

DOLBENMAEN

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Chambers Conservation Ltd.

Issue

Issues: - 4 Final Version

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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 Dolbenmaen is situated approximately seven kilometres north west of Porthmadog.

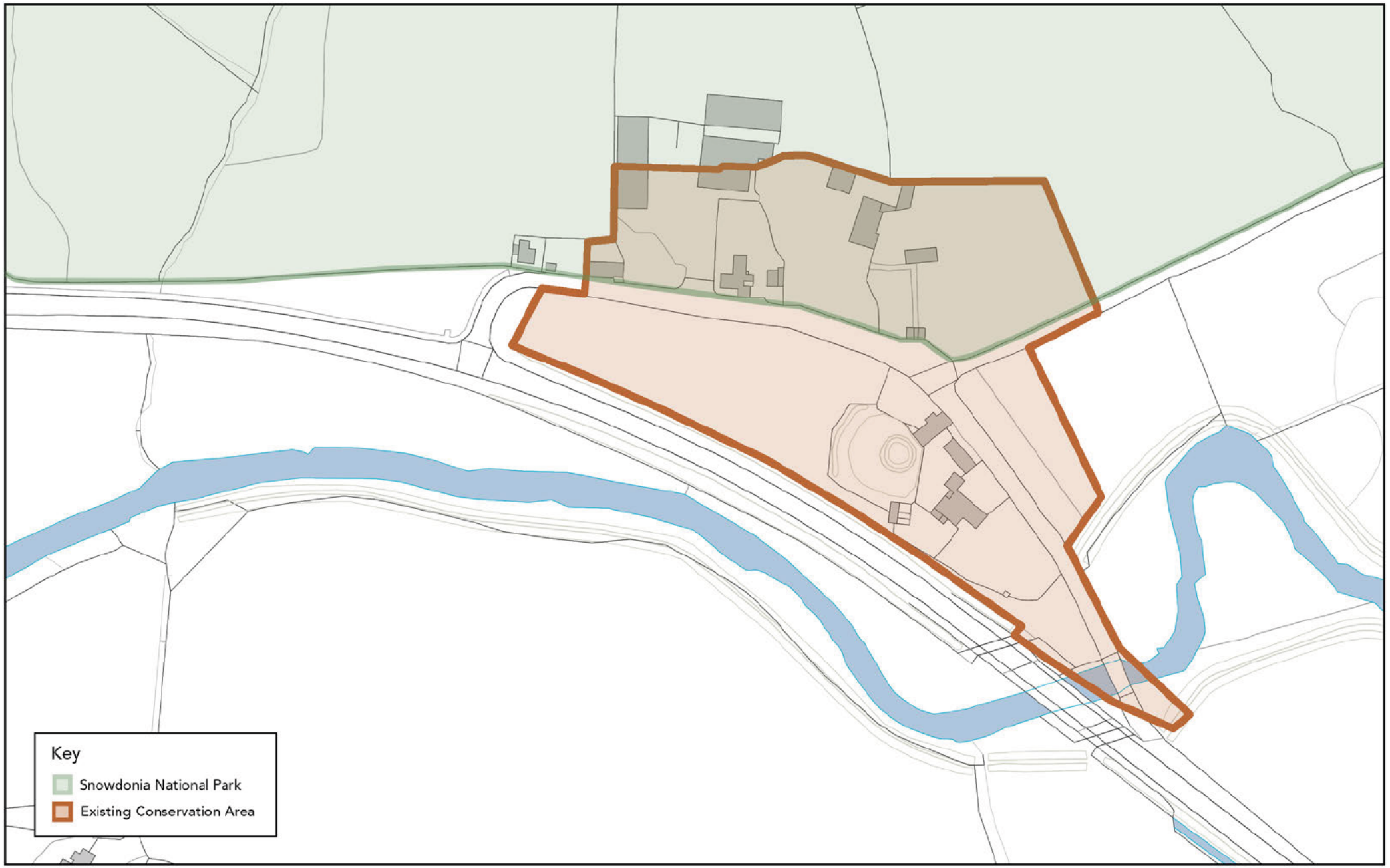
1.2.3 The village lies adjacent to the Afon Dwyfor in flat meadow land, which rises in a steep rock escarpment of Craig-y-Llan to the north, eventually leading to the summit of Craig-y-Garn. South of the river the plain continues up to the rock outcrop of Bryniau Tyddyn. The site lies at a point where the valley narrows and also at a strategic crossing point of the river.

1.2.4 The site lies partly within the National Park. The boundary including the areas to the north of the former Caernarfon Road and west of that to Cwm Pennant.

1.2.5 Designation date: 1989.



01 St. Mary's Church and Craig-y-Llan (2021).



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 Dolbenmaen has a significant place in the history of Wales. The site of the Maerdref of Eifionydd This important medieval history is overlain with significant activity in the Romano-British period and earlier. It is of very high historic significance. This is evident in the fabric of the area in a number of ways:

- The mwd at the heart of the conservation area and the relationship with Pont Dolbenmaen across the Afon Dwyfor, the church and Plas Dolbenmaen provide a unique set of historic assets, little changed since the early 19th century.
- This grouping also provides a clear picture of early medieval Dolbenmaen. This grouping is also unusual in Wales and as such of enhanced historic significance.[1]
- The mwd is very evident, especially on key views, albeit somewhat overgrown currently.
- Plas Dolbenmaen is a prominent house and associated buildings and may also have been the site of the Llys buildings.
- Pont Dolbenmaen is also thought to be the position of a ford, probably from the prehistoric period.
- The area around St. Mary's church and churchyard, potentially the Llys chapel, and the relationship of the church and churchyard to Plas Holland.

2.1.2 The landscape setting and topography of Dolbenmaen is fundamental to the special interest. The relationship with the escarpment of Craig-y-Llan to the north, Bryniau'r Tyddyn to the south and the separating plain of fertile agricultural land within the heart of the village all contribute. These views are identified specifically later in this appraisal. Key views showing this relationship are:

- Views on the approach from the west, showing the context between Bryniau'r Tyddyn and Craig-y-Llan.



03 Pont Dolbenmaen towards Craig-y-Llan. (Wikimedia Commons).



04 Plas Dolbenmaen from the north-east (Peoples Collection Wales)

[1] Lynch, Frances, A guide to Ancient and Historic Wales – Gwynedd, HMSO, 1995, p.168.

- Views from the east showing the context between Bryniau'r Tyddyn and Craig-y-Llan.
- View from new bridge on the A487 across Pont Dolbenmaen to Craig-y-Llan.
- View of St. Mary's Church, Lych Gate and Craig-y-Llan with the widening of the road in front, creating a more significant space.
- View towards Craig-y-Llan across the churchyard and the fields beyond.
- View across farmland to the Mwd from the west.

2.1.3 The standing built heritage of Dolbenmaen provides a clear picture of its origins and evolution. This reflected in the layout, architecture, materials and details, contributing to Aesthetic and Communal significance. Key elements include:

- The relationship of Plas Dolbenmaen to the Mwd and Pont Dolbenmaen. This relationship is physical (the outbuildings directly join the mound), visual (both in the same views) and historical – i.e. the Plas Dolbenmaen buildings may have been the site of the original Llys buildings and the current buildings probably contain elements of 17th century and earlier fabric.
- The lych gate, wider are of road and connection between St. Mary's church and the Mwd opposite.
- Relationship between the church and Plas Holland.
- Stonework detailing and materiality. The types of hard igneous rocks and coarse lime pointing (which would have been limewashed). The latter visible especially in the church and the lych gate, together with slate roofs of diminishing courses (visible on Plas Dolbenmaen, the lych gate and the south-west facing roof of the church).
- Stonework in the boundary walls, together with iron gates of traditional pattern and detail.
- Limewashed (although now replaced in modern paint) finish to Min-y-Ddol, and post-war corrugated cladding to the Bungalow.

2.1.4 Dolbenmaen is also of high cultural and communal significance, primarily because of its association with the Princes of Gwynedd, then with



05 Mwd from the churchyard (2021).



06 Diminishing coursed slate roof to the lych gate, with long stone copings (NB this is a new roof, replaced within the last 5 years or so. (2021).

significant local and regional estates. It is also referenced in the fourth branch of the Mabinogion, in the story of Pwyll Pendefig, (Prince of) Dyfed.

3.0 Historic Timeline

Prehistory

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

3.1.2 The location of Dolbenmaen on relatively fertile land has evidently led to settlement of the area over a long period. Some 400m south of the village lies Craig-y-Tyddyn Camp[2], a small prehistoric (iron age – Romano British) fort on the ridge above a settlement below.

3.1.3 To the north, is Castell Caerau[3] which is a more heavily defended structure of a similar period. It is likely that there was settlement between the current village and Castell Caerau, and there is a further enclosed hut circle group, east Taleifion, to the north-east, demonstrating a long period of occupation.

3.1.4 Earlier finds and remains, typically burial or ritual sites, denote occupation of the wider area from Neolithic and Bronze Age times[4]

Medieval

3.1.5 Thirteenth-century Gwynedd was divided into 22 areas, known as cwmyd (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. 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.

3.1.6 Dolbenmaen lies at the heart of the Cwmwd of Eifionydd. Each Cwmwd had free and bond townships and a royal maerdref, inhabited by bondmen, within which were the buildings of the llys.

3.1.7 Dolbenmaen was consequently a bond township and was held in a very restrictive tenure until the late 15th century. Bondsmen would have been attached to the court to work the Lord's fields, hence the tight grouping of houses around the Llys which is still identifiable.[5]



07 Extract from the Tithe map, 1844.



08 View of the Mwd from the A487 (2021).

[2] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=&id=3168
[3] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=&id=3168
[4] Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) report no. 2155. Dolbenmaen Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, 2011.
[5] Lynch, Frances, A guide to Ancient and Historic Wales – Gwynedd, HMSO, 1995, p.169.

16 - 17th Century

3.1.8 Some of the llys sites, including Abergwyngregyn, contain a mwd (motte). These were either earlier features used or sometimes constructed by the Princes.

3.1.9 Whether the motte at Dolbenmaen is of Norman or Welsh origin is not clear, but the evidence of location, tenure and fortification indicates that the commotal centre was at Dolbenmaen, until it was relocated to a new castle at Criccieth by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in the 1230s[6].

3.1.10 Dolbenmaen appears in the story of Pwyll Pendefig, (Prince of) Dyfed in the Mabinogion, where it is recorded that he *'in his expedition against Math, King of Gwynedd….retreats to Dolbenmaen'*[7].

3.1.11 By 1603, the township was leased from the crown by Griffith Williams, whose brother Ellis farmed at Tyddyn Mawr. It was left, via his son, to Sir Richard Trevor of Trevalyn.

3.1.12 In 1620 Sir Richard built a house, probably on the site of the current Plas Dolbenmaen. By 1637 the lands were left to John Griffith of Cefn Amwlch[8] and purchased from the crown.[9] The lands were sold to the Brynker family (of Brynkir) in 1719, then to William Owen of Clenennau and Brogyntyn (the family seat near Oswestry) in 1736, eventually passing by marriage to the Ormesby-Gore family.

18th and Early 19th Century

3.1.13 The rectory was built on glebe lands owned by the church. The current building was built 1786 as an enlargement of a small earlier rectory. The building, also previously known as Ty'n y Llan, was latterly named in honour of Revd Jeffrey Holland, (1782-1833) 4th son of the high sheriff of the county, who volunteered for naval service and was present at the battle of the Glorious First of June (1794). The house is now privately owned.

3.1.14 It is suggested that Plas Dolbenmaen and the bridge were potentially also rebuilt or altered during this period, suggesting a period of investment in the late 18th century.

3.1.15 The tithe survey of 1839 shows Plas Dolbenmaen holding lands including the mwd. A small cottage (labelled Ty Connol, on the 1888 OS, Ty Canol) and school.



09 Extract from the OS Map, Surveyed 1888.



10 Plas Holland, the old rectory (2021).

[6] Lloyd, J. E. (1905) *Some notes on Medieval Eifionydd*, Archaeologica Cambriensis, 299
[7] Ibid, 296.
[8] https://biography.wales/article/s-GRIF-CEF-1481
[9] Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) report no. 2155. Dolbenmaen Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, 2011. p4.

Late 19th Century.

3.1.16 The church is called St. Beuno's on the 1888 map as a chapel of Penmorfa, but this changed to St. Mary's between 1888 and 1901. The church is essentially a single-cell 15th century building, but may have much earlier origins associated with the Cwmyd. The lych gate was, according to the inscription, *'Built in 1847 by the Reverend G. Owen MA'.* An inscription below refers, perhaps, to an earlier structure of 1747.[10]

20th Century.

3.1.17 The lands were sold by the third Baron Harlech (George Ormesby-Gore) in 1911. As shown on the 1888 OS map, by this time Plas Dolbenmaen was a public house and known as 'Dolbenmaen Castle'. Ty Canol and the land around Min y Ddol (formerly the school) were also listed in the sale.

3.1.18 Change was limited in the 20th century. Characterful, corrugated 'the bungalow' to the north-west, just outside the conservation area, appears to have been constructed immediately after the second world war. The by-pass road and new bridge were constructed in 1973.

3.1.19 Unfortunately Ty Canol was demolished in c. 1985 and rebuilt (subsequently being de-listed). At the time this, it is understood, was a listed building. It was not reconstructed to the original form. Latterly a haulage yard has been constructed adjacent with associated metal sheds, to the west of Ty Canol.

4.0 Spatial Analysis

4.1 Settlement Form & Layout

4.1.1 The settlement form of Dolbenmaen still reflects the development of the Princely Llys and Mwd in the context of the Afon Dwyfor. The site being intended to make the most of the fertile lands but using the higher grounds for defence, it was also a key river crossing point, by a ford originally. The settlement is located at a relatively narrow point, before Cwm Pennant, between Bryniau'r Tyddyn and Craig-y-Llan, giving it a strategic position.

4.1.2 To the north of the village, the agricultural land meets the rocky escarpment of Craig-y-Llan, with the higher summit of Craig-y-Garn (363m AOD), behind. To the south, Bryniau'r Tyddyn rises out of the plain and the higher ground conitinues south to the coast at Criccieth.



11 Pont Dolbenmaen from the south-west (2021).



12 Listed outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen – note modern roofs. (2021).

[10] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=21522

4.1.3 The layout is also defined by its relationship to the Afon Dwyfor. The Mwd set away from the Dwyfor, leaving space for development of the Llys buildings, a space is now occupied by Plas Dolbenmaen.

4.1.4 The primary route through the settlement, although now on a by-pass, connects Caernarfon to the west and Porthmadog to the east (the A487).

4.1.5 Other than the by-pass, the form of the village is the same as in 1841, with the road north-east to Cwm Pennant, meeting the former Porthmadog to Caernarfon Road by the church. Other than Plas Dolbenmaen, all the development was to the north of the road, including the church and the school.

4.1.6 Today the road across Pont Dolbenmaen is limited to a foot or farm traffic only, the primary connection to the A487 being at the western end.

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 Fig 17):

A Dynamic views on the approach from the west, showing the context between Bryniau'r Tyddyn and Craig-y-Llan.

B Dynamic views from the east showing the context between Bryniau'r Tyddyn and Craig-y-Llan.

C View from new bridge across Pont Dolbenmaen to Craig-y-Llan.

D View through the trees to the façade of Plas Dolbenmaen.

E Dynamic view of the Mwd and listed outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen from the south.

F Views between listed outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen (partly obscured).



13 View towards Craig-y-Llan from the churchyard. (2021).



14 Pont Dolbenmaen and Craig-y-Llan. (2021).

G Dynamic view of the Mwd and listed outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen from the north (including view from the churchyard to the Mwd).

H View of St. Mary's Church, Lych Gate and Craig-y-Llan with the widening of the road in front, creating a more significant space.

I View through Lych Gate to the church.

J View of St. Mary's Church and Plas Holland across the churchyard.

K View towards Craig-y-Llan across the churchyard and the fields beyond.

L View across farmland to the Mwd from the west.

4.3 Green spaces & Trees

4.3.1 The green spaces of Dolbenmaen are characterised as open farmland meeting the settlement, as part of St. Mary's churchyard, or the key spaces around the Mwd.

4.3.2 Open farmland surrounds the village to the west, north and east. The areas to the south are physically separated now by the A487.

4.3.3 Open farmland extends into the village between the Mwd and the road junction (see fig 15), providing a long view to the mwd and an important setting for the other village buildings all on the north of the former Caernarfon road.

4.3.4 The land to the north and east forms the setting for both the village and the escarpment of Craig-y-Llan.

4.3.5 The churchyard is of note, probably being associated with the Llys initially. Today it's character is defined by high-quality slate gravestones and tombs in a fine landscape setting. The entry to the churchyard is provided by the fine mid 19th century Lych Gate.

4.3.6 Distinctive trees or groups of trees are shown on plan at Fig 18, these include:

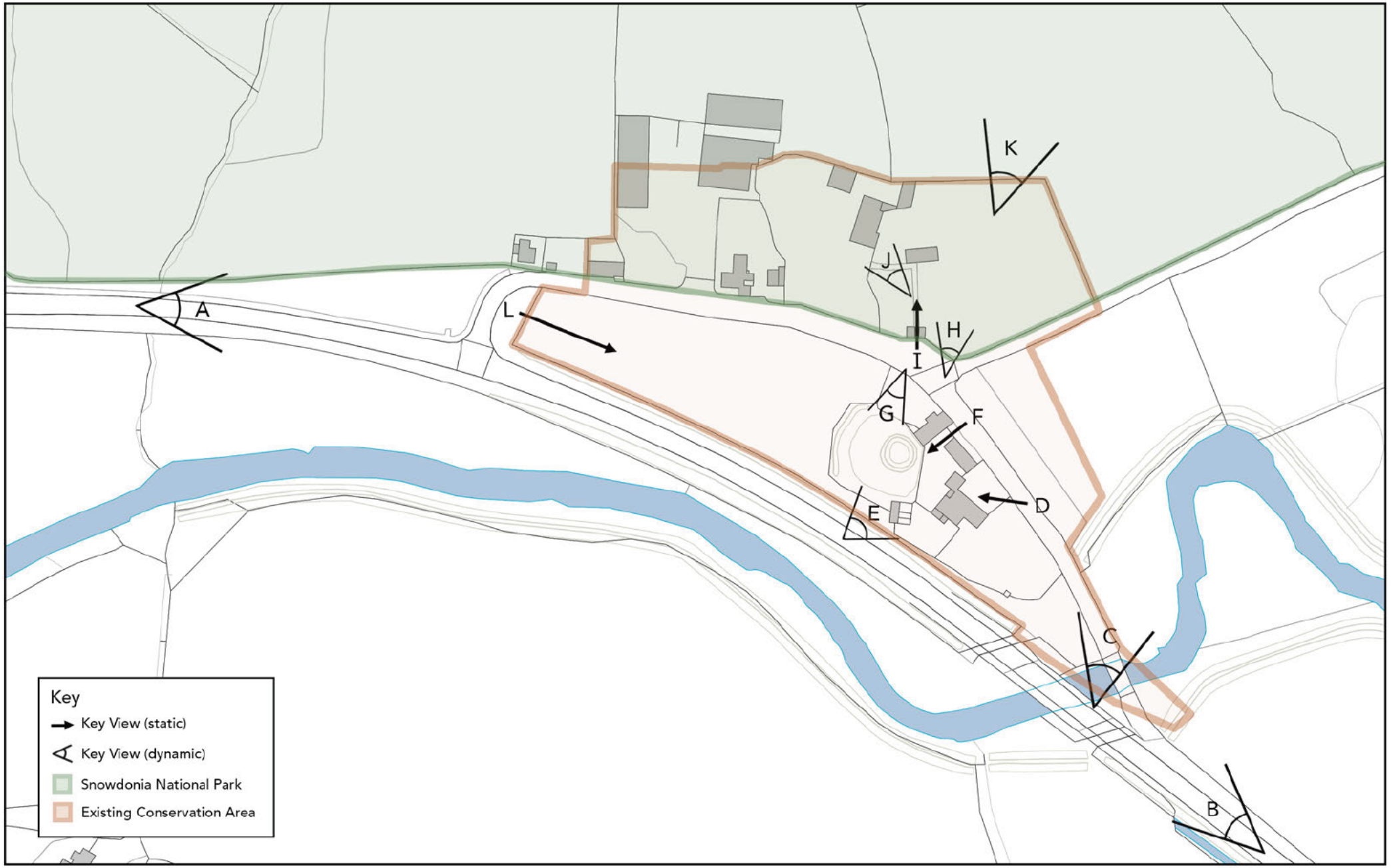
- Individual yew tree in the churchyard.
- More prominent of the trees to the east of Plas Dolbenmaen (better specimens of predominantly Oak and sycamore.
- Trees west of the Mwd (which do not impede key views).
- Tree near the entrance and on the boundary of Plas Holland.



15 Open field between the junction with the A487 and the Mwd. (2021)

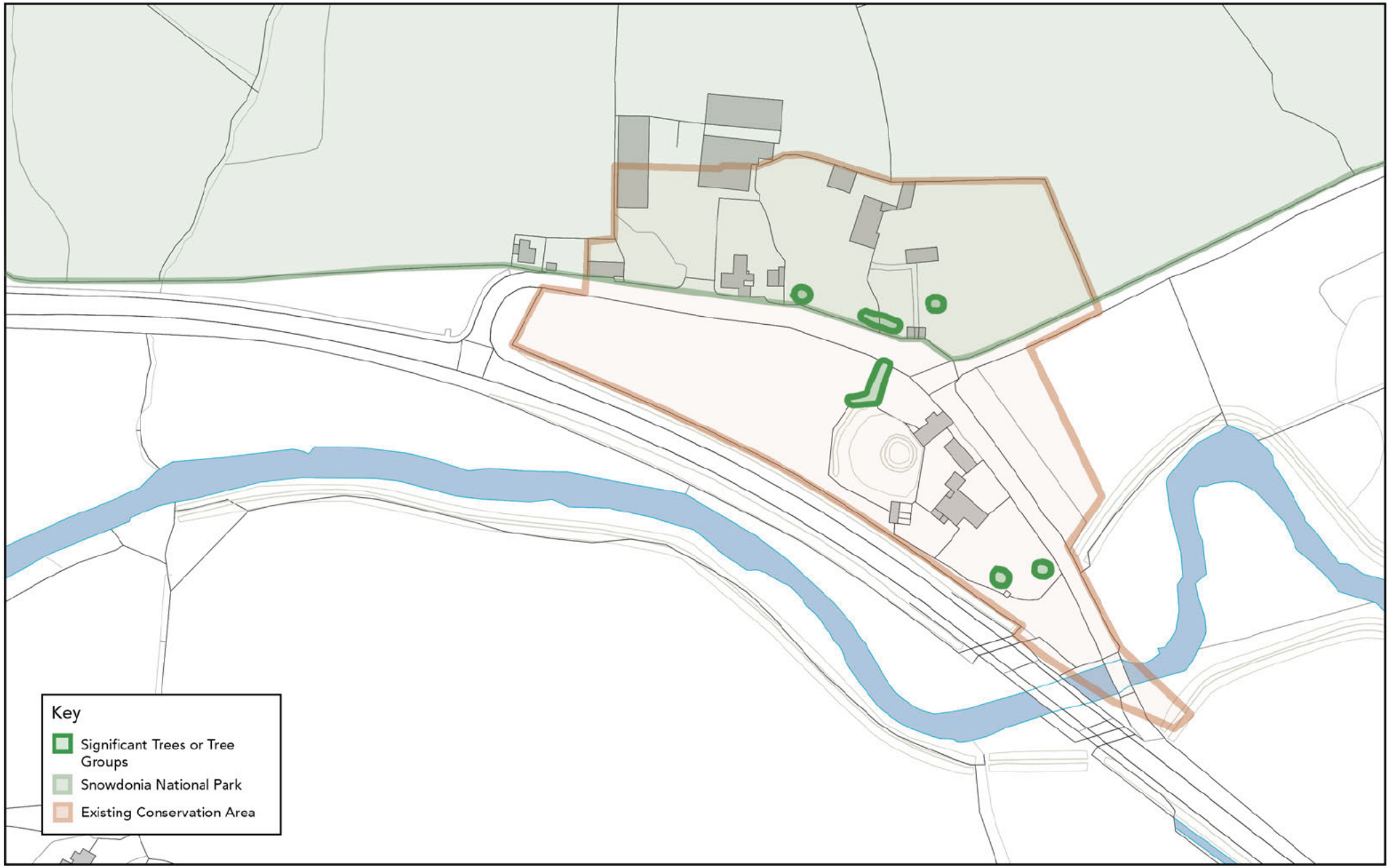


16 Open land and flood plain looking north from Pont Dolbenmaen (2021).



Key Views
1:2000 @ A4

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



Trees
1:2000 @ A4

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

5.0 Character

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 Other than the by-passing of the village by the modern road, the village has changed very little in the past 200 years. Its character is predominantly defined by the relationship of the Mwd, Plas Dolbenmaen, the Afon Dwyfor and the Church as a group.

5.1.2 The setting, from both east and west in the context of Craig-y-Llan to the north and Bryniau'r Tyddyn to the south is distinctive, with the flat plains leading to ridges either side of the village.

5.1.3 The importance of the road between Porthmadog and Caernarfon and the construction of the new bridge adjacent to Pont Dolbenmaen has taken traffic and consequently activity away from the village centre, but the alignment and arrangement of the roads in the village has changed little.

5.2 Architectural Character

5.2.1 The present architectural character of the settlement is diverse, but still presents a clear picture of the development of Dolbenmaen over the centuries.

5.2.2 The architectural character to the east of the Conservation area is defined by the relationship with the Mwd. Plas Dolbenmaen is likely to have been the site of the Llys buildings and perhaps the church the site of an associated chapel.

5.2.3 The road widens outside the 19th century Lychgate which lifts the status of the junction. Views to the Mwd are somewhat overgrown and are partly obscured by a large storage container, but the visual relationship is still a strong one.

5.2.4 The current Plas Dolbenmaen[11] is now a substantial 18th century farmhouse, probably with sections of much earlier origin. There would certainly appear to be elements which could be parts of the new house constructed by Sir Richard Trevor in the early 17th Century, and possibly earlier fabric could exist. It appears in the tax returns of 1662 when it was one of only two



19 St. Mary's Church and Plas Holland (2021).



20 Plas Dolbenmaen (2021).

[11] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=4280

houses in the district with two hearths.[12] It is shown on the OS County series 1st edition (c.1888) as the Dolbenmaen Castle public house.

5.2.5 The visual, architectural and physical relationship between Plas Dolbenmaen and the Mwd is highly significant. The outbuildings are listed separately, which also reflects this important group value. This is very vulnerable to inappropriate change and needs to be carefully monitored.

5.2.6 The outbuildings have been re-roofed in machine-cut slate, which lacks character in comparison to earlier slating visible in photos retained by RCAHMW. It is not clear whether the original detail referred to in the listing is retained internally.

5.2.7 The buildings and characterful dry-stone walls abut the motte directly (and even are cut-slightly into the mound), and the rubble stone pigstys form a rewarding foreground from the south, the early gates and dry stone walled enclosures are all important the character of the building and setting.

5.2.8 Plas Dolbenmaen itself is constructed from large stone blocks to the north-east elevation, unfortunately pointed in cement currently, and simple 19th century 2/2 sashes, currently boarded over. The roof is in diminishing coursed slate, which is an important feature.

5.2.9 Opposite, the lych gate dates from c.1847 is a characterful structure with a shallow gable. Constructed in local stone, graded in size from large stones to smaller at higher level. It comprises a central gothic arch and gates, and two low storage sections, perhaps for a bier and gravediggers equipment.

5.2.10 The roof of the lychgate has been recently repaired, and the whole repointed, retaining thicker diminishing coursed slates and substantial stone copings.

5.2.11 The arch, on approach, frames a fine view of St. Mary's church beyond, which opens to bring Plas Holland into view on leaving the lych gate.

5.2.12 The Church St Mary's was formerly a chapel of Penmorfa, during which time it was dedicated to St. Beuno. The present building is thought to be fifteenth century and later, and much modified in the 19th Century. It comprises a nave and chancel, without division. There are surviving later medieval roof trusses.



21 The Mwd (to the left) and outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen (2021).



22 Lych Gate from the forecourt. (2021).

[12] https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/16741?term=dolbenmaen

5.2.13 The church externally is in rubble stone with some very large stones to the base and quoins. The nature of the pointing suggests the church may have been limewashed in the past. A small raised bellcote faces Plas Holland.

5.2.14 The church has a diminishing course slate roof facing the Mwd, but an evenly spaced slate roof facing towards Craig-y-Llan.

5.2.15 It is possible that the church was founded as a chapel originally associated with the llys.

5.2.16 To the east of Plas Dolbenmaen is Pont Dolbenmaen[13] The current bridge is probably late 18th century when enhancements to the Tremadog-Caernarfon road were being undertaken. It is likely that it replaced an earlier structure, and may retain some elements of this.

5.2.17 West of the church is Plas Holland, the former rectory. This presents a strongly 18th century frontage towards the mwd, but the range to the rear is clearly earlier, with substantial chimney stack and small dormers. The whole has been rendered in modern render, but retains sash windows. It makes for a rewarding group with the church, and the gravestones and memorials. An unfortunate outbuilding, in timber, has been constructed on the boundary with the churchyard, disrupting the view.

5.2.18 Beyond Plas Holland is the modern Ty Canol. This replaced an earlier building which was, at the time, listed. The current building is of stone but otherwise undistinguished and unfortunate in the context of the historic structures around. The yard and expanse of concrete with steel buildings (partly within the conservation area) also is visually obtrusive.

5.2.19 Min-y-Ddol is a classic single-storey cottage, which may have been thatched originally, but now has a relatively modern slate roof. Windows are modern, the entrance door of the early 20th century. A relatively modern extension in profiled metal is screened by the walled enclosure to the east.

5.2.20 The Bungalow sits just outside the current conservation area boundary, but is of some interest. It is a corrugated structure and would appear to have been erected shortly after world-war 2 (based on the OS map evidence). It is largely intact, except for later uPVC windows.



23 Church and Plas Holland. Earlier range to the rear of Plas Holland, note visually disruptive outbuilding (right). (2021).



24 Min-y-Ddol (2021).

[13] https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=&id=4213

5.3 Materials and Details

5.3.1 The primary building material of Dolbenmaen is stone. The majority from the local hillsides, quarried specifically for the purpose. Dark stones, igneous rocks, basalt, dolerites etc are evident and important to the character, as are the lichens and mosses which inhabit them, especially in boundary walls. It is likely that early structures (as evidenced by the church) would have been limewashed.

5.3.2 Visible stone coursing is generally uncoursed rubble, sometimes with quoins and details (the church, outbuildings of Plas Dolbenmaen). The front façade of Plas Dolbenmaen and the lych gate are coursed rubble. The latter diminishing in depth as the wall increases in height.

5.3.3 Plas Holland is rendered (now in a modern render). It may have been rendered since the later part of the house was constructed in the 1780's, to unify the earlier and later sections, but the current render lacks character. Min-y-Ddol is whitewashed in a modern paint (but may well have been traditionally limewashed previously)

5.3.4 Roofs are exclusively in slate (except the Bungalow), but they vary significantly. Plas Dolbenmaen, the lych gate and the south facing slope of the church retain diminishing course slate.

5.3.5 Chimneys are stone and significant in scale. Large chimneys point to the 17th century origins of Plas Dolbenmaen and the rear section of Plas Holland.

5.3.6 Plas Dolbenmaen retains windows which would appear to be of 19th century origin in the main. These are partly concealed with security boarding but would appear to be of 2/2 configuration to the front façade. Plas Holland has smaller-pane sashes, which would have been the predominant type to the residential buildings. Min-y-Ddol and the Bungalow now have modern windows.

5.4 Boundaries

5.4.1 The definition of space in Dolbenmaen is essential to its character, and stone walling is the primary form of defining space.

5.4.2 Dry-stone walls predominate, these are characterised by a mix of various igneous rocks, generally not slate. Lichens and mosses are important to the character of the walls.



25 The Bungalow (2021).



26 Fine-grained igneous rocks to the Lych Gate, recently repointed (2021).

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 There are a number of traditional, often riveted, gates surviving which are important to the character of the conservation area, in particular between the Mwd and the road (partly overgrown), and into the field adjacent.

5.5.3 Signage brings some additional interest, including the church service notice above the lych gate, and the Beddgelert 6 ¾ mls signage outside Ty Canol.

5.5.4 There are some high-quality tombs and gravestones in the churchyard, featuring some unusual and high quality carvings and pattern work.

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 31):

6.1.1 Scheduled Monuments

- *CN063 Dolbenmaen Castle Mound.*

6.1.2 Listed Buildings

- *4213 Pont Dolbenmaen*
- *4278 Parish Church of St Mary*
- *4279 Plas Holland*
- *4280 Plas Dolbenmaen*
- *4281 NW Range of Farm Buildings at Plas Dolbenmaen*
- *21551 NE Range of Farm Buildings at Plas Dolbenmaen*
- *21552 Washhouse Building at Plas Dolbenmaen*
- *21522 Lychgate to the Church of St Mary*

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 32):



27 Traditional gates remain in several locations and are important (2021).



28 Dry-stone walling (although with mortar bedded coping) and cast iron signage outside Ty Canol. (2021).

- *All boundary and retaining walls.*
- *Min-y-Ddol*
- *The Bungalow*

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, it is proposed that the conservation area boundary be slightly extended, to encompass the Bungalow which is important as a well-preserved and characterful post-war addition to the settlement.

7.1.2 Proposed boundary extension, see figure 33

8.0 Hidden Histories (archaeological potential)

8.1.1 Dolbenmaen 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. A likelihood enhanced by the relationship with the scheduled forts and settlements at Craig-y-Tyddyn Camp and Castell Caerau.

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 around Plas Dolbenmaen.

9.0 Other Designated Assets

9.1.1 There are no other designated assets within or adjacent to the conservation area.

9.2 Trees Preservation Orders

9.2.1 There are no currently no tree preservation orders identified within the conservation area.



29 Tombs and gravestones on the approach to the church. (2021).



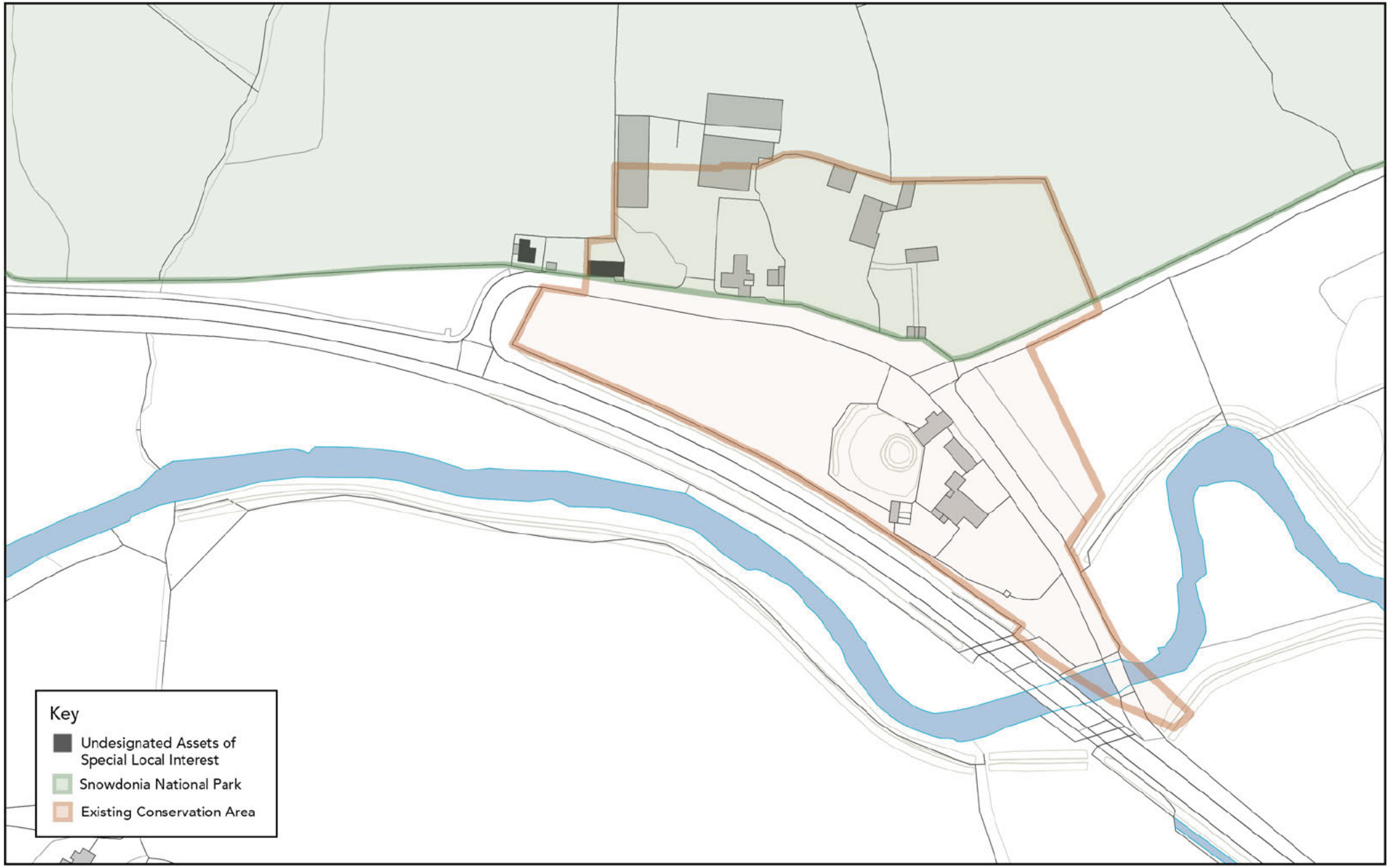
30 Storage container adversely affects the setting of the Mwd. (2021).



Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments

1:2000 @ A4

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Undesignated Assets of Special Local Interest
1:2000 @ 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.

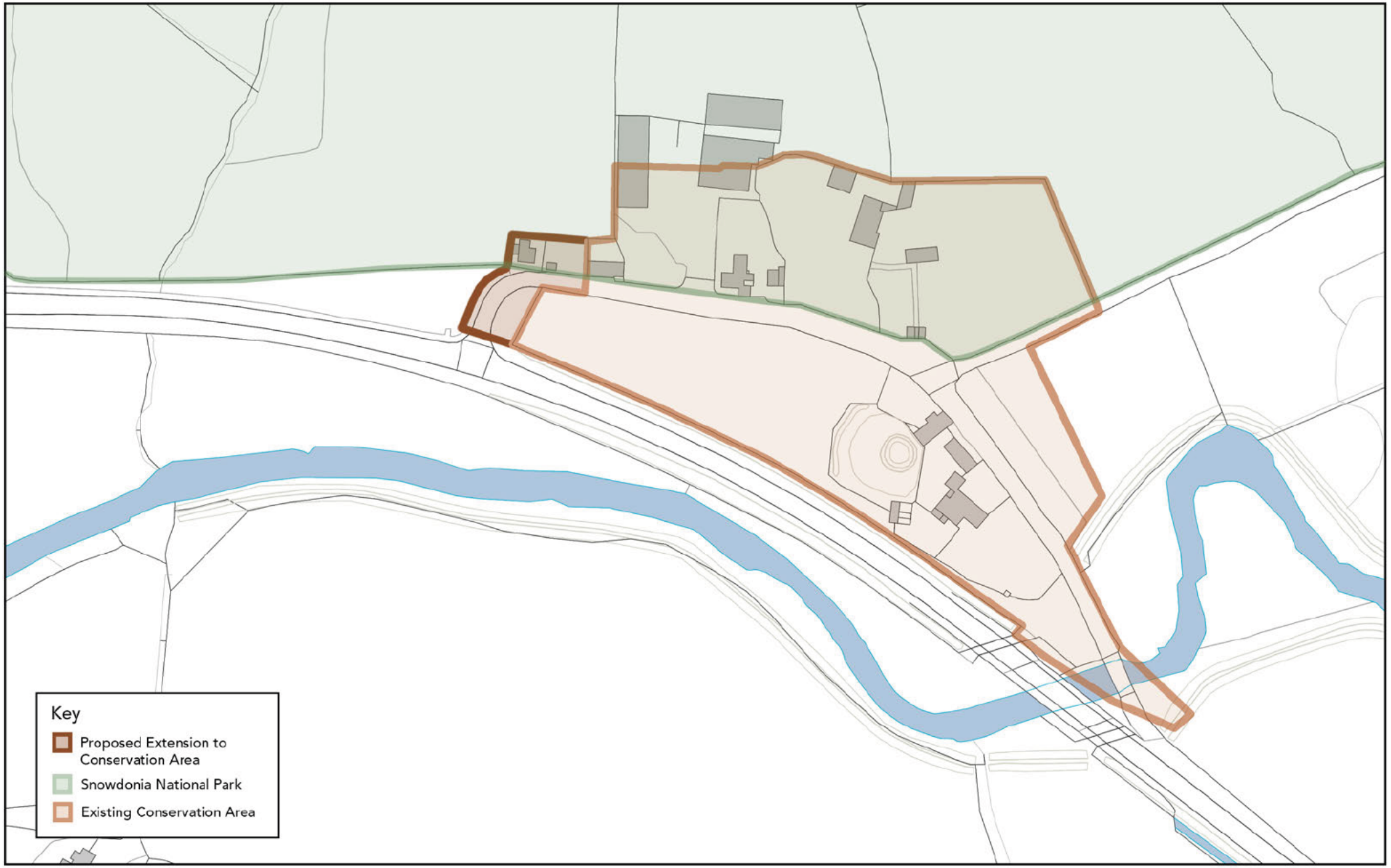
10.2 Protected Species.

10.2.1 Limited information has been found regarding specific protected and important species in the Dolbenmaen Conservation area.

10.2.2 The Afon Dwyfor is known to host notable fish and invertebrate species, including:

- Atlantic salmon
- Brown trout
- Bullhead Cottus
- Brook lamprey
- River lamprey
- Sea lamprey
- European eel
- White-clawed crayfish
- Fresh water pearl mussel

10.2.3 The Afon Dwyfor is known to provide a habitat to an otter population and weasel, bank voles and wood mice are also recorded in various locations.



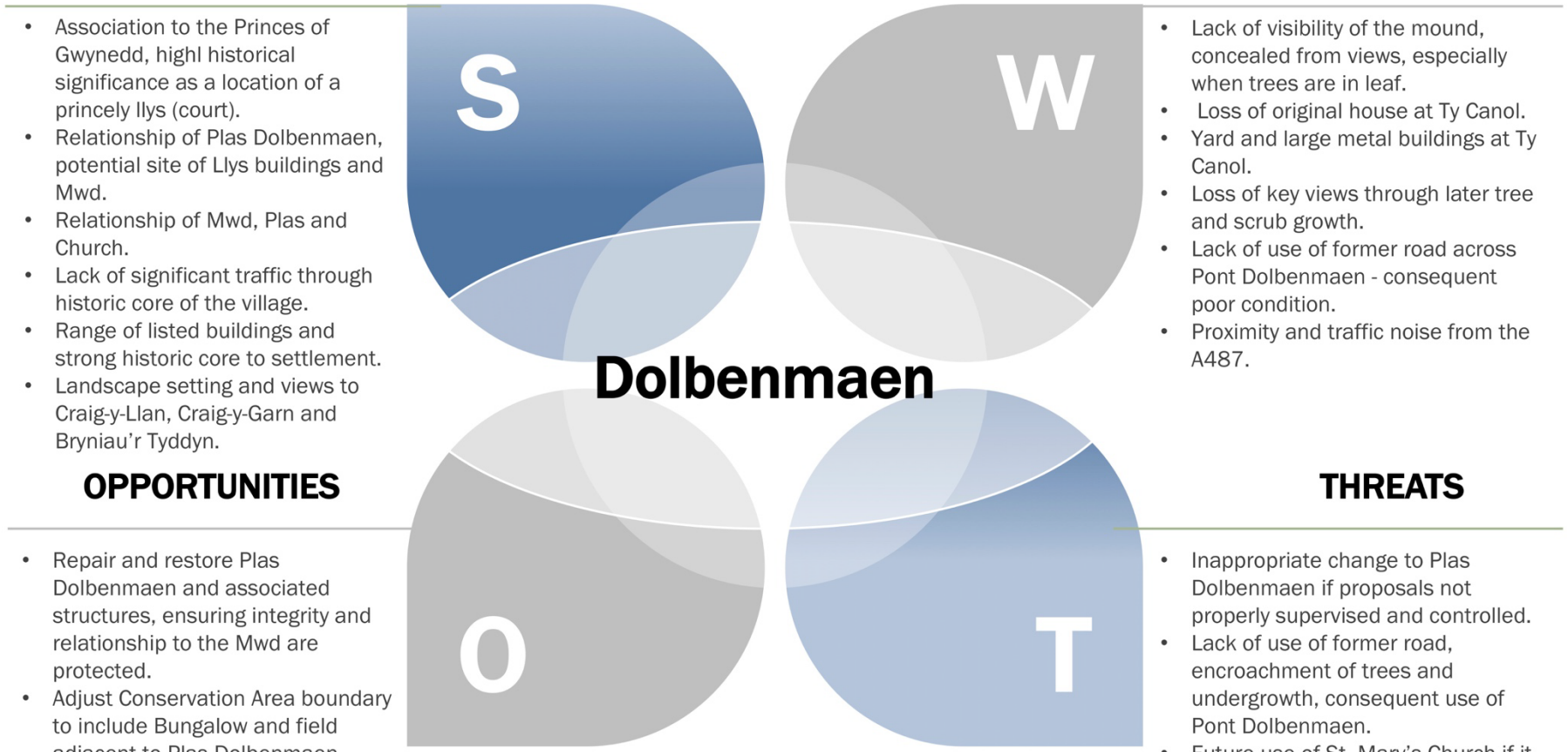
Proposed Conservation Area
1:2000 @ A4

33 Proposed revision to Conservation Area Boundary (© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100022403)



PART TWO – CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN.

1.0 Summary SWOT Analysis



2.0 Understanding the Issues

2.1 The Condition of the Conservation Area

2.1.1 Dolbenmaen is well preserved in terms of the retention of its historic assets. The relationship between the Mwd and the other early buildings (albeit much changed) is unusually complete.

2.1.2 The fact that most of the key buildings are listed is both a reflection of the importance of the architectural heritage and has retention of original features and details, although the loss of the original Ty Canol (a listed building) is highly regrettable.

2.1.3 Whilst most buildings are occupied or in beneficial use the highly significant Plas Dolbenmaen and its associated buildings are currently empty. Work has been undertaken and an application submitted for reinstatement to use as a house.[14] Other applications have been approved for conversion of the outbuildings into a cycling centre and café. Works on the latter seem to have started, but ceased.[15]

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

- The condition of Plas Dolbenmaen and the Mwd.
- Pointing of historic buildings in inappropriate mortars or finishing in later render or paints.
- Construction of extensions, boundaries and new work in the conservation area which doesn't reflect the important range of existing materials. More appropriate, natural, materials should be encouraged.
- Inappropriate or poor quality new developments or extensions.
- Siting of storage units and outbuildings.
- Loss of traditional boundary treatments.

2.1.5 Specific examples include:



34 View showing the original Ty Canol before demolition. (SNPA)



35 Cement pointing, Plas Dolbenmaen.

[14] Gwynedd Council Planning and LB applications (for Plas Dolbenmaen house only) – ref. C09D/0197/36/LL & C09D/0196/36/CR.
[15] Planning ref. C03D/0698/36/LL

- Modern cement pointing to Plas Dolbenmaen and St. Mary's Church.
- Modern render to Plas Holland.
- Outbuilding adjacent to the churchyard at Plas Holland.
- Modern paint finishes over stonework and metal extension to Min-y-Ddol.
- Development of Ty Canol (including the replacement of the house), extensive surfacing and modern storage buildings.

2.2 Buildings at Risk

2.2.1 Plas Dolbenmaen and the associated, listed, outbuildings are not in use. This puts these buildings and the Mwd, which are linked, significantly at risk.

2.2.2 As previously noted, applications were approved by Gwynedd Council for the conversion of the outbuildings to a cycling centre and café in 2005 and works would appear to have commenced on this, including replacement slate roofs (modern, even courses) but ceased. Planning and Listed building consent for the retention of Plas Dolbenmaen as a house, with associated modifications were approved in 2012, but no works have been undertaken.

2.2.3 If no works are forthcoming in the near future, the local authority (as this lies without the National Park) should *urgently* consider taking further action.

2.3 Overview of the SWOT Analysis.

2.3.1 A SWOT analysis has been undertaken for the Dolbenmaen 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 where appropriate.
- Urgently find a suitable new uses for Plas Dolbenmaen and the associated structures.



36 NE range of buildings at Plas Dolbenmaen (probably formerly stabling), note the relatively new slate roof. (2021).



37 Views of the Mwd from the village are largely concealed by trees and scrub growth, some now starting to affect the mound. (2021)

- Better control development and change in and around the Conservation Area to ensure they better reflect the local materials and are of appropriate quality, layout and design.
- Extend conservation area boundary to include the Bungalow.
- Open up views to the Mwd, by removal of scrub and less significant trees.
- Consider enhanced interpretation and work with landowner for potential access to the Mwd.

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.
- Consider measures to enhance former road across Pont Dolbenmaen, perhaps as a cycleway and introduce interpretation, reinstating important views.
- Seek to ensure that views are protected through active management of trees and scrub, especially around the Mwd.
- Potential to bring improved community and visitor facilities to the village through beneficial use of Plas Dolbenmaen outbuildings.
- Ensure that green spaces and key views are protected through local engagement and when considering applications for development.

3.0 Positive Management.

3.1 Boundary Changes.

3.1.1 It is proposed to extend the boundary of the conservation area to include the Bungalow and the field to the east of Plas Dolbenmaen, see section 1, 7.0.

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.

3.3 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:

- Consideration of a design brief to ensure that the redundant, or under-utilised buildings are brought back into beneficial or enhanced use. This would apply to Plas Dolbenmaen and assocated buildings.
- Consider intervention through the mechanisms afforded under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to secure a beneficial future for Plas Dolbenmaen, the associated outbuildings and the Mwd.
- Seek to better control development of inappropriate quality on the periphery of the conservation area.
- Consider measures to enhance former road across Pont Dolbenmaen, perhaps as a cycleway and introduce interpretation, reinstating important views.
- Seek to ensure that views are protected through active management of trees and scrub, especially around the Mwd.
- Encouraging reinstatement of more appropriate joinery details to locally significant buildings, and use of traditional materials such as hot-lime pointing and renders.

3.3.3 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 Dolbenmaen.
- 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 Dolbenmaen has natural opportunities for micro-power generation given its orientation, siting adjacent to the Afon Dwyfor and also orientation of some key structures.

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. Dolbenmaen currently has no trees specifically protected under tree preservation orders, however significant trees are identified as having importance in the conservation area (see 4.3).

3.5.2 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.

3.5.3 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.

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

3.5.5 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.

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

3.5.7 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:

- 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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