. Early origins are reflected in the bow window fronted wing and in some of the outbuildings to the rear, adjacent to Rhesdai Cambrian. The condition of the hotel is a little tired, and in need of repair and redecoration.

5.2.17 The former Barclays Bank (to the east of Y Stryd Fawr) was was the home of Rev Thomas Charles and the end point for the famous walk of Mary Jones. It has been a bank since c.1920. A good three-storey building, possibly late 18th century, now with a stucco façade.[17] To the rear remains the early Calvinistic Methodist Coleg building.

5.2.18 The southern end of Y Stryd Fawr is a more diverse mix. Brick buildings in buff brick (103-105), blue brick (85-87) and red brick (including Bronydd and Dolgoed), mix with earlier structures, in rubble stone or stucco. The variance in scales from low two-storey buildings to tall three storey buildings is important to the character of the streetscape.



29 Plas yn Dre, 2021.



30 Former Barclays Bank, previously home of Rev Thomas Charles. (2021).

[16] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=26005
[17] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=4911

5.2.19 Adjacent to Thomas Charles' house, 72 high street (a listed building) is of early Georgian origin (although in need of repair), and makes a rewarding group with the bank and 74, a brick 19th century building with projecting bay windows to the first floor, set in front is the small granite war memorial with throw stones and chains.

5.2.20 Further south, Yr Hen Ben Tarw (The Old Bulls Head), is of 17th century character, albeit with later alterations.

5.2.21 The Former Bala-Union Workhouse (1838-41) has recently been well converted into accommodation and repair works undertaken. The workhouse is quite typical in form for Poor Law workhouses of the period but a well-preserved example. Latterly it served as a Militia Barracks (from 1869) and until recently the Aykroyd & Sons, Clothing Factory.

5.2.22 The former Capel Clay, now an art and pottery studio, well preserved externally, marks the corner with Heol Aran.

5.2.23 The parallel roads behind Y Stryd Fawr broadly comprise the Medieval town. Heol y Domen sweeps around Tomen-y-Bala and the rear of the terrace has a number of characterful rubblestone outbuildings opposite, important to the setting of the mwd.

5.2.24 The apse of the Presbyterian church adjoins the road adjacent to a potentially 18th century structure, much altered, behind Henblas. The open space (albeit parking) adjacent to the church is important as it opens up a view of the church tower and nave windows.

5.2.25 Between the church and Heol Berwyn, the street is lined with rubble stone and rendered terraced houses, generally of the 19th century. Most have later windows.

5.2.26 The Congregational Church is aligned on Heol Berwyn to be viewed down the road from Y Stryd Fawr, which is an important glimpsed view. The current chapel (1867) is broadly classical, with a façade of snecked stone with limestone quoins and dressings. Michael Daniel Jones (1822-1898) and John Peters (1833-1877) were both ministers here. Opposite is Y Bala's second college, The Independent College. This was formed in 1842. Its first Principal was Michael Jones. His son, and successor, Michael D Jones, a committed nationalist, moved the College in 1869 to Bodiwan and latterly set up a Welsh colony in Patagonia.



31 Former Bala Union Workhouse (2021).



32 View of Presbyterian Church and building behind Henblas from Heol-y-Domen. (2021).

5.2.27 At 48-52 (south side) are good row of slightly gothic cottages.[18] 46 has a gable facing the street and whilst it has later windows should be considered for listing with the adjacent terrace as an important group. Opposite, the parking area behind 44-46 Y Stryd Fawr is untidy and unkept.

5.2.28 Behind Y Cyfnod, Swyddfa'r Post and Gwesty'r Plas Coch are an interesting group of buildings which could be 18th century, although one has been modified by a 20th century brick façade. The building nearest Y Stryd Fawr has substantial 3/3 sashes.

5.2.29 Tegid Street splits the road into Heol-y-Domen (to the north) and Heol Plasey (south). The eastern portion of Heol Tegid is described in Character Area 2. The western portion of Tegid street has a particularly fine Georgian group. With the shop of E.J Theodore on the southern side, good buildings either side and the former 'Al Fresco' restaurant (now seemingly vacant) opposite. The buildings nearer the junction with Heol-y-Domen have suffered from a significant degree of inappropriate change (cementitious render, uPVC windows).

5.2.30 South of Heol Tegid, is characterised by substantial parking areas, however the former Capel Plasey is now the Heritage Centre (south of the road) and there are potentially some early outbuildings behind Yr Hen Ben Tarw and Celfi Penllyn, which are in need of repair. The range to the rear of the former Workhouse has recently been sensitively repaired and converted to accommodation, which has significantly enhanced the area and provided a view through to the primary range of buildings.

5.2.31 North-east of Y Stryd Fawr, running parallel, is Heol Arenig, which faces onto later local-authority housing towards the southern end. The earliest built fabric on the street shows its early role as a service street for the larger buildings on Y Stryd Fawr. Important stabling and ancillary buildings remain, especially behind Plas yn Dre, White Lion Royal Hotel and Badell Aur. Several are not in a good state of repair and need attention or a sustainable use.

5.2.32 Sections of the street were faced by terraced housing in the late 19th century, and two unusual terraces exist, including Rhesdai Arenig, presumably following earlier building lines or small streets perpendicular to



33 Congregational Church from Heol Berwyn (2021).



34 Western section of Heol Tegid, E.J.Theodore's Ironmongers. (2021).

[18] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=25966 (no.50).

the road. Whilst not distinguished architecturally these are an important part of this area.

Character Area 2 – Heol Tegid & Capel Tegid

5.2.33 Area 2 is grouped around the Capel Tegid, and the open square in front, set off the road which runs south-east from the medieval core of the town. The area has a range of good, 18th and 19th century stone houses, with sashes. Nearer to Heol-y-Domen, the houses have been render and the degree of change more pronounced.

5.2.34 Capel Tegid (1865-7) was designed by W H Spaull of Oswestry, who also designed Coleg-y-Bala. It replaced two earlier chapels (1757 and 1809). The façade is much modified with hung slate to the upper gable and the spire having been replaced c.2000. The house on the north-west corner of the square was the early home of Thomas Charles. The chapel, college, and open ground to SE of the chapel (where open-air meetings were held) form an important group in the history of Non-conformism in Wales.

5.2.35 Fronting the square, on the opposite side of Heol Tegid, is the fine terrace of 35-43 Heol Tegid, of rubble stone with extended eaves and sashes. 39 (Llys Owain) has a fine and unusual door with arched panels. Presumably the other building would have had matching doors originally. The roof and gable of 43 were deteriorating at the time of survey.

5.2.36 Beyond (south), set back from the road, are a further pair of late-Georgian listed, semi-detached three-storey houses, Plas Teg and Plas yn Acre. Plas yn Acre has unfortunately been altered with uPVC windows.

5.2.37 **Character Area 3, Heol-y-Castell**

5.2.38 Extending north-west from Heol Arenig is the narrow Heol-y-Castell. This was the original route north from the medieval town, but latterly superceded by the wider Heol Ffrydan.

5.2.39 The road is characterised by rendered cottages tight onto the street. Most now have replacement windows, but the early character is still distinct. The terraces beyond are later, where the road opens out to a more rural aspect.

Character Area 4, Christ Church and Post-Railway Developments.

5.2.40 Christ Church is prominently sited on the corner of Heol Arenig and Heol Ffrydan. The church is in a simple stripped-back lancet style by the architect Benjamin Ferrey with a tall spire prominent in views from the north



35 Terrace perpendicular to Heol Arenig. (2021).



36 Capel Tegid and statue of Rev Thomas Charles (2021).

and north-east, especially across Pont-y-Bala, from Heol Ffrydan and from Coleg-y-Bala. The latter speaks visually of the relationship between the Anglican and Non-conformist churches.

5.2.41 On the original alignment of Heol Ffrydan (perpendicular to Y Stryd Fawr) is the fine terrace of 9 listed Victorian houses (4-20 Heol Ffrydan). The five nearest Y Stryd Fawr are of particular interest with polychromatic brickwork – predominantly blue engineering brick with contrasting red and buff details, off set with timber-framed full-height bay windows. The four to the north-west are slightly simpler, of buff brick with blue brick banding and lower bays. The whole is important as a group and in views at this end of town. The revised alignment of Heol Ffrydan has created a series of slightly unkempt grass and parking spaces in front which could be significantly improved.

5.2.42 Behind the terrace, on Heol Arenig is a good Victorian villa, Ty Seren, of rubble stone with terracotta dressings. Ty Seren retains good walls, and original railings and gate posts also of stone capped with terracotta. This is important in relation to Christ Church and the church yard, but also a well preserved building in its own right. It appeared to be empty at the time of survey.

5.2.43 On the north side of Arenig Street is a fine, Grade II* listed, early 20th century (1909) terrace in an Edwardian baroque style, with arts and crafts influences.[19] The symmetrical terrace is brick with sandstone dressings, the central bays have prominent arched gables. Unfortunately part of the terrace has been badly affected by a fire (2021) and it is essential that this is properly repaired and reinstated.

5.2.44 To Heol-yr-Orsaf (the extension of Y Stryd Fawr) there is a further brick terrace associated with the speculative development which accompanied the railway's arrival. The earliest section of four houses, nearest the former station, is of red brick with details in terracotta, well preserved (these four are listed). Houses and shop nearest the town are also in red brick but with sandstone dressing. Not listed these have suffered a greater degree of alteration (including uPVC cladding to the south elevation). Most also have prominent satellite dishes which ought to be removed. The whole should be protected as a group on an important arrival point.



37 Station building and later canopy, brick dressings much in evidence (2021).



38 Heol-y-Castell, looking north (2021).

[19] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=25974 (Isfryn, 13 Heol Arenig).

Character Area 5, South of the Town Centre.

5.2.45 Heol Aran marks the end of the medieval town, and there is a sense of the earlier scale of building. On the corner of Heol Aran and Y Stryd Fawr is a range of single storey buildings, of 18th century or perhaps earlier in origin, now comprising a garage and Yr Hen Efail. The latter now starting to deteriorate. These buildings are an important piece of the Bala townscape and should be protected. Also to the south of Heol Aran is a characterful stone terrace, varying in height from 2-3 storeys.

5.2.46 To the north of Y Stryd Fawr is a range of outbuildings associated with the former Tafarn Llew Coch, 'Stabal Llew Coch', now converted into holiday cottages. These are important buildings, with the later Y Llew Coch (now a house) at the junction. Adjacent are the relatively modern police and ambulance stations.

5.2.47 Opposite is Neuadd Buddug, the former cinema and theatre. Formerly the Victoria Hall, the 19th century building has been sadly closed since 2018. The building was converted as a cinema in c.1930 and has an entrance and porch from this period. It is an important part of the town and a suitable new use is essential if it cannot be revived.

5.2.48 Adjacent to Neuadd Buddug is a good 19th century terrace, the last building before the leisure centre on the southern side of Y Stryd Fawr, which retains good boundary walls and railings.

5.3 Materials & Details

5.3.1 Whilst the predominant material in the town is stone, rubble in the earliest buildings, the character of the town is to be found in its diversity of building materials which reflect its evolution. Early buildings may well have been timber but all have been replaced or rebuilt. Brick has become important, predominantly after the coming of the railway in 1864 and buildings which use many different materials for visual effect.

5.3.2 Georgian stone buildings are characterised by rubble stone, often with strongly defined eaves, albeit of simple character. There is some evidence of working stone north of the town, with larger blocks probably coming from the more substantial quarries at Arenig, where rhyolite was quarried (although



39 Grade II* listed terrace on Heol Arenig, fire damage. (2021).



40 Terrace off Heol Ffrydan, high quality but with the setting adversely affected by ad-hoc parking and poorly designed landscape. (2021).

often referred to as 'granite'). These rocks are distinctive because of their pronounced quartz and feldspar crystals.[20]

5.3.3 Roofs are almost exclusively in slate. The majority being thinner, more modern, slates probably replaced since the railway opened up routes to the larger quarries. Some earlier slates remain, and are consequently of importance, including the diminishing coursed roofs to Y Cyfnod & R.H. Roberts.

5.3.4 Early photos and remaining earlier structures suggest there would have been extensive limewashing especially when the built character of the town was smaller scale. This has been largely replaced by modern paints and renders.

5.3.5 The HSBC bank uses Ruabon pressed brick with a Cheshire sandstone, the terrace to Heol Ffrydan combines different bricks, render and timber, to create polychromatic patterns to great effect.

5.3.6 Decorative timber detail is relatively limited. Simple deeply projecting eaves are a particular feature of the later 18th and early 19th century buildings, combined with large sash windows. Sashes are the predominant window type, earlier windows being of multi-pane (usually 8/8 configuration) with later Victorian examples having larger panes.

5.4 Boundaries

5.4.1 Boundaries are most often marked through stone or brick walls (with terracotta or stone copings), often topped with ironwork. Some ironwork has been lost but the town retains a significant amount of distinctive and good quality ironwork.

5.4.2 Good examples of 19th century ironwork remain, the 1811 Presbyterian Church has good railings, gates and copings. More ornate railings, with walls and gates remain to the terraces on Heol yr Orsaf and opposite the police station. All are important to the streetscape.

5.4.3 There are also a number of good examples of early 20th century ironwork in an arts and crafts style. Particularly notable are the 1909 terrace to Heol Arenig and the railings in front of Y Gelli. (see Fig 41).



41 Rubble stone at Y Gelli, Heol Tegid. Note also the slab porch and good arts & crafts railings. (2021).



42 19th century ironwork and surfacing, Heol Pensarn (2021).

[20] Talbot, J & Cosgrove, J. (2017) *Roadside Geology of Wales* p.109.

5.4.4 Rear boundaries would have been defined with taller walls, but most of these have been modified or lost.

5.5 Other Features, Details & Surfaces

5.5.1 Y Stryd Fawr has always been a wide street and defined by trees since the 19th century. In later times the street has been defined by vehicles, but the parking areas use cobbled setts, with throw stones around threes and generally make a positive contribution. The parking will also contribute to Y Stryd Fawr economically.

5.5.2 As previously referred to, the statute of Thomas Edward Ellis, the war memorial and other details also contribute to the distinctive nature of Y Stryd Fawr, with its generous proportions.

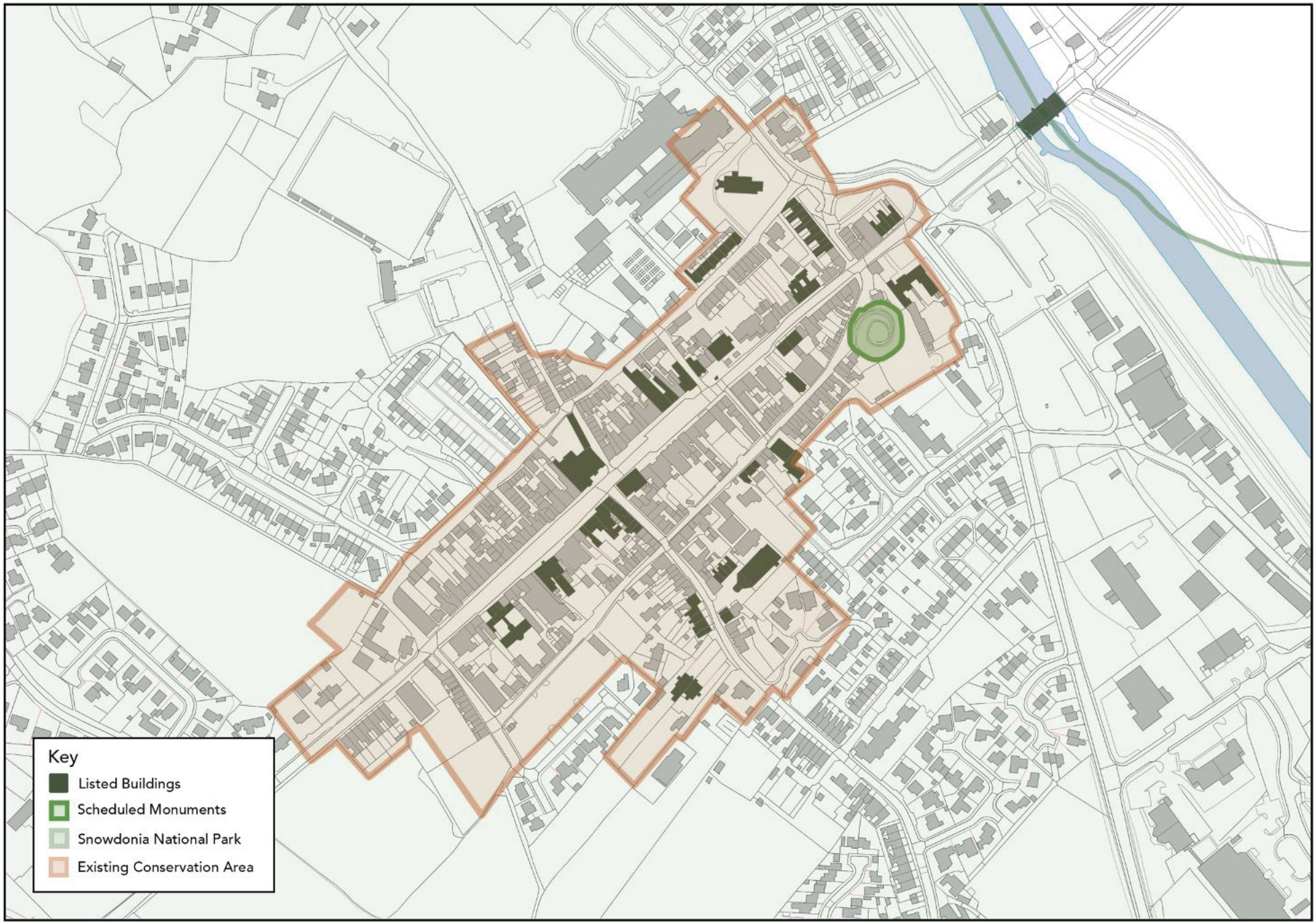
5.5.3 Some of the paving and 'highways' style guarding to the crossing points are detrimental to the appearance however.



43 Ironwork details, terrace to Heol Arenig. (2021).



44 The cobbled parking areas, trees, bollards, throw stones make a positive contribution to the conservation area. (2021).



Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments
1:2000 @ A4

45 Listed Buildings in, and adjacent to, the Conservation Area (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

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:

6.1.1 Scheduled Monuments

- *ME016 Tomen y Bala Castle Mound*

6.1.2 Listed Buildings

- *25979 10 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25980 12 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25981 14 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25982 16 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25983 18 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25984 20 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25965 26 High Street (II)*
- *26015 34 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26016 36 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26011 37 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26017 38 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26012 39 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26018 40 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26013 41 Tegid Street (II)*
- *26014 43 Tegid Street (II)*
- *4915 48 Mount Street (II)*
- *25966 50 Mount Street (II)*
- *25967 52 Mount Street (II)*
- *25977 6 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *26020 72,High Street (II)*
- *25978 8 Ffrydan Road (II)*
- *25987 Ariunfa (II)*
- *25975 Awelfryn (II*)*
- *4913 Aykroyd & Sons, Clothing Factory (Former Workhouse) (II*)*
- *4911 Barclays Bank (II)*
- *26021 Bodiwan (II)*
- *25988 Bronallt (II)*
- *26001 Caffi'r Cyfnod (II)*
- *18375 Capel Tegid (II)*
- *26006 China Treasure Takeaway (II)*
- *25964 Christ Church (II)*



46 Christ Church, 2021.



47 Glasfryn, Trem-y-fron, Ariunfa, Bronallt on Heol yr Orsaf. (2021).

- *26003 Congregational Chapel (II)*
- *26002 Cwpwrdd Cornel Café (II)*
- *25969 Derlwyn (II*)*
- *25972 Dolydd (II*)*
- *26007 E.J. Theodore (II)*
- *25973 Fedw Arian (II*)*
- *25976 Glanrhyd (II)*
- *25986 Glasfryn (II)*
- *26009 H Rowlands (II)*
- *25994 Heulfryn (II)*
- *25974 Isfryn (II*)*
- *25970 Islwyn (II*)*
- *26000 Ken Davies Newsagent (II)*
- *26004 Neuadd-y-Cyfnod (II)*
- *26010 Plas Deon (II)*
- *26022 Plas Teg (II)*
- *26023 Plas-yn-Acre (II)*
- *25993 Plas-yn-Dre (II)*
- *4910 Presbyterian Chapel (II)*
- *25992 R.H. Roberts (II)*
- *25971 Ronville (II*)*
- *25968 Rosedale (II*)*
- *26005 Siop Bapur Newydd (II)*
- *25996 Siop DE (II)*
- *25999 Spar (II)*
- *18376 Statue of Rev Thomas Charles (II)*
- *25995 Statue of T.E. Ellis (II)*
- *25998 Tenovus (II)*
- *4909 Town Council Offices (II)*
- *4916 Neuadd y Dref (II)*
- *25985 Trem-y-fron (II)*
- *25991 Ty GM (II)*
- *4914 White Lion Royal Hotel, Including Former Stable Range and Associated Wall Adjoining to the Rear (II)*
- *26019 Y Gelli (II)*
- *26008 Y Siop Fach (II)*
- *4912 Ye Olde Bulls Head PH, Including Outbuildings Adjoining to the Rear (II)*
- *25997 Yr Eryr (II)*

6.1.3 Potential Additional Designations.

It is considered that the following buildings and structures should be considered for listing on the national list:



48 Heulfryn and Siop De, 2021.



49 Yr Hen Ben Tarw. (2021).

- *Y Llong/The Ship Inn.*
- *Canolfan Bro Tegid, former British School.*
- *Yr Hen Efail and Garage (corner of Heol Aran & Y Stryd Fawr).*

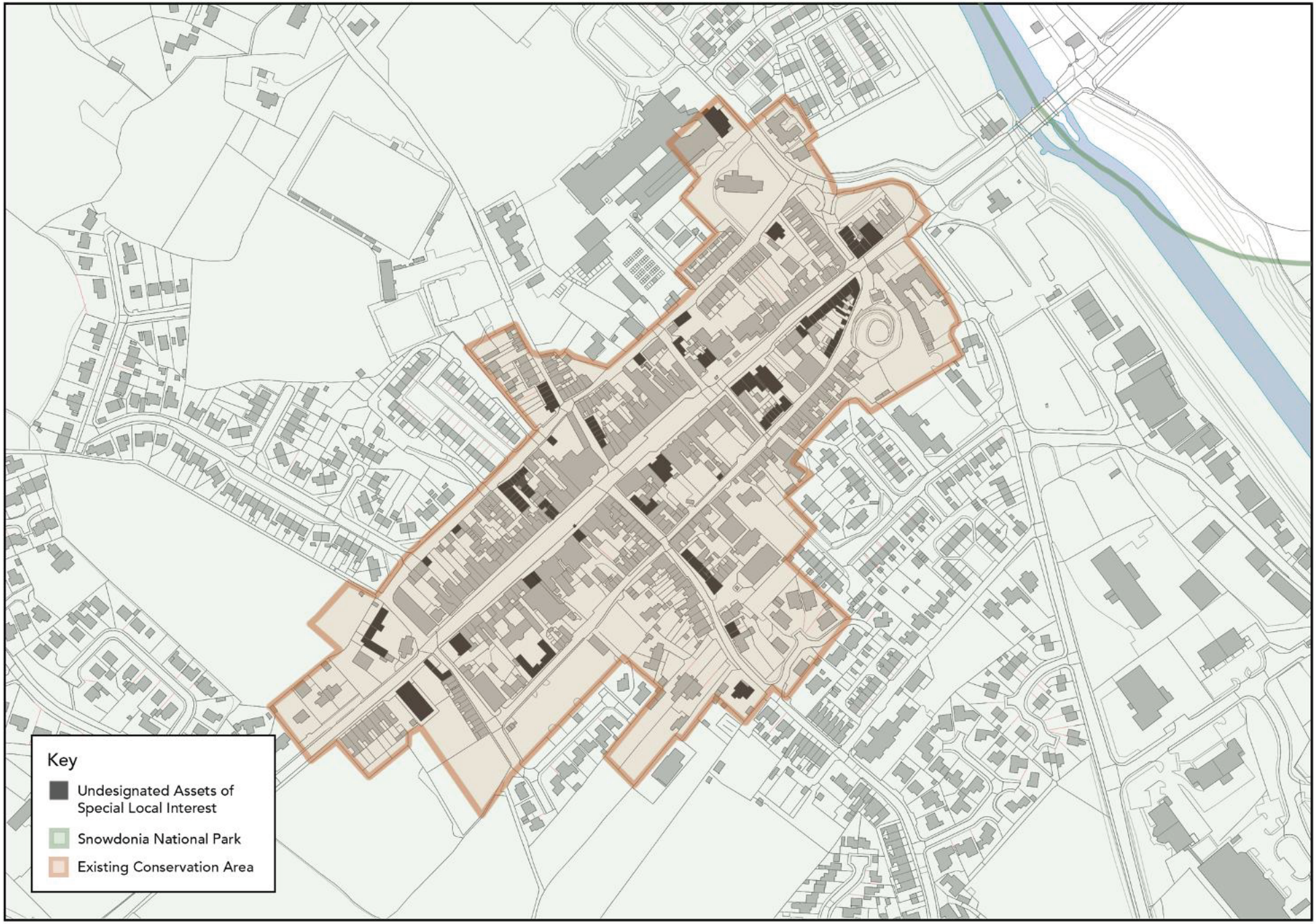
6.1.4 There are a series of significant designated historic assets (scheduled monuments and listed buildings) within c500m of the conservation area:

- *4908/4653 Pont-y-Bala (II)*
- *24597 Gateway and Screen Walls to Rhiwlas (II)*
- *25989 Coleg Bala (II)*
- *25990 Statue of Lewis Edwards at Coleg Bala (II)*
- *26021 Bodiwan (II)*
- *ME092 Llanfor Roman Fort and Camps*

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 50):

- *Y Llong/The Ship Inn.*
- *Canolfan Bro Tegid (former British School)*
- *46 Heol-y-Domen.*
- *Yr Hen Efail and Garage (corner of Heol Aran & Y Stryd Fawr).*
- *Neuadd Buddug (former Victoria Hall).*
- *Ty Seren*
- *4-16 Y Stryd Fawr (including the outbuildings at the rear onto Heol-y-Domen).*
- *Buildings behind Y Cyfnod, Swyddfa'r Post and Gwesty'r Plas Coch.*
- *HSBC Bank*
- *Terrace to west of Heol-y-Castell.*
- *4-8 Heol Tegid. (4-6 currently the 'Al Fresco')*
- *26-32 Heol Tegid (including Bala Backpacker's Hostel).*
- *48-50 Heol Tegid*
- *55 Heol Tegid*
- *Former Capel Clay*
- *Stabal Llew Coch*
- *99 Y Stryd Fawr including outbuilding facing Heol Arenig.*
- *Terraces perpendicular to Heol Arenig.*
- *Terrace to Rhesdai Cambrian opposite the White Lion stables.*
- *Outbuilding to rear of Tenovus (on Heol Arenig).*
- *Arran House (Y Stryd Fawr)*
- *25-27 Y Stryd Fawr*
- *7-17 Heol-y-Domen.*
- *Heulfryn Stabal (Stryd yr Eglwys).*
- *Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn (19th century section, facing Heol Ffrydan).*



Undesignated Assets of Special Local Interest

50 Undesignated Assets of Special Local Interest (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)



Other Designations
1:2000 @ A4

51 Other designations (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

6.2.1 Ysgol Beuno Sant, which is just beyond the Conservation Area boundary is a good example of a National School. It is detached from the Conservation Area, however, so it is recommended for inclusion on the inclusion on the local list (see 6.3 below).

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 Hidden Histories (archaeological potential)

7.1.1 The archaeological potential of sites within the conservation area specifically is not known. There is limited evidence of prehistoric activity in the local area. Interest mainly from the Roman period onwards.

7.1.2 The road from Caer (Chester) must have passed through the area of modern Bala, close to the complex at Llanfor and on to Caer Gai, so there is potential for below ground deposits.

7.1.3 The medieval and immediately post-medieval town, although quite well documented, still has the potential to be better understood, potentially though below ground deposits or remains within standing structures.

8.0 Other Designated Assets

8.1 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

8.1.1 The conservation area lies north of the Llyn Tegid site of Special Scientific Interest.

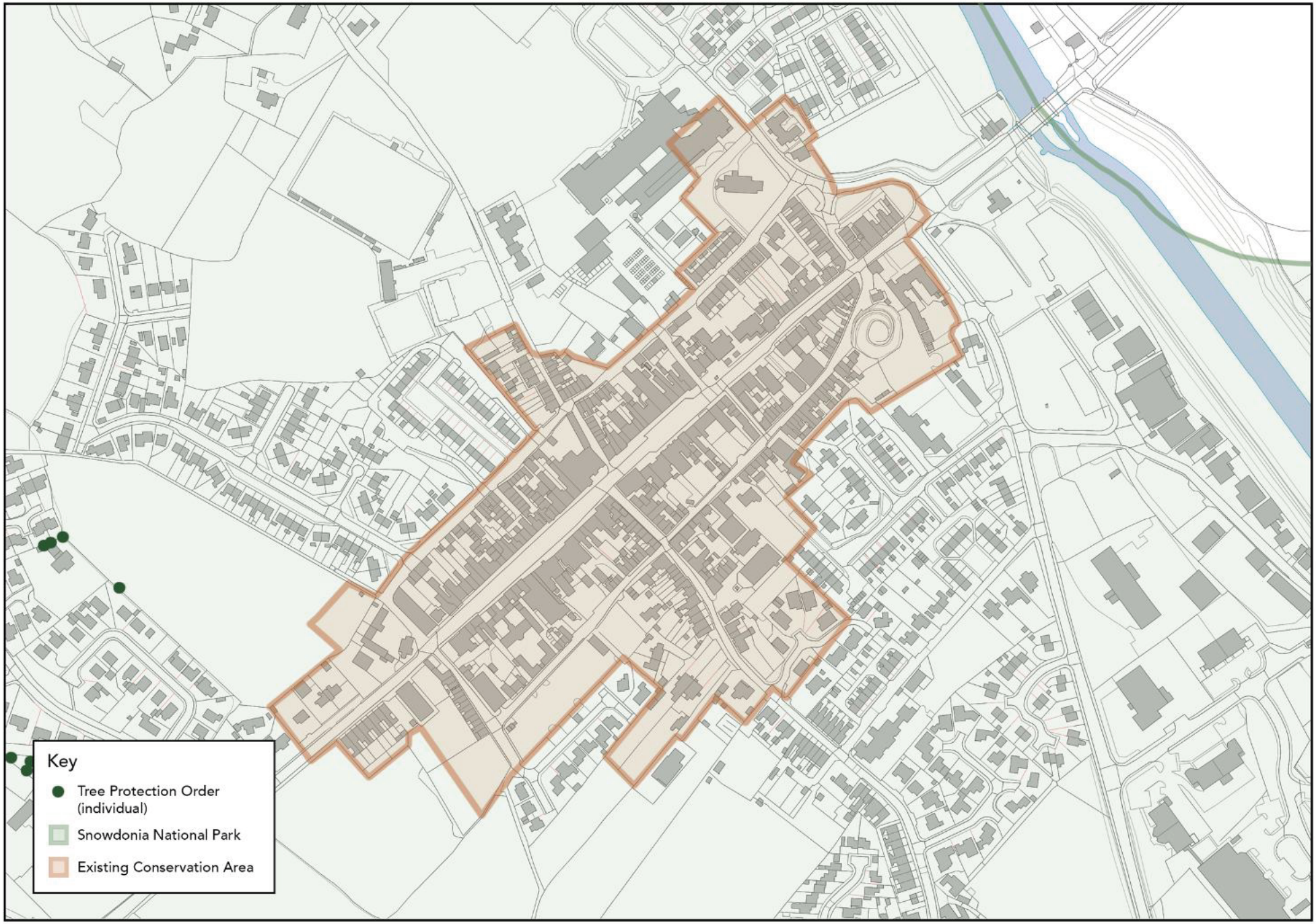
8.2 Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

8.2.1 The conservation area lies adjacent to the Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn Tegid SAC, which covers part of the Afon Tryweryn at Bala.[21]

[21] https://naturalresources.wales/media/673374/River_Dee___Bala_Lake_32_Plan.pdf

8.3 Trees Preservation Orders

8.3.1 There are no currently recorded Tree Preservation orders in the Conservation Area (in addition to the protection that the area confers). However there are some immediately on the periphery. See Fig 52.



Trees

52 Tree Preservation Orders and other important trees (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)

8.4 Designated Historic Landscape

8.4.1 The village is located in the registered historic landscape HLW (Gw) 16 - Bala and Bala Lakesides.[22]

9.0 Biodiversity

9.1 Trees

9.1.1 See 8.3 for Tree Preservation Orders.

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

9.2 Protected Species.

9.2.1 A number of key protected species are known to be present in and around Bala. These include:

- *River Lamprey (Lampetra fluviatilis)*
- *Brook Lamprey (Lampetra Planeri)*
- *Bullhead (Cottus gobio)*
- *European Otter (Lutra Lutra)*

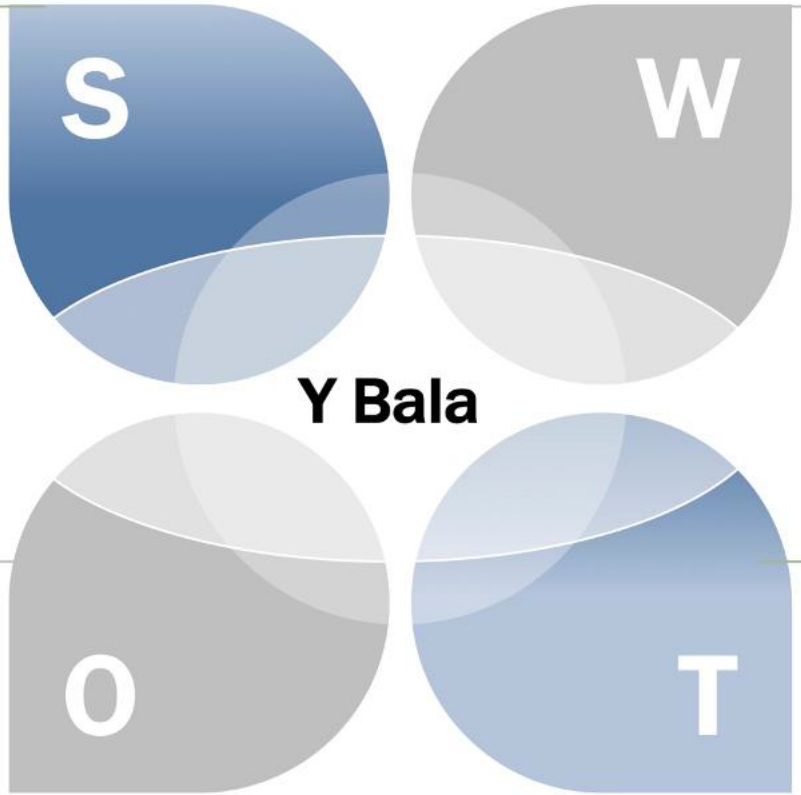
9.2.2 Swallows and swifts are also known to nest in the large eaves of a number of buildings and bats of various types are recorded.

[22] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/historiclandscape/FullReport?lang=&id=HLW%20(Gw)%2016



PART TWO – CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN.

1.0 Summary SWOT Analysis



STRENGTHS

- Footfall and popularity.
- Strong identitiy and activity.
- Good range of local shops and services, generally Y Stryd Fawr is well kept and engaging, with good surfacing and detail.
- Role in non-conformism, associated heritage and statuary.
- Key buildings are generally sound and well preserved.
- Proximity to Llyn Tegid and surrounding landscape.
- Presence of town trails and interpretation allowing engagement with heritage.

WEAKNESSES

- Amount of traffic to and through town, consequent parking in the town.
- Industrial estate to former station site and appearance on approach from north–west.
- Condition of the rear of some of the ancilliary, but important, buildings onto Heol Arenig, Heol y Domen and Heol Plasey.
- Connections to Llyn Tegid could be improved.
- Extent of change (primarily windows, joinery, rainwater goods replaced with uPVC).

OPPORTUNITIES

- Listing more key buildings and better protecting the town and key buildings. Or introducing article 4 directions.
- Make more of Parallel streets through protection of historic structures and good quality new development.
- Sensitive application of sustainable technologies where appropriate.
- Find sustainable use for Neuadd Buddug (and perhaps Neuadd y Cyfnog).
- Better control of developments in and around the conservation area.
- New station and connection to Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid presents opportunities.

THREATS

- Increasing level of inappropriate change (e.g. plastic windows, roofing materials, insensitive additions), threatens the intrinsic character.
- Future of Neuadd Buddug and Neuadd-y-Cyfnod (been vacant for some time).
- Fire damage to terrace on Heol Arenig.
- Condition of some of the hotels. White Lion currently for sale.
- Level of traffic and tourist pressure.
- Encroaching developments in and around the conservation area are not of appropriate quality.
- Lack of control of detailing of change to existing buildings and new developments

2.0 Understanding the Issues

2.1 The Condition of the Conservation Area

2.1.1 Y Bala retains much of its special character, which which reflects its evolution from a planned medieval settlement, to a focus of religious discourse and, since the railway's arrival, a destination for visitors.

2.1.2 Most buildings are occupied or in beneficial use, there is a transition in retail occupation and some buildings are currently empty, but this is modest in comparison to many similar-sized towns.

2.1.3 There are some 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, including alterations to shop fronts.
- Inappropriate or poor quality developments or extensions.
- Loss of traditional boundary treatments.
- Loss of buildings which would have formed stabling, storage and domestic quarters to the streets parallel to Y Stryd Fawr.

2.1.4 Specific examples include:

- Replacement of windows and doors to some key buildings in the conservation area, especially non-listed buildings on Y Stryd Fawr and parallel streets.
- Outbuildings replaced by poor modern development (especially on Heol Arenig).

2.1.5 Developments in and around the conservation area have not, to date, been of adequate quality, reflecting the unique mix of architecture. Better quality materials and design should be expected.



53 Replacement uPVC windows and cladding, Y Stryd Fawr.



54 Piecemeal boundary treatments and poor modern development to Heol Arenig. Note the early outbuilding to Plas yn Dre (part clad in corrugated iron).

2.2 Buildings at Risk

2.2.1 Neuadd y Cyfnod has been vacant since closure as a restaurant. This is a key, listed building, at the threshold of the conservation area, set back from the road and retaining significant original detail, with important boundary walls. Some work was being undertaken at the time as survey.

2.2.2 Neuadd Buddug, the former Victoria Hall/Cinema was in use (as a theatre and cinema) until 2018. This is a great loss to the town in cultural heritage terms but also puts the building (reflecting it's Victorian origin and adaption in c.1930 for cinematic use) at risk. It is not listed or subject to article 4 directions therefore highly vulnerable to change, together with the parking/site adjacent.

2.2.3 The condition and loss of simple service buildings which would have formed stabling, storage and domestic quarters to the streets parallel to Y Stryd Fawr is of concern, these buildings should be repaired and protected, with sustainable new uses found.



55 Neuadd y Cyfnod. (2021).



56 Neuadd Buddug (2021).

3.0 Overview of the SWOT Analysis.

3.1.1 A SWOT analysis has been undertaken for the Bala 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.

3.1.2 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.
- Find a suitable new use for Neuadd y Cyfnod, Neuadd Buddug ensuring the protection and enhancement of their significance, and ideally retention in publicly accessible uses.
- Seek to enhance the rear elevations and outbuildings of some of the hotels and larger retail premises on Y Stryd Fawr.
- Ensure that the significant remaining original details of the Conservation Area are protected through the implementation

of enhanced development controls (potentially article 4 directions).

- More could be made of Thomas Charles' house, the early coleg and links to Mary Jones (and Bwd Mary Jones at Llanycil).
- Consider integration of sustainable technologies and retrofit where it will not adversely affect the character of the conservation area or the specific building.

3.1.3 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.
- Consider improvements or change to enhance the former station site and approach to the town from the north-west.
- Ensure that the fire-damage to the listed terrace on Heol Arenig is appropriately repaired and reinstated.
- Support and work with owners of key hotels in order to ensure they are viable and maintained in good condition.

4.0 Positive Management.

4.1 Boundary Changes.

4.1.1 No modifications to the conservation area boundary are currently proposed.

4.2 Local & National Policy Protection

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 It is recommended that an article 4 direction is introduced to the Bala conservation area. The town is still largely well preserved and there is an opportunity to check further inappropriate change, removal of historic windows, joinery and rainwater goods.

4.2.3 As noted in 6.1 of the CAA, it is recommended that Y Llong/The Ship Inn, Canolfan Bro Tegid, former British School and 46 Heol-y-Domen are considered for listing on the national list.

4.3 Enhancing the Special Interest of the Conservation Area

4.3.1 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.

4.3.2 Specific issues to be addressed in the Bala Conservation Area include:

- Potential implementation of development control measures (article 4 direction) to control loss of historic joinery details and features
- Seek to find long-term uses for Neuadd Buddug (if it cannot be revived as a cinema and theatre – which would be preferred) and the adjacent site. Seek engagement with Gwynedd Council, the Community Council and other key stakeholders.
- Enhancing key frontages onto Y Stryd Fawr. Consideration of a townscape heritage or similar project to encourage appropriate treatment of retail and domestic frontages.
- Enhancing the rear of hotels and especially the remaining support structures such as stabal and cartws. Consequent improvement in parallel streets.
- 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.

4.3.3 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 Bala.

- Raising awareness and (with support in the future) skills for local contractors and crafts people.

4.4 Sustainability & Environmental Upgrading

4.4.1 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).***

4.4.2 Bala has natural opportunities for micro-power generation. Micro-hydro generation has recently been undertaken at a scheme at Llanuwchllyn and a scheme refurbishing a historic turbine at Palé Hall. Other schemes are also proposed but have yet to come to fruition.

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

4.5 Biodiversity

4.5.1 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).

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

4.5.3 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.

4.5.4 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.

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

4.5.6 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.

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

4.5.8 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.

5.0 Consultation

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

- Bala Community Council.
- 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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